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Brian Friel, Ireland, and The North

Scott Boltwood



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Brian Friel, Ireland, and The North

After nearly five decades as one of Ireland's most celebrated playwrights, Brian Friel has been the subject of ten books and dozens of articles. This study expands Friel criticism into a sizeable body of new material and into a new interpretative direction. Along with considering Friel's most recent plays, the book analyzes his interviews and essays to chart the author's ideological evolution throughout a career of more than forty years. Moreover, a chapter is devoted to his previously ignored articles for the *Irish Press* (1962–1963), a series that reveals unsuspected insights into Friel's disposition towards the Irish Republic. Refining our understanding of Friel's relationship to Republicanism is central to the argument; rather than assuming that the author embraces nationalist ideology, the book relocates the conceptual concerns of his work away from Dublin and to "the North," this bridge between Ireland and the British province of Northern Ireland.

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Scott Boltwood

Emory & Henry College, Virginia



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For Mary Bell

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used for frequently cited texts. A complete bibliographical listing for each work can be found in the Works Cited.

Works by Brian Friel

<i>BFC</i>	<i>Brian Friel in Conversation</i>
<i>CC</i>	<i>The Communication Cord</i>
<i>CF</i>	<i>Crystal and Fox</i>
<i>CM</i>	<i>The Loves of Cass McGuire</i>
<i>DL</i>	<i>Dancing at Lughnasa</i>
<i>EW</i>	<i>The Enemy Within</i>
<i>EDI</i>	<i>Essays, Diaries, Interviews: 1964–1999</i>
<i>GI</i>	<i>The Gentle Island</i>
<i>Give</i>	<i>Give Me Your Answer, Do!</i>
<i>HP</i>	<i>The Home Place</i>
<i>LV</i>	<i>The London Vertigo</i>
<i>MH</i>	<i>Making History</i>
<i>MS</i>	<i>Molly Sweeney</i>
<i>Mundy</i>	<i>The Mundy Scheme</i>
<i>P</i>	<i>Performances</i>
<i>SP</i>	<i>Selected Plays</i>
<i>TPA</i>	<i>Three Plays After</i>
<i>Vol</i>	<i>Volunteers</i>
<i>WT</i>	<i>Wonderful Tennessee</i>

List of abbreviations

Major critical studies on Brian Friel

- Andrews Andrews, Elmer, *The Art of Brian Friel*
Corbett Corbett, Tony, *Brian Friel*
Dantanus Dantanus, Ulf, *Brian Friel*
Maxwell Maxwell, D. E. S., *Brian Friel*
McGrath McGrath, F. C., *Brian Friel's (Post) Colonial Drama*
O'Brien O'Brien, George, *Brian Friel*
Pine Pine, Richard, *The Diviner*

Introduction: Friel, criticism, and theory

The critical consensus towards Brian Friel's drama and its relationship to the Irish Republic's form of nationalism has evolved significantly since the first studies of his career appeared in the 1970s. The initial discussions by D. E. S. Maxwell and George O'Brien argued that the playwright espoused a relatively unproblematized Irish nationalism, and even as late as 1988 Ulf Dantanus' *Brian Friel* positions the playwright squarely within the tradition of Joyce, Synge, and O'Casey: "the habitat, heritage and history of Ireland have made him an Irish writer" (Dantanus, 20).¹ Yet, in that same year the playwright's ideological ambivalence to the Irish Republic was first posited by Shaun Richards and David Cairns in their broad revisionist interrogation of Irish literature (Cairns and Richards, *Writing Ireland*, 148–9). In her 1994 study of the early Field Day Theatre Company and Friel's collaborations with it, Marilyn Richter recognizes that their ideological objective was to articulate a relationship to Irish nationalism "for which there was, as yet, no name" (Richter, *Acting*, 254). By the late 1990s, only the most naive critics would read Friel's career within a straightforward nationalistic framework. This recognition of Friel's problematic relationship to conventional constructs of Irishness has deprived the critical community of a vocabulary to discuss his career; while he cannot be accommodated comfortably by Republican nationalism, he strenuously opposes the Protestant domination of the Northern Irish province and rejects its brand of Unionism. Thus, without the ability to associate Friel's position to a statist ideology, the criticism has retreated to interpretive frameworks based upon such amorphous criteria as a generic "Irish psyche," a tenuously

undefined “new nationalism,” or a vague identity “defined, to a very large extent, as ‘not English.’”

My approach views this confused taxonomy as indicative of the playwright’s subaltern status and the traditional difficulty that elite discourse – in this case both Republican and Unionist – has in representing it. *Brian Friel, Ireland, and The North* will argue that this confusion over Friel’s relationship to conventional Irishness – nationalist identity and culture – results from the critical failure to recognize the emergence, articulation, and waning of a Northern subalternity in Friel’s work. This book’s first chapter will demonstrate that even in his earliest enthusiasm for Republican nationalism, Friel engaged with the state’s ideology not as a presumptive Irish citizen who lived in the North, but as a doubly disenfranchised Northerner: one alienated from both Irish states and unable to identify with either.

This book will further argue that this initial ambivalence to the Irish Republic evolves into a separate Northern identity in the early 1980s, and the Field Day Theatre Company, which Friel founded with actor Stephen Rea, should be considered as one of the formations produced by this subaltern group to press its claims upon both the Irish Republic and the Northern province. Of course, such an interpretive agenda must by definition remain provisional and speculative not only because Gayatri Spivak reminds us that the subaltern often acts unwittingly and without consciousness of its own subalternity, but also because “it is never fully recoverable . . . it is effaced even as it is disclosed” (Spivak, *Other Worlds*, 203). Similarly, various critics have recognized the subaltern as a consciousness that is “contradictory, fragmented, [and] more or less haphazard” because it is emergent and not yet formalized (Chatterjee, “Caste and Subaltern,” 170); David Lloyd has pointed out that by definition “it resists or cannot be represented by or in the state” (Lloyd, *Anomalous States*, 127). Thus, most often this book will trace the “effect” of Friel’s subalternity: his vexed engagement with the Irish Republic or Northern Ireland, rather than merely his short-lived advocacy of “the Northern thing” in the early 1980s.

While it is not uncommon for the strategies for reading culture articulated by Ranajit Guha, David Lloyd, Partha Chatterjee, and others associated with Subaltern Studies to be categorized under the rubric of

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postcolonial studies, I will avoid such a limiting affiliation for my examination of Friel's ideological evolution.² As evidenced in the arguments offered in the mid 1990s by such theorists as Luke Gibbons and Declan Kiberd, the initial impetus for applying postcolonial theory to Ireland was to interrogate a theoretical practice "expansive enough to include not only the literatures of India, Africa, and the Caribbean but also Canada, Australia, and even the United States," but not Irish literature (Gibbons, *Transformations*, 174). While Declan Kiberd's *Inventing Ireland* stands as the most nuanced postcolonial reading of Irish literary history, the recent collection of essays edited by Clare Carroll and Patricia King applies postcolonial theory to diverse aspects of Irish history, sociology, and literature. However, these works rely upon the evolution of the counterhegemonic nationalism associated with such elite historical phenomena as the Young Irishmen, the Home Rule movement, and de Valera's Republicanism. Whereas none of the essays in Carroll's and King's collection seeks to examine the cultural challenges posed by Northern Ireland even in the form of subsidiary argument, postcolonial analyses of such Northern writers as Brian Friel and Seamus Heaney have tended to consider their careers as univocal responses to a cultural nationalism emanating from Dublin as metropole, rather than attempting to negotiate the two distinct discourses associated with Dublin and Belfast.³

Notwithstanding Terry Eagleton's proviso that the "second rule" of every postcolonial critic is to "Begin your essay by calling into question the whole notion of postcolonialism," I would like to state my suspicion of too readily adopting the methodology for Northern Ireland (Eagleton, "Postcolonialism," 24). With the possible exception of recent works by David Lloyd and Shaun Richards, the brief postcolonial discussions of Northern Ireland adopt a nationalist bias towards the political crisis that has defined the province since Partition in 1921 (Lloyd, *Ireland*, 47-52). While the basis of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 legitimates the necessity for authentic and tangible enfranchisement of the Catholic population within the governing structures of the province, George Boyce's study of Irish nationalism along with the treatments of Ulster and Northern Ireland authored by Jonathan Bardon, Paula Clayton, and Colin Coulter have

clearly recognized the recalcitrance of a robust Loyalist culture that cannot be easily absorbed into the current paradigms of Irish nationalism. Moreover, the works of Boyce and Coulter also document a reluctance among Northern Catholics to unequivocally embrace Southern republicanism. In other words, the application of an unnuanced post-colonial theory either ignores the complexities of Northern Irish society, or adopts the republican bias that the region will eventually reconcile itself to absorption into a greater Ireland.⁴

By situating my analysis within the context of subalternity, I seek to avoid the totalizing tendencies of postcolonial analysis, as it has come to typify the version practiced within Irish Studies, to align itself with or against one of the poles of elite historiography: Irish nationalism or English imperialism. Moreover, I suspect that the ultimate resolution between Ireland and the North may have less to do with historical paradigms of the Irishness and more with the suppletive postnationalism suggested by Richard Kearney (Kearney, *Postnationalist*, 70–95).⁵ While the ideologies and historical practices of conventional nationalism and colonialism are certainly the topic of Friel's plays, I will argue that the author's own ideological strategy throughout his career evolves tangentially to these gross nationalisms. To that extent, Friel's writings express the subaltern's enduring alienation from and resistance to co-optation by the conventional ideologies associated with the governments of Dublin, Belfast, and London. Likewise, his resolve to reside in Derry's environs rather than one of these metropolises is similarly indicative not of a provincality on the playwright's part but, as I will discuss in chapter 4, his fundamental inability to subordinate Northern subalternity to doctrinaire Irishness. Such a strategy will allow *Brian Friel, Ireland, and The North* to reconcile the fundamental paradox of Friel's career; while he has chosen to live in the Republic and serve as a member of The National Treasury of Irish Artists (Aosdana), the Irish Academy of Letters, and even the Irish Senate, these seeming endorsements of the Irish Republic coincide with the author's professed disillusionment with both the Irish state and its national culture.

This book's project is to chart the long arc of Friel's ideological evolution: from his paradoxical combination of alienation from and

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enthusiasm for Irish nationalism in the 1960s, through his skeptical interrogation of the state in the 1970s and 1980s, to his ultimate disillusionment with Ireland in the largest sense in the 1990s and early 2000s. I will pursue a symptomatic reading of Friel's career to explore facets of his engagement with the Irish state's nationalist ideology; at times this analysis will focus on how Friel's plays interrogate nationalism as a patriarchal discourse, how other plays encourage an exploration of the reverberations of seminal historical events in contemporary society, while still others concern the literal relationship between the individual and the state. Ultimately, however, this book's particularist readings will construct a single strategy of explicating Friel's vexed dialogue with the Irish state. In many instances my reading of individual plays will contrast itself to the *ad hoc* strategies that have come to dominate most, but certainly not all, Friel scholarship. This criticism too often relies upon convenient interpretive precedence for reading his plays; exploiting simplified notions of contemporary culture for overtly political plays like *The Freedom of the City* and *Volunteers*, aesthetic concepts for presumed metaphysical plays like *Crystal and Fox* and *Faith Healer*, or modes of generic Irishness for such plays as *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*, *Aristocrats*, and *Dancing at Lughnasa*.

Of course, such eclecticism of interpretive strategies has been intellectually productive and is particularly important to assessing the scope of a contemporary author, especially one whose long career is marked by such a challenging combination of formal experimentation, thematic evolution, and popular success. Indeed, the abilities of such critics as Richard Pine and Elmer Andrews to deploy diverse intellectual contexts to their studies of Friel's career underscore the playwright's complexity. This extensive body of criticism is often both refined and nuanced, and my present study does not pretend to supersede this considerable corpus of valuable work, much of which informs this project. Yet, this eclecticism stales when numerous authors defer to the conventions that encourage the routinized discussion of particular plays as thematic expositions of love or exile, others as obsessed by language, and yet others as expositions of the oedipal struggle against the father. By contrast, rather than producing

a reductive treatment of Friel's career, my decision to rely upon a single interpretive strategy will reveal an unsuspected depth in Friel's oeuvre; for example, rather than endeavoring to discern minute distinctions within the confines of accepted readings, I am able to expose ignored themes, such as the equivocal portrayal of the generation that came of age during the era of Irish independence in the plays of the 1960s, the emergence of what I term a group of sorority plays in the 1970s, and the sustained interrogation of history and its methodologies during the latter half of his career.

In other words, this book is self-consciously aware of its position both within and against the prevailing criticism of Friel's career, and the assessment of scholarly trends will be part of my subject. I will adopt an adversarial relationship to both the scholarship and the author, and will seek to evade the complicity that sometimes develops between the two. In his discussion of Third World literature and specifically the career of Salman Rushdie, Aijaz Ahmad has warned of the symbiotic etiquette that frequently develops between a living author and his commentators; we witness a corresponding deference in many discussions of Friel's work, where critics defer to, if not actually explicate at length, the interpretive cues that Friel himself provides. For example, in the early 1970s his repeated assertion that his early plays "were all attempts at analysing different kinds of love" conditioned much of the initial criticism (*EDI*, 47); similarly, the treatment of his 1990 success *Dancing at Lughnasa* demonstrates Friel's continued ability to influence the critical community. During the three years following the staging of *Dancing at Lughnasa*, Friel repeatedly and publicly emphasized two themes that figure in subsequent examinations of the play: first, that the play "is about the necessity for paganism"; second, that the autobiographical aspect of the play is limited to the metamorphosis of his aunts, "those five brave Glenties women" referred to in the play's dedication, into the drama's Mundy sisters.⁶ Following Friel's lead, as early as 1992 – merely two years after the play's premiere – the ontology of paganism becomes the subject for numerous discussions, beginning with Alan Peacock and Kathleen Devine and followed by Elmer Andrews, Roy Rollins, F. C. McGrath, Richard Allen Cave, Tony Corbett, and Margaret

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Llewellyn-Jones.⁷ While no critic has explored the play's biographical content, Fintan O'Toole, F. C. McGrath, and Richard Pine all refer only to Friel's maternal aunts to define the play's autobiographical scope.⁸

By maintaining an adversarial relationship to Friel, I will not, as some have, praise some plays or cursorily dismiss others as "failed" or "overrated." Rather, I will seek to discern what the critical consensus has overlooked and, more importantly, subject Friel's public statements and writing to the same scrutiny usually reserved for his literary efforts. In the case of my previous example, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, I seek to demonstrate how our understanding of the drama develops when we resist the author's desire that we limit the play's autobiographical scope to the Mundy sisters and expand it to include Michael Mundy, Friel's surrogate, and the character's father Gerry Evans, a figure who bears little resemblance to the author's father. Rather than merely indulging in speculation concerning the author's relationship to his father, such a shift in the type of question asked about the play reveals surprising insight into Friel's sense of Irish cultural identity. Likewise, rather than embracing the play's didacticism, which strenuously directs our attention to paganism and the spiritual transcendence made available by dance, I will consider matters more consistent with the book's focus on the political and ideological. Thus, my book's overarching strategy is to initiate the exploration of political and ideological territory that has been ignored in the criticism.

Brian Friel, Ireland, and The North departs from established critical strategies most in its decision to initiate its analysis of the author not with his handful of short stories or unpublished plays from the late 1950s and early 1960s, but with the series of columns that he wrote for *The Irish Press* during 1962 and 1963. All of the monographs include lengthy discussions of either these roughly twenty stories or six plays – while Andrews, Pine, and McGrath examine both – but none discusses these fifty-nine articles written during a formative period from the staging of his first play at the Abbey Theatre to his internship at the Tyrone Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis. In chapter 1 I will argue for the centrality of this overlooked journalistic series to

understanding Friel's ideological development. Because of their general unavailability, the significance of these articles has been overlooked; however, my treatment of the most ideologically charged pieces powerfully reveals the extent of Friel's alienation from the societies of both Northern Ireland and the Republic.

Unlike its predecessors, this book is also the first to exploit Friel's essays and interviews, which have only recently been published in selected form by Christopher Murray in 1999 and Paul Delaney in 2000. In the past, only the resourceful scholar could uncover Friel's occasional essays, published in theater programs or regional periodicals; now Murray's and Delaney's collections provide a wealth of material that is valuable not only for its importance to Friel's sanctioned corpus, but also for our ability to observe the author's casual, even unguarded admissions. Indeed, chapters 3 and 4 would have assumed markedly different trajectories had it not been for the insights available in such fugitive pieces as "Self-Portrait," "Making a Reply to the Criticism of *Translations* by J. H. Andrews," his preface to Charles McGlinchey's memoirs, and such interviews as those with Laurence Finnegan, Ray Comisky, and Mel Gussow. Whereas his two early essays on Irish theater, "The Theatre of Hope and Despair" and "Plays Peasant and Unpeasant," allow Friel to position himself within Dublin's theater society as a type of studied *agent provocateur*, these less conventional pieces contain a wealth of information relevant to this study's focus on Friel's ideological development and his ongoing dialogue with Irish history. Finally, this work also benefits from the many political histories and cultural studies focusing on Northern Ireland that have appeared in the decade since the ceasefire and Good Friday Agreement have restored to Northern Ireland a normality that it had not enjoyed in over forty years. Jonathan Bardon's authoritative *History of Ulster* as well as the cultural studies by Colin Coulter, Anthony Buckley, and Mike Morrissey and Marie Smyth are but a few of the valuable works to have appeared since 1997.

Finally, my work is the first to appear since the staging of a series of short plays set in Russia and central Europe: "The Yalta Game" (2001), "The Bear" (2002), "Afterplay" (2002), and *Performances* (2003). Both Richard Pine and Elmer Andrews have valuably discussed Friel's earlier

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versions of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* and *Uncle Vanya* and Turgenev's *A Month in the Country* and *Fathers and Sons*; because Friel generally translates these texts faithfully, both critics turn their attention to the consonance between Friel's cultural sensibility and nineteenth-century Russia. Yet, neither these commentators nor the criticism in general could have anticipated how these plays of the new century would mark a rupture in Friel's career; rather than merely undertaking more translations, "Afterplay" and *Performances* are the only original plays in Friel's more than forty years of playwriting to be set outside of Ireland.⁹ Thus, for the critic concerned with Friel's engagement with Irishness, they introduce significant questions regarding the relationship of the writer to his homeland. While *The Home Place* (2005) fails to resolve all of the questions raised by the short Slavic plays, this final portrayal of Friel's fictional Ballybeg provides a powerful summation for the playwright's career by returning to several topics that have concerned him throughout his career: the opposition between elite and subaltern histories, the union of nationalist ideology and familial authority in the figure of the aging father, and the challenge posed to the formation of Irish cultural identity by a benign Englishness.

I **The *Irish Press* essays, 1962–1963: Alien and native**

The early 1960s was a period of considerable professional risk and maturation for Brian Friel, when his artistic future seemed poised between the writing of drama or fiction. Because of a series of artistic successes in the late 1950s, Friel had the courage in 1960 to leave teaching as his full-time occupation and attempt a career as writer. In 1958, BBC Northern Ireland broadcast his radio plays *A Sort of Freedom* and *To This Hard House*, while his talent as a writer of stories was confirmed in 1959 when he secured a contract with *The New Yorker* (O'Brien, 2; Dantanus, 39). During the following few years, he divided his energies between writing short stories and plays; however, his eventual decision to devote himself to the theater appeared increasingly unlikely as the 1960s commenced.

A Doubtful Paradise was staged by the Group Theatre of Belfast in 1959, but the production was poorly received and soon closed. In fact, Friel later admitted that "It was a dreadful play. I don't think the Group Company collapsed because of it, but it didn't do them any good!" (*BFC*, 7). This aura of inadequacy regarding his plays was succinctly expressed in December 1962 when an *Irish Press* headline referred to him as one of two "Abbey Rejects," in an article announcing that his play *The Blind Mice* was selected for production by Phyllis Ryan's Orion company to be staged at Dublin's Eblana Theatre (Ward, "Test," 8).¹ Friel soon admitted that this unsuccessful play was, in his own words, "also a bad play," and he soon disavowed it along with his other early dramas. Even his comparatively successful *The Enemy Within* ran for less than a week at the Abbey Theatre as part of its summer series of 1962. Conversely, during this period of theatric

disappointment, *A Saucer of Larks*, his collection of short stories, was released to general critical acclaim. In short, Friel endured a period of genuine artistic frustration as a playwright that lasted until the Dublin production of *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* in 1964. After four years of dramatic stagnation and artistic vacillation, this play's immense success became a turning point in his career; he subsequently committed himself to writing for the theater and abandoned the short story form by the decade's end.

Many critics have initiated their analyses of Friel's career with the examination of his stories, but neither because of their direct relevance to the interpretation of his plays nor an assertion of the indisputable quality of this work.² Various writers have argued for the aesthetic superiority of "The Flower of Kiltymore" (Pine, 57-8), "The Diviner" (McGrath, 54-5), or "Mr Sing My Heart's Delight" (Andrews, 11-14); however, all are quick to recognize the stories as heavily indebted, if not constrained, by the formal influence of such writers as Sean O'Faolain, Frank O'Connor, and Anton Chekhov. Indeed, while Richard Pine attributes the "triteness" of some stories to the expectations at *The New Yorker* for stereotypes of Irishness (Pine, 56), John Cronin largely dismisses the small corpus as "prentice work by a writer who had yet to discover his true medium" (Cronin, "Donging," 3). Yet, despite the semantic parsings that sometimes are indulged in to distinguish one complementary interpretive framework from another, there is general agreement that the stories are narrow in scope, repeatedly relying on the themes of patrilinear dynamics and the relationship between the private and the public, often described as the opposition of illusion to reality.³ Ultimately, though, these explorations of Friel's short stories rely upon the assumption, shared by all the critics, that their primary importance is their relevance to themes later developed in the plays.

Although Friel's earliest plays have a direct bearing upon his career, these too have been frequently discussed with a rigor sufficient to make a full treatment here unnecessary.⁴ Indeed, having been subjected to extensive analysis in five books, one could claim that these unpublished plays have received surprising attention. Conversely, though the *Irish Press* articles also date from the beginning of Friel's

career, they have been critically ignored. Just as with such early plays as *To This Hard House* (1958), Friel has refused the reprinting of his weekly columns, dismissing them as “a kind of marking time” as he struggled to find his artistic vocation.⁵ But, more significantly, this series is entirely absent from the Brian Friel Papers, the 160 boxes of archival material donated by the author to The National Library of Ireland in December 2000, which includes copies of such early articles as “Labors of Love” (1963) and “Kathleen Mavourneen, here comes Brian Friel” (1970) and such early plays as *A Sort of Freedom* (1958) and *The Blind Mice* (1963). Thus, one discerns in Friel’s decisions regarding what material from his early career to publish, archive, or efface the author’s creation of a critical path of least resistance into his dramatic career.

Rather than initiating yet another interpretation of Friel’s stories or the six withdrawn plays, I intend to explore his series of articles for *The Irish Press*.⁶ If Friel’s struggle for artistic self-definition may be conveniently dated from 1959 to 1964, his seventeen-month career as a weekly columnist for *The Irish Press* from April 1962 through August 1963 provided him an unique opportunity to hone his skills as a writer and experiment with form, while earning needed income.⁷ Moreover, these fifty-nine essays (totaling more than 50,000 words) provide unparalleled access to the themes that preoccupied him at this initial point in his career. Not only do these editorials appear five years before such essays as “The Theatre of Hope and Despair” (1968) and ten years before “Self-Portrait” and “Plays Peasant and Unpeasant” (1972), but they represent an immense body of prose for a writer who has never demonstrated an affinity for the essay. Indeed, while Friel participated in fourteen interviews in the two decades from 1964 through 1984, he published merely five essays.⁸ Moreover, compared to the circumspect auteur of these later expositions, these earlier editorials reveal a more reckless and unguarded writer, ranging in topic from local politics to American society, Donegal to Derry, and family to community.

This series for *The Irish Press* deserves analysis for several reasons. Most significantly, this substantial body of work has been unjustly ignored by the critical community; in more than forty years

since their publication, these articles have been touched upon only twice: Ulf Dantanus briefly describes them as explorations of "the distinctive qualities of country life" that inform his short stories (Dantanus, 46-8), while more recently, in the only article devoted to these columns, George O'Brien considers their place in the evolution of Friel's dramatic language and "his recognition and acceptance of the theatre as the form most suited to his expressive needs" (O'Brien, "Meet Brian Friel," 32). O'Brien's survey categorizes this corpus into groups concerning childhood, "life and times" in Derry (33), and those reflecting a "broader social context" (35). Whereas his discussion of these "disposable" editorials (32) should be applauded for subjecting the series to critical attention, his focus upon style and language both dismisses and disparages the rich content of these pieces: "whatever interest the columns may have as data is far outweighed by their interest as exercises in voice, tone, nuance, and other demanding technical skills" (36). I could not disagree more; indeed, I will demonstrate that these articles contain ideological content so rich that this chapter will be able to offer an analysis of only fifteen of the fifty-nine editorials.

One also suspects that these forays into journalism have been ignored because of a critical bias against the serious treatment of journalism, which preserves elitist distinctions between high and low art; indeed, O'Brien refers to journalistic work as "a rather discredited kind of professional writing" (O'Brien, "Meet Brian Friel," 32). With his New Critical focus on the writer learning to control language and mature as an artist, O'Brien dismisses even Friel's most politically charged material as a "kind of existential slapstick" and of less interest than the columns' formal properties (35). However, my analysis will reveal that such antonymous distinctions fail to reflect the alchemical fusion of reportage and fictionalization constituted by these essays. Rather than rote iteration of events and personages, the factual implausibility and inconsistency of much of this material "make sense" only when examined as fictions with their own literary strategies. Finally, whereas these essays will lack any obviously direct or simplistic correspondence to his plays, they paint a complex self-portrait of the aspiring dramatist's state of mind, comprised of ideological and

psychological revelations. In sum, the Brian Friel who emerges is both multifaceted and more conflicted than suggested by the sum of his canonical prose work; furthermore, these editorials define the cultural fault lines that permeate Friel's articulation, enjambing, and rupturing conceptions of nation and province, Catholic and Protestant.

In one of the first essays, entitled "Cunningly Candid" which recounts his annual eye examination, Brian confides to his audience "my trouble is that I cannot bring myself to be *wholly* honest" (italics in original), and throughout his checkup he repeatedly reminds himself, "Caution, boy; caution. Keep the guard up. Be discreet. Be circumspect. Give away nothing but the bare essentials" (26 May 1962).⁹ In his responses to his optician's mundane questions regarding alphabet and clarity, Brian cannot resist "shading, colouring, distorting slightly," and his admission should caution us that these essays too are both more and less than they appear. Indeed, his often satiric portrayals of his actions or events in Derry provide a disarming veneer for the amusement of the readers whom, the *Irish Press* informs us in the banner for his first article, he "has undertaken to entertain . . . every Saturday" (28 April 1962). Similarly, though Friel declares his essay's intended topic each week, often his actual subjects reveal themselves only within context, beneath the "wee, thin skin on the story I am telling" (26 May 1962).

For example, though in his introductory column Friel promises that "In the coming weeks I hope to tell you in more detail about my life here [and] about my ambitions" (28 April 1962), the critical reader will be disappointed to discover that he discusses his artistic ambitions – playwrighting, or theater in general – only once and as a transitional introduction to an unrelated topic.¹⁰ In his attempt to explain how he became a compendium of quotations and aphorisms, Friel begins his article "The Play that Never Was" by making reference to his first written play: "My doubtful talent for producing an apt quotation to suit almost any occasion can be traced to a period in my youth when I wrote a three-act drama entitled *The Francophile*. The play was bizarre in many respects . . ." (6 October 1962). Even though the play had been staged for the first time in 1960 and recently reworked to be broadcast by the BBC in the same

year that this editorial appears, Friel's desire to distance himself from the play and associate it with his remote past is signaled by his description of it as solely from "a period in my youth." Indeed, the article's title predisposes his reader to dismiss the play as failed and unfinished, and the article never reveals that it was recently produced twice in the previous two years (the second time under the title *A Doubtful Paradise*).

Perhaps Friel gravitated to the topic of this earlier play because less than two months before the composition of this column, he had traveled with his wife and two daughters to Dublin for the premier of *The Enemy Within* at the Abbey Theatre. Whereas we may assume that such professional and public validation for the playwright at this early stage in his career would have been a monumental event for him, it enters into his writing for the *Irish Press* only through its erasure. In an article entitled "It's a Long Way to Dublin" published less than three weeks after the staging of *The Enemy Within*, Friel recounts the long trip from Derry to Dublin with his family, a journey taxing both emotionally and physically for everyone in the car; however, at no point in the essay does he confide to his audience the purpose for their arduous trip was his play's premiere (25 August 1962).¹¹ Indeed, after spending an entire article on this extended introduction to his week-long sojourn in Dublin, the audience may well have expected Friel to continue with a second Dublin installment the following week in which he reveals the purpose for the trip; however, they were disappointed, for he returns to write a sixth in his Donegal series.

Similarly frustrating is Friel's determined avoidance of another milestone in his career as playwright: during the summer of 1963, he traveled to America to observe the workings of the Tyrone Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, and upon his arrival in the United States he initiated a series entitled "Brian Friel's American Diary," from 20 April through 29 June 1963. While the importance of this temporary escape from Ireland and participation in an established theater has been discussed many times before in the critical material,¹² Friel himself avoids mentioning to his readers the theatrical reason for such a momentous trip or his experiences in this theater. Indeed, he proves

to be even more evasive than in his earlier trip to the Abbey Theatre. He devotes the first eight Diary installments from late April into June 1963 to his experiences in New York City as a tourist, which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter, but concludes the series shortly after his arrival in Minneapolis. Here too, Friel approaches his topic but remains too guarded to discuss it directly. As with his Abbey premiere, Friel devotes an entire article to his journey to the theater, in this case recounting his flight from New York to Minneapolis, and even the difficulty of getting a taxi to take him to the Guthrie Theater itself (15 June 1963). Although this time he does identify the Guthrie as his destination, he refrains from explaining his trip's purpose: one could as easily assume that he is there to visit a friend or relative, undertake a duty associated with his newspaper work, or meet this famous son of Northern Ireland. Ultimately, as if Friel cannot fulfill his promise to "tell you . . . about my ambitions" (28 April 1962), as if this material is too personal and too important, for the first time in his sixteen months of regular editorializing he stops writing entirely for six of the next seven weeks. This cessation soon becomes final, for upon his return to Ireland he writes only one more column for the *Irish Press*: "Brian Friel The Returned Yank" (10 August 1963).

If these examples suggest that even in these occasional journalistic pieces Friel is determined to withhold direct revelation regarding his artistic career, to employ "a certain cunning with which we protect ourselves against questions" (26 May 1962), they equally demonstrate his inability to avoid topics entirely, for he allows their palimpsest to remain for the attentive reader to recover and, ultimately, Friel seems to desire the illicit pleasure of being deciphered. Indeed, the infamous eye examination concludes with Brian's odd "flush of joy" when he realizes that despite his diversions and obscurations, his optician had nonetheless seen through his defenses:

"And what sort of eyesight have I got?"

He considered the question.

"Poor. But then you are a man of considerable inventiveness, sir. Nature usually compensates in that way. I'll have your glasses within ten days." . . .

I was half-way up the street before I realised with a flush of joy that, for the first time in my dealings with professional men, I had got what I wanted without revealing one iota of accurate information about myself.

The installment ends tantalizing the reader, withholding the knowledge of “what [Brian] wanted” from this encounter; yet, it is apparent to anyone who reads it attentively that Brian’s pleasure arises from his ability to compel another to decipher “the story I am telling,” thus forcing his reader into the position of his optician (and vice versa).

Similarly, the remainder of this chapter will be devoted to interrogating a selection of these articles with the goal of recovering and reconstructing a profile of Friel at the beginning of his dramatic career – not so much attempting to discern fact from fiction, but to construct a coherent interpretation for his narrative strategy. Although the broad spectrum of this material sheds light upon many aspects of his life and beliefs in the early 1960s, this chapter will explore Friel’s attempts to negotiate the multiple and mutually reinforcing psychological traumas of citizenship, for him, on the wrong side of the border in the north of Ireland, an area where he feels at once both native and alien. A Catholic and Republican nationalist in the Protestant and Unionist province of Northern Ireland, Friel’s essays reveal his inability to reconcile his anomalous condition with either Republic or Union. Ultimately, this chapter will establish the interpretive trajectory for my reading of his plays of the 1960s: the exploration of Friel’s conflicted attitudes towards nationalism as a political praxis that has failed, to different degrees, in both the Republic and Northern Ireland.

Thus, this analysis of Friel’s editorials will necessarily adopt an adversarial relationship to them to penetrate and otherwise counteract his intention to manipulate his readers. As the very first topic discussed in his first installment, Friel recognizes the writer’s ability to condition his audience; indeed, he asserts that his very responsibility as a writer is to construct the psychological nexus that will encourage his readers to formulate certain interpretations and not others:

“Something important happens before a publication is read,” says the advertisement from the *Saturday Evening Post*. “It is

a psychological fact of life called apperception. It is the state of mind a reader brings to the publication he reads – the expectation that influences, colours and intensifies his reaction ...”

And since we are going to meet in this column every Saturday it occurs to me that I had better let you know something about myself . . . , so that you can adjust your apperception and approach this page with at least accurate prescience.

Although Friel suggests that his readers “can adjust” their apperceptions themselves, the vast majority will be incapable of doing so because they will lack the ability to compare Friel’s version to any other. Rather, Friel’s appearance in this nationalist newspaper provides the apperceptive reassurance to his audience of his ideological rectitude, a reassurance that he will repeatedly exploit to interrogate that very ideology. In short, his description of himself as a “dull” and encumbered Everyman of Derry, who silently endures the eccentricities of both neighbors and fate, is intended to disarm his readers critically with the fiction that he is too honest or too feckless to manipulate his audience.

Forty years after Partition marooned his family beyond the Irish state’s border, Friel’s essays adopt the rebellious tone more easily associated with the waning of English authority in Edwardian Ireland. Frequently, he parades his political biases in his column by admitting his inability “to speak tolerantly of the Unionists” (5 January 1963), or to feel charity for “that unscrupulous lot in Stormont . . . that rotten mob . . . those sadistic thugs” (9 March 1963); indeed, once when an American innocently asks him “You an Orangeman?,” Brian reports his shock: “That almost gave me a respiratory condition. But I could tell by the earnest face that the poor recluse had no notion of the heinousness of his accusation” (4 May 1963). However, though he may boast that he can barely resist “growling like a dog when I pass a policeman” (5 January 1963), Friel portrays himself as intimidated into inaction when confronted by the state’s power. Although he may rail against the Unionists in his dispatches to his nationalist readers, on the rare occasion when he does find himself in the company of a British official,

as the unlikely guest of the warden of Derry's crown prison, Brian confides that he "felt out of things," uncomfortably silenced, and anxious to blend in (26 January 1963). During his tour of the prison yard, his attempt to conceal his nationalist sympathies forces him pointedly to ignore an old friend who has been imprisoned, leaving Brian feeling himself the traitor: "If there had been a cock about the exercise-yard he would have crowed his head off."

A child of the generation that had failed to gain its independence and become part of the Irish state,¹³ Friel combines the aspirations for freedom with the paralysis of the hopelessly dominated that according to Albert Memmi characterize the generation after a failed rebellion (Memmi, *The Colonizer*, 163–5). Thus, Brian's nationalist bravado is repeatedly overwhelmed by the state's omnipotence that reduces him to a nonentity. Indeed, even in his most rebellious act, the state in its self-sufficiency comfortably ignores him, and Friel can only claim to strike a symbolic blow against English authority that falls short of his rhetoric's fury:

The ground-floor corridor was empty except for a few clerks rushing to their offices and they did not even glance in my direction. I chose my hiding-place carefully, almost fastidiously. Behind the marble bust of Queen Victoria I laid the bull terrier to rest.

(23 June 1962)

Brian chooses to conceal the dog's corpse behind the statue of Victoria in Londonderry's Guildhall, the building that houses the ornate Lord Mayor's Office and embodies English authority in the city; the same structure accidentally "seized" by Lily, Skinner, and Michael in *The Freedom of the City*. Secreting his dead pet behind Victoria's statue enables him to joke that the terrier is now "happy in heaven with all the other dogs"; nevertheless, though Brian's act reveals the extent of his personal antipathy to English authority, it also emphasizes how impotent he – and, by extension, every Catholic – is. In this case, Brian's insignificance is conveyed to the reader by his veritable invisibility to the clerks who "did not even glance in my direction."

While Brian's nonexistence in the eyes of the state is manifest in the Guildhall, we see that he has internalized this insignificance in a sketch titled "In the Waiting Room," where he receives a note from his doctor informing him that "I have been notified by the Ministry of Health that you are dead" (9 February 1963). The receipt of this message compels Brian to rush to his doctor's office, where he spends the morning listening to the minor and imagined complaints of those assembled. Although he desires "reassurance" from his visit, the column ends with him again having his nonexistence forcibly confirmed. After listening to everyone explain their illnesses, Brian fails to elicit their sympathy because the state's decree seemingly confirms the civil erasure shared by all Catholics:

"It's all right for you fellows!" I blurted. "But the Ministry of Health claims that I'm dead! Dead!"

And although my face pleaded for comfort and consolation, they offered me none. I don't believe they even heard me. Each man of us was a little island of wretchedness.

Although Friel recounts a morning that had been characterized by a lively discussion of illnesses and traditional cures, the crowd cannot respond to Brian's lament because his complaint articulates the unspeakable: the political nonexistence of the minority population in Northern Ireland. Brian has revealed the essential truth afflicting all in the waiting room, he can be neither contradicted nor comforted; indeed, he has spoken too transgressive a truth for them to even acknowledge.

At this point in my analysis of Friel's editorials, it is useful to recognize that he attributes to himself the psychological affects of subordination that demonstrate marked similarities to those reported by Frantz Fanon, though Brian's experiences often invert the paradigms that arise from Fanon's study of racial difference. Fanon first recognizes his own irreparable objectification in the specular nature of his difference when the "external stimulus . . . flicked over me" (Fanon, *Black Skin*, 111) and said "Look, a Negro!"; indeed, Fanon is "overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the 'idea' that

others have of me but of my own appearance" (Fanon, *Black Skin*, 116). However, Brian's comparable experience of alienation, lacking any visual cues to designate his Otherness, reverses Fanon's paradigm. Whereas Fanon's black Antillean first learns to identify with the mother country's "idea" of the national self contained in its hegemonic narratives, only to later learn of his alienation from without, from white Europeans, Friel repeatedly signals his internalization of "the 'idea' that others have of me" (Fanon, *Black Skin*, 146-7). Although he can alternatively hide from or pass among Protestant society, Friel cannot dispel the perception of his ostracism projected on him by Protestant ideology; thus, though Brian had been "in great form" when he was notified of his death, the "curt note" sent him "running down to his [doctor] for reassurance" that the state's error lacks binding authority. While Fanon recounts the public construction of colonized identity, Brian experiences his alienation as his private response to state intervention: when a note from the Ministry of Health is delivered to his home, or as we shall see in the following example, when the police come to his house. If Fanon derives limited solace that "the racial drama is played out in the open, the black man has no time to 'make it unconscious'" (Fanon, *Black Skin*, 150), Friel internalizes his proscribed identity, and many of his articles demonstrate that the Catholic within this Protestant state hides, seeks to quietly "pass," while suffering an anxiety as great as Fanon's because of the fear of unexpected exposure and disproportionate persecution.

Despite his alarm in the previous example, Brian frequently takes comfort in his anonymity, because to be seen by the state is the prelude to its exertion of oppressive force. Indeed, Brian lives in a state of pervasive and anxious "unmanning": powerless and always already guilty. The most explicit description of his frayed emotional existence as the object of a "Kafka-esque" and malevolent state appears in "Stalked by the Police: The Daylight Torture of Brian Friel" (3 November 1962). Brian recounts how he had been "grilled by the police" twice in six months. But what strikes the reader is not the brutality of interview procedures, but Brian's hysterical response to any interaction with the police. His excessive reaction to any

contact with authority results from a lifetime under state oppression; Brian admits that he lives in a society where "There is a fatalism about the whole business; you know your number will come up some time," where he himself "had always known they would get me sooner or later." However, rather than having collaborated to terrorize or subvert, Brian suspects that his crimes have been "an opinion expressed recklessly over a drink, an indifferent Good Morning to the B-man up the street, an obstinate preference to holidaying in the Twenty-six Counties, [or] a small subscription to the Gaelic League annual collection." In other words, he suffers from the apprehension that a panoptic state surreptitiously observes his otherwise insignificant activities, preparing a dossier that will condemn him as a political enemy. Thus, when the police come to his home for a second interview, which we learn later is unrelated to the first and seems part of a door-to-door investigation, Brian reacts with uncontrolled relief to discover that he may be merely a suspect in a series of burglaries:

I could have cried with relief. Perhaps I did. That I was to be charged with an honest criminal offence – and not some vague infringement of the Special Powers Act – filled me with hope.

In a wild rush of words I explained . . .

Once Brian realizes that he may be suspected of a civil crime rather than for his political affiliation, his relief is as traumatic as his previous apprehension, and he speaks so frantically to the officers that he later cannot remember what he told them. However, although Brian learns that in both cases the police were looking for criminals and treated him with their normal, brusque manner, he does not emerge from these interactions with any confidence in state authority. Rather, the paranoid certainty that he remains the object of a state plot is only exacerbated; indeed, he envisions the final intervention of the state into his life in terms reminiscent of the banal events leading to the execution of K in Kafka's *The Trial*:

I cannot forecast what the pretext will be. But about noon, some glorious summer's day when the office girls in their gay cottons

are sunning themselves on the seats . . . a solitary plain-clothes man will come tapping gently at our door and lead me away by the hand . . .

Brian's situation is analogous to that of a colonized subject because, as a Catholic and a nationalist in Northern Ireland growing up in the 1940s and 1950s, he has internalized the civil erasures that for Memmi define the "Situations of the Colonized": the criminalization of culture; the transparent nullification of political rights; and the policies of military intimidation, unequal education, and state-sponsored poverty.¹⁴ However, for Brian the situation is exacerbated, rather than assuaged, by the accessibility of an independent Ireland a few miles from his Derry home. Indeed, when he attempts to find his ideological home in the Republic, Brian demonstrates that his indoctrinated inadequacies "weigh on him until they bend his conduct and leave their marks on his face" (Memmi, *The Colonizer*, 155). In other words, rather than being liberated by travel to the Republic, Brian finds himself alienated there all the more severely; as if being disenfranchised in Northern Ireland contaminates him in the eyes of the citizens in the Republic as well. In short, while Brian found his interrogation by the police an "unmanning" experience, he repeatedly worries that he is "unmanly" in comparison to even his social or economic inferiors in Donegal.

On 14 July 1963, Friel starts a series of six articles, which concludes on 1 September 1963, about living in a sparsely populated area on the coast of The Rosses "with the improbable name of Mulladhoo Irish."¹⁵ Whereas the first installment merely describes the house and the primitiveness that "would wipe the smug grin off of the face of Mrs. 1970" (14 July 1962), the second, "Brian Friel's seaside adventures" (21 July 1962), explores his sense of isolation from and inferiority to the local men:

The men line up along the wall outside the church and with inscrutable eyes watch the congregation arrive. My ambition is to gather courage to stand with them, to merge, *to be an insider*. I may have a shot at it next Sunday.

(My emphasis)

However, his attempt to earn membership in this company of men by proving his virility on an overnight salmon expedition ends in his abject humiliation because of his debilitating seasickness: "The other three [on the boat] ignored me, or stepped on my back as if I were an old tyre, or hauled me by the heels to the stern, or cursed me in terse obscenities. Savages!" For the following two days, Brian responds to his failure by mocking the fishermen's small catch and belittling Donegal, where the rain is constant and even the "air [is] mentally debilitating." Nevertheless, by week's end, he again fantasizes about passing as one of the local men:

Took a walk along the beach this evening, pretending to myself that the rocks were the men who will be lined up outside the church tomorrow morning. Nobody around, so I was able to practise "Yes, men" and "Yes" without embarrassment. Convinced I now have the tone right but still feel nervous of joining up.

This column commences with Brian preparing to pry his way into Donegal society but ends with him more isolated by the fear that the boatmen have "[told] the whole countryside about last Wednesday." Although Brian can convince himself that "Maybe I was delirious [in the boat]. There's nothing unmanly about being delirious," his feelings of inferiority have only been aggravated by the excursion, and the article closes with Brian's increased alienation signaled by his retreat to the company of rocks instead of men.¹⁶

"Brian Friel's troubles with a rat in the house" (11 August 1962) demonstrates that Brian cannot free himself of the suspicion that he will remain an alienated outsider despite any putative acceptance by the locals. Friel initiates this episode with the remark that in Derry a rat infestation is the cause of shame and secretiveness; thus, when Anne and Brian see a rat in their Donegal cottage, he travels to the more distant Dungloe for rat poison so that his immediate neighbors will not know of his problem. However, when he attempts to whisper his trouble to a busy shopkeeper, the clerk quickly announces the dilemma to the crowd of shoppers, who promptly enter into an animated discussion on rats and the best extermination procedures.

Moreover, everyone assures him that at one time or another rats have infested every house in the area. As a result, Brian feels a communion with the locals that had evaded him heretofore: "There we were, completely at one with one another, drawn together by something we all shared, like mothers whose children have the measles. We shook hands; we exchanged names, we slapped one another on the back." When Brian leaves, he finally believes that he has become an insider, that he has found the shared experience that allows him entry into this previously closed community. Indeed, giving a ride to a stranger walking along the road, he confidentially jokes about rats; however, the startled man disabuses Brian about any rodent infestation in Donegal and suggests to him that the locals have made him the butt of their mockery: "No harm in it, of course. But now and again an odd visitor makes an eejit of himself and sure it's only kindness to give him his head, isn't it?" His dream of becoming an insider, a recognized citizen of the Republic, is transformed into the nightmare of remaining "an odd visitor" and "the stupid townie" from Northern Ireland to be abused by a community closed against him. Brian, however, cannot allow himself to believe that he has been cruelly misled by his new-found friends, and he concludes the episode alone later that night, constructing an elaborate refutation of the local man's conclusion:

I have given it considerable thought since and have decided that my passenger was wrong. Those people were not taking a hand at me. They wanted to make me feel at ease and socially acceptable . . . But their purpose was not to deceive but to convince a stupid townie that a rat between friends is nothing. Whatever their private thoughts on rat-harbours are, at least they did not slink away from me at that counter.

Yet, despite Brian's desire to argue for the authenticity of his social acceptance, the ending bears unfavorable similarities to his rejection more unequivocally described in "Brian Friel's Seaside Adventures." Whereas this group of Dungloe shoppers refrain from subjecting him to the savage treatment that he suffered in the salmon boat, for all their civility Brian again finds himself alone in the night, reexamining recent events and seeking an explanation that allows him to salvage

any degree of communal incorporation. Indeed, his unlikely assertion that he was “delirious” during the fishing expedition, and “There’s nothing unmanly about being delirious,” conveys the same tacit surrender to failure that is introduced by the phrase “Whatever their private thoughts” in this rat episode.

Julia Kristeva reminds us that modern nationality is conferred according to two principles: *jus soli*, being born within the land, or *jus sanguinis*, born to its citizens (Kristeva, *Strangers*, 95–6). Whereas Friel may claim citizenship based upon the Irish nationality conferred on all born upon the island, he is foremost the citizen of another, and continually inimical, state; in other words, though he can claim to be both *jus soli* and *jus sanguinis*, the legitimacy of both definitions is undermined and problematized by his birth and residence in the United Kingdom.¹⁷ On a superficial level, this taint of the foreign adheres to him and reduces him to the status of stranger within his maternal homeland; on the psychological level, Kristeva argues that the compromised individual experiences an unmaning, a deterioration of agency, comparable to that noted in these episodes:

The difficulty engendered by the matter of foreigners would be completely contained in the deadlock caused by the distinction that sets the *citizen* apart from the *man* . . . The process means – and this is its extreme inference – that one can be more or less a man to the extent that one is more or less a citizen, that he who is not a citizen is not fully a man.

(Kristeva, *Strangers*, 97–8)

As in the above examples, because his status defies conventional political categories, Brian’s repeated fear of appearing “unmanly” betrays him as one of Kristeva’s “extreme” examples: suspended between civil incorporation and expulsion, the native and the foreign.

This Donegal series is written early in his career with *The Irish Press*, and after writing six installments in a concentrated period of less than two months (from 15 July through 1 September 1962), he never again returns to his experiences in Mulladhoo Irish. Thus, though he was to write forty more essays for the paper over the next

year, he avoided the topic of his endeavors to achieve the status of citizen in the Republic. After failing to impress the fishermen and suspecting that the locals have made him the butt of an elaborate joke, the series concludes equivocally with Brian straddling his roof to sweep the chimney, hoping that his neighbors see him overcome his "unmanly agitation" and finally consider him "the man of the house" in the Donegal mold (1 September 1962). With Friel isolated on his rooftop we lack the knowledge of whether this last rite undertaken to earn local esteem earns him the symbolic citizenship that he craves.

While Friel never journalistically returns specifically to his cottage, he does return to the topic of his relationship to the people of Donegal and the Republic, albeit chimerically, in "After the Catastrophe" (22 September 1962), published a mere three weeks after his last Donegal episode. This column recounts Brian's recurrent fantasy "every night in bed, in the half-hour between the swallowing of the sleeping pill and the sudden suspension of awareness" in which he ruminates on what he will do when the Soviets invade Northern Ireland: "I will either wade out to throw garlands of roses around their thick necks, or run like the hammers of Jericho to the west coast of Donegal. Six nights out of seven I run." Despite Brian's attempt to escape, he dreams that one day the invaders will discover his solitary sanctuary even in the underpopulated West, and rather than arrest him, a "smart young lieutenant will take a fancy to me because I will remind him of his grandfather." In short order, Brian finds himself embraced by Ireland's new ruler, who insists that he "live with him in Letterkenny" and

every evening, after he has returned from purging Lifford or Bundoran or Buncrana, he will send for me, and I will amuse him with my half-wit antics and babblings. I will enjoy all the privileges of a medieval court jester.

Thus, referring to himself as the "court jester" and "Old Rafteri," Brian imagines that years will pass with him finally happy in County Donegal.

However, this disarming idyll describing his dream of a triumphal return to Donegal in a position of influence and affluence is an

admission of his ultimate alienation from the Republic and psychological dependency upon the societal dynamics of oppression in Northern Ireland; unable to realize his nationalist aspiration of acceptance in the Republic, Brian's nightmare betrays his fear that he is a collaborator with Ireland's enemy. Indeed, rather than envisioning the Russians as the *deus ex machina* accomplishing Ireland's unification, they suggest a nightmare expansion of and conflation with Northern Ireland's oppressive regime, for they "purge" the area of its nationalists. Yet, while these forces occupy Northern Ireland, Donegal, and perhaps the entire island, another "underground resistance movement" emerges and contacts Brian hoping to benefit from his intimacy with the enemy. Unfortunately, Friel cannot imagine himself as an ally of these new Nationalists; recognizing the occupiers as "my lords" and "my masters," Brian betrays his contacts with this liberation movement, indifferently assuming that they "will meet with a sorry end, and will be replaced by svelte Swedish types who will value the favour of Old Rafteri." Ultimately, after years of occupation, the Russians will be overthrown eventually by "the unruly Irish," who have again wrested independence from their more powerful oppressors, and Brian will suffer with his masters, with "hordes of savage, blood-thirsty, starving, crazed natives . . . screaming for my carcass."

Friel attempts a recuperative turn at the end of the article by juxtaposing himself to "all the other gasbags" who argue for liberal ideals as "creativity in democracy" and "the dangers of unconscious conditioning." While "they, poor eejits, will go down propounding," Brian admits the ruthless instinct that will compel him to sacrifice ideology for survival. Nonetheless, one cannot but be struck by this narrative's apprehension not only that any nationalist living within Northern Ireland would be suspected by the Irish of the Republic of collaborationist tendencies, but Friel's own more pessimistic suspicion that by living among Ireland's enemies (whether English or Russian) he becomes complicit with their ideology. Indeed, Brian's identification with Ireland's enemies is nowhere more clearly delineated than in his adoption of the colonizers' language, referring to the Irish rebels as the undifferentiated "hordes of blood-thirsty, starving, crazed *natives*" (my emphasis), who fulfill Friel's subconscious demand that he be punished for his collaboration.

Ultimately, Friel's fantasy reminds us of the dream analyzed by Fanon in which an associate finds himself transformed into the oppressor and welcomed into white society. Friel's condition lacks the extremes of severity and privations that compel Fanon to worry that his friend's "psychic structure is in danger of disintegration"; nonetheless, "After the Catastrophe" reveals the existence of a "dependency complex" that binds Friel to his oppression against his will:

it is because he lives in a society that makes his inferiority complex possible, in a society that derives its stability from the perpetuation of this complex, in a society that proclaims the superiority of one [group]; to the identical degree to which that society creates difficulties for him, he will find himself thrust into a neurotic situation.

(Fanon, *Black Skin*, 100)

Friel's dream reveals his own "neurotic situation" and confirms that his collaborationist's guilt undermines his relationship to the Republic, augmenting the foreignness that he already bears.

Amid the shifting personae of subjected colonized and alienated foreigner, we are left with the contradictory undecidability of the character Brian, which betrays the writer's ideological struggle. Although the inextricable blurring of the autobiographical and the fictional resist definitive sorting, several themes recur, establishing a significant pattern, and nowhere are they more apparent than in an open letter to Lord Brookeborough, "Now about these rats . . ." (12 January 1963). This comic appeal to Northern Ireland's premier seeks his intervention in Brian's hitherto unsuccessful attempt to convince the city to clear the rats that infest the mews behind his house in Derry, antagonizing him with their strange "quadrille" in which "they get up on their back legs and wave their pale front paws at me." Perhaps the most striking ambivalent shifting in this essay is Friel's ultimate vacillation between nationalist, whose confessed goal is the reunion of the Republic with the North (he even imagines the subsequent newspaper headline: "REPUBLIC UNITED BY A RAT"), and the cryto-accommodationalist, who is willing to barter ideological commitments for material benefits:

If you agree . . . Lord Brookeborough, I promise never again to plot your overthrow, to think evilly of you, even to talk flippantly about you. Just speak to your boys here in Derry, and you will gain a powerful ally in me.

Anticipating his later tribute to the toppled Unionist leader, Brian imagines himself Brookeborough's nationalist doppelgänger, for both "have been far too long in one place, are inclined to get things out of proportion, to suffer from illusions of importance."¹⁸ Indeed, they are both capable of the cynical exploitation of political language; Brian believes that Brookeborough too will recognize their similarity when the prime minister admits, "He may have called Wolf! before, but haven't I myself shouted Not An Inch and Ulster Is British and not meant a word of it?"

However, Brian arrives at this unlikely identification only after the collapse of his earlier fantasies of himself as "the exiled Napoleon," Al Capone "waiting for the boys to return from the job," and even Charles Stewart Parnell declaring "to the roof of the garage below me, 'No man has the right to fix the boundary of the march of a nation.'" His initial identification with the exiled Napoleon, only after his failure to deliver his nation, suggests his ultimate inability to envision a united Ireland even in the unlimited realm of fantasy. Similarly, his allusion to himself as "Al Parnell" mocks himself for sharing the hubris that blinded these figures to their own imminent downfall and betrays the admission that his dream of national unity conflates too many impossibilities, too many irreconcilable categories all of which share associations with failure.¹⁹ Yet, as in the narrative strategy that takes us from the Donegal series to "After the Catastrophe," Brian whimsically entertains collaboration only after his more earnest failure to imagine a scenario which incorporates Northern Ireland as an undifferentiated and natural part of the Republic.

Intimidated by Unionist hegemony in Northern Ireland and alienated in the Republic, Friel portrays a character lacking the psychological autonomy and self-sufficiency to assume his place even within the circumscribed Catholic nationalist society in Derry.

When describing his role in the city's community of the disenfranchised, his insecurity expresses itself in attempts either to ingratiate himself with his social inferiors, like semiskilled craftsmen (13 October 1962), or to compete with his social equals (30 June 1962). However, "Brian Friel's secret thoughts at the Annual P.P.U. Meeting" (1 December 1962), provides his fullest exposition of the psychological deformation of his double negation, as both colonized and foreigner, that affects him even among other Catholic nationalists in Northern Ireland, and which, to borrow Kristeva's term, reduces his psyche to one of "no social standing." Whereas other men at this meeting fulfill the conventional expectations of sociability, Brian isolates himself by "skulking in the back row" at his own table, fearing that he might make eye contact with anyone while he surveys the crowd, deriding some for their weight or attire, envying others for their income or social standing. Yet, despite his desire to become inconspicuous, if not invisible, he feels under intense and constant scrutiny by those ostensibly occupied with the meeting's business. Even when reaching into his pocket for his handkerchief, Brian is tormented by the paranoid certainty that even his most insignificant actions are closely watched. The psychological constraints are so intense as to rend Brian's consciousness into two separate entities, one that acts and another that caustically derides his actions:

What about drawing a big, fat woman on your voting slip, eh?
Oh, you're a playboy! That's what you are! No, you're not a
playboy. You're just low. A mean, low type . . . Be adult. Arg,
shut up and vote. The scrutineers are collecting the papers.

Even when the men casually break into informal groups at the meeting's conclusion, Brian remains paralyzed through the editorial's very ending:

That's a civil-looking group over there. Join them . . . Well,
then, go ahead! I don't know what to make of you sometimes.
You're as odd as two lefts. Odd and low and shabby and mean. No
wonder D. hates you, the big slob. Go on man! Go on!

Whereas this psychological ordeal provides a clue to the origins of the character division of Gareth O'Donnell into Public and Private Gar in *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*, which is to be written in less than two years, Brian only superficially shares the inhibitions stemming from his young character's immaturity. Unlike Gar, Brian is paralyzed by the fear of exposure as one "low and shabby and mean" among the company of "all those fine citizens frowning their brows." In short, even within his home community, Friel's fictional self emerges as a contradictory and paralyzed character alternating between bold nationalism and intimidated inadequacy, prone to the same self doubts that undermine his identity in Donegal.

Before leaving the topic of Friel's paralyzing and conflicted relationship to his citizenship in Northern Ireland, it is instructive to consider briefly his sole treatment of nationalist politics in the province. As a professed nationalist, the son of a city councilman, and an employee of a Republican newspaper, Friel could not be expected to openly criticize the failure of the Nationalist Party in Northern Ireland; nonetheless, his comical exposé entitled "Bringing in the Voters" (9 June 1962) betrays his disillusionment with a representative process that guaranteed Unionist government for the province.²⁰ This article recounts Brian's day spent in the earnest desire to aid "the boys" by volunteering to drive voters to the polls. Even though the incumbent Eddie McAteer would be returned to his seat in Stormont with over 60 percent of the vote from this Catholic district, the campaign is portrayed as suffused with the anxiety of the attempt to gain the edge in a closely contested election. Brian finds himself desperately careening over back roads in search of a single, though always elusive, voter to bring to the voting station; however, his initial passion for his mission turns to resentment when he discovers that his only achievement at the end of a frantic morning has been to chauffeur another party worker home to walk his dogs. Brian returns home bitterly disillusioned only to have his lunch interrupted by the campaign's telephoned plea for his assistance. When he is finally prevailed upon to return, he belligerently confronts the campaign director with his rancor over his earlier mistreatment; as a result, he is entrusted with a more prestigious responsibility:

"Right," he said. "I'll put you in charge of the tape. It will be your responsibility."

"Tape?"

... "All you'll have to do is dole out the adhesive tape for sticking those posters on to the cars. Are you prepared to accept that responsibility?"

"You can depend on me," I said, squaring my shoulders.

"I knew I could," he said, "Good luck."

The article concludes with Brian's boast that eleven rolls of tape remained to the party when McAteer's victory was announced, and "when Eddie thanked his supporters for their wonderful help, I am convinced . . . that he was looking straight at me."

This narrative's assumed naiveté only thinly disguises Friel's cynicism towards the state of Catholic franchisement in Northern Ireland. After a generation of Unionist gerrymandering and belligerent electioneering, Friel lampoons a system that enabled the minority Protestant population of Derry with 10,000 adult voters to overrule a Catholic majority with twice the adult population (Bardon, *Ulster*, 638). Indeed, the Protestant legislative majority had consistently guaranteed that McAteer's Foyle constituency contained a vast majority of Catholics so as to deprive them of influencing the outcome in Derry's two other wards. As a result of similar tactics employed throughout the province, the 1962 elections returned thirty-two Unionists, nine Nationalists, and eight members from four distinct Labour parties; thus, the Loyalist community maintained the legislative majority that it had held in every election since partition. Moreover, Friel would have known also that the Nationalist Party would not assume the role of the government's opposition because of its policy of nonparticipation, which was not to be abandoned until 1965 (Wichert, *Northern Ireland*, 90). In short, Brian's hectic election-day activities are undertaken with the foreknowledge that the day's political activity could not have possibly influenced the province's political realities or improved the Catholic condition therein.

Early in his career with *The Irish Press*, Friel confesses his fantasy of liberating himself from the identifications and associations that confine him; he dreams of escaping to a distant place where he is unknown,

of being “cut loose” so that he can assume a more mysterious and debonair identity: “I will don a cravat, and stroll across the plush lounge with a copy of *Hamlet* under my arm” (5 May 1962). When Friel does have such an opportunity to free himself from sectarian identifications, when he travels to America alone in the spring of 1963, the ideological nexus that has defined him slowly dissolves; instead of emerging as the cosmopolitan patrician of his dreams, we witness the erosion of Brian’s identity, from sectarian Catholic, to generic Northerner, ostracized Other, finally becoming nothing more than a golden labrador dog named Fritz.²¹

In the third of his ten-part “American Diary,” “A Moving Lecture” (4 May 1963) – after initial installments recounting the difficulties of his arrival and the following day sight-seeing – Brian struggles with the vertiginous, urban milieu where his constituent tribal distinctions are meaningless. In his first encounter with a native New Yorker, who claims to “know all about Ireland,” Brian is stunned by his version of Irish history:

The people, they had this ree-bellion, for the people didn’t want to have nothing to do with England. And so the Orangemen and the Catholics, they ree-belled against the English and drove them out. And I think that was a good thing.

In this instance, Brian is compelled to correct the inaccuracies of this anonymous elevator operator, “to make it abundantly clear that the Orangemen were not the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick.” And he does so in a rushed, verbal assault that “bombarded the poor fellow with a battery of names and dates and battles.”²² However, despite his impassioned affirmation of his Catholic, nationalist loyalties, the very next column, “The News from Home” (11 May 1963), finds Brian identifying with the very figurehead of the Orange ideology that he had just railed against. While “sauntering across 47th Street,” he chances to read the headline that Lord Brookeborough has resigned the premiership of Northern Ireland, and Brian is seized by unexpected sentimentality for the Unionist, whom he now regards as his “soul-mate”:

He, whose name was once enough to make me choke with fury, was now my soul-mate. Cast-off, Basil and Brian. I staggered home and wrote to my wife, and in the letter I tried to express this new and at the time genuine sympathy I felt for the ex-prime minister. I remember pointing out that for all his protestations he was still an Irishman . . . he deserved our prayers and our generous understanding.

Serving as prime minister from 1943 to 1963, Brookeborough had embodied throughout Friel's adult life the Stormont government and, therefore, the Loyalist forces of political oppression and psychological intimidation. Brookeborough's bigotry was infamous and long-standing: "more often than not Brookeborough played the Orange card and relied on anti-Catholic speeches. He rejected any attempts by Unionists to adopt Catholic candidates for parliament" (Wichert, *Northern Ireland*, 67). Thus, Brian's feelings for this formerly reviled figure are so incongruous and uncharacteristic that his wife responds with shock: "I'm ashamed of you and disappointed in you! You promised me you would not drink over there!" Once he convinces her of his sobriety, however, she seeks another explanation for her husband's abnormal emotions: "It must have been a touch of sun-stroke that made you write the way you did. If it's as warm as you say it is out there, *take off your winter underwear* . . . And keep your head covered." But there is no logic to his sudden sympathy for Brookeborough, only signs of his isolation in American society; culturally alienated and socially isolated, Brian grasps closely at any vestige of his familiar world. In short, the escape from the North's array of inadequate and oppressive identities reduces him to an ideologically empty cipher, and the freedom once promised by independence and anonymity is revealed to be a psychological vacuum in which he finds himself inhabiting increasingly depreciated identities.

Finding himself adrift in a city where he is merely one of the undifferentiated "people from all over the world" (18 May 1963), Brian cannot retain even a generic definition as Irishman. Indeed, if the men of County Donegal denied to recognize him as a fellow citizen, in America Brian begins to see himself conforming to a different

stereotype, that of disgruntled foreigner. His sixth episode, "The Philosopher and I," recounts his unwanted conversation with an "Athenian nut," a philosopher named Socrates, whose physical similarity to him is so great that he remarks, "we could have been cousins, both of us dark and lean and unwashed looking" (25 May 1963). Moreover, both are ostracized from American society by accents so pronounced that they are rendered unintelligible to the average New Yorker. This imaginary comrade in alienation becomes the only friend that Brian finds in the United States, and through Socrates Friel criticizes the American "money-grabbing" that the writer may have been hesitant to voice more directly.

Friel admits to an even more extreme depersonalization two weeks later, in his eighth article entitled "Living a Dog's Life," where he imagines himself a pet living an isolated life in an urban apartment (8 June 1963). In Ireland, Friel had occasionally written from fictionalized perspectives; however, this is the only time that he occupies a subhuman position.²³ Friel had twice imagined himself as American: once as a tough New Yorker looking for "social stability" (19 January 1963), another time as a mid-western farmer (23 March 1963). But, once in America, Friel both loses his sense of self as an Irish nationalist and fails to identify with Americans as he had previously imagined.²⁴ Rather, Brian emerges as one dependent upon the manichean definitions that deform him in Northern Ireland and the foreign status that ostracizes him in the Republic. And only his reunion with his wife and daughters in Minneapolis restores his narratives to verisimilitude, himself to mundane society, and his psyche to its former coherence (15, 29 June 1963).

Friel's work with *The Irish Press* intersects with his emergence as a dramatist both chronologically and formally, with his sojourn at the Tyrone Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis in the spring of 1963 interrupting and eventually ending his newspaper series. However, in the final installment of his "American Diary" we witness the emergence of a dramatist who is confident and ready to abandon this weekly distraction from his artistic pursuits. Whereas the initial submissions in his ten-part American Diary formally resemble his previous work in their semi-autobiographical content and exploratory

prose style, the only article that professes to have been written in Minneapolis is structured as a play.²⁵ Entitled “‘The Phone Call’: A tragi-comedy in one act” (29 June 1963), the column rigorously conforms to the formal conceits of drama to a much more comprehensive extent than any other installment that employs dialogue or hints at the author’s theatrical pursuit.²⁶ Indeed, this “tragi-comedy” begins by establishing the set:

The action takes place . . . in an apartment hotel in Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S.A. . . . There are four people in the room: father, mother, and their two daughters, Paddy (aged 7) and Mary (aged 5). Father is smoking nervously, one hand is poised above the phone, ready to grab it when it rings.

and even intersperses stage directions through the dialogue, an element absent from other columns that depict conversations:

FATHER: (*He grins fiercely*). And remember – if you don’t sound cheerful and happy, I’ll want to know why! (*To the children*) And if either of you two speak out of turn I’ll bust your jaws; it’s not every day of the week you make a trans-atlantic call. (*To Mother*) You know what to do?

Finally, Friel even concludes this brief masque with tableau and curtain:

Father’s eyes narrow. He looks at the other three with cunning, then suspicion, then hate. Then he throws back his head and a high-pitched, bleating, insane laugh breaks from him. He keeps this up for 60 seconds – until a quick curtain falls.
(italics in original)

Unfortunately, Friel effectively ends his work with the newspaper with this installment, having mentioned the theater itself only briefly in the ninth column and never having discussed his experiences in the theater. Six weeks later, though, a final article appears as a form of

epilogue to his tour of America. "The Returned Yank" portrays Brian back in Derry, confronting others' disparate assumptions regarding his fortunes as migrant (10 August 1963). Although this piece also incorporates dialogue, its diluted format returns to the style characteristic of his earlier columns. Thus, Friel may have ended his partnership with *The Irish Press* to preserve and exploit the artistic developments suggested by "The Phone Call."

2 **The plays of the 1960s: Assessing partition's aftermath**

The unexpected success of *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* in September 1964 has traditionally been ascribed to the metamorphosis of Friel's dramatic apprenticeship transformed by the intense experience of his brief participation with the Tyrone Guthrie Theater in 1963. However, the regular requirements of writing his eclectic byline for *The Irish Times* must also be recognized as equally valuable to his education as a professional writer, for forcing upon him considerable practical discipline as well as allowing him even greater artistic freedom. More significantly, the articles reveal the writer as restlessly vacillating between the differing positions of a polyvalent cultural identity; as the objectified foreigner, he fails to win enfranchisement in his ideological homeland; as the subjugated other of colonial domination, he is disowned and alienated in his birth land. This restless inability to claim an artistic locale expresses itself in the plays of the 1960s as well – most literally in the serial displacements from Iona, to Ballybeg, to the region around Cork,¹ to Ballymore in County Tyrone, back to the environs of Ballybeg, and finally to Dublin. After the mid 1970s Ballybeg becomes Friel's most popular dramatic location, yet he is unable to inhabit this setting consistently until after his definitive and formal break with nationalist politics in 1967. Indeed, I will later argue that his eventual ability to inhabit Ballybeg imaginatively will increasingly correspond to its emergence not as a site of Nationalist Irishness, but of Northern identity.

The six “recognized” plays of the 1960s, from *The Enemy Within* (1962) through *The Mundy Scheme* (1969),² form a group so diverse in theatrical technique and socio-cultural focus that previous

critics of Friel's career have resorted to broad conceptual strategies with which to structure their interpretations. Exploiting Friel's own statement that he "tried to explore . . . different kinds of love" in several of his early plays,³ Ulf Dantanus describes the works from *Philadelphia* to *Crystal and Fox* as a "four-part catechism of love" (Dantanus, 115). Likewise, Richard Pine asserts that "all Friel's plays are 'love' plays," but that those of this period are more explicitly so (Pine, 104).⁴ Yet, Pine himself seems to recognize the inherent difficulty proposed by such an interpretive framework and struggles to formulate a definition of "love" suitably comprehensive to encompass the plays' diversity:

not only the relationships of love between fathers and sons, between siblings, within families, but also the "images for the affection" which transcend direct relationships and represent a "culture of *communitas*" . . .

(Pine, 103-4)

F.C. McGrath's analysis of these plays resonates with Pine's influence, as argued in his book's 1990 edition, emphasizing "frustrated love" in *Philadelphia* and *Cass McGuire*, or the illusion of love in *Lovers* (McGrath, 71, 72). However, he further argues that the dominant thematic concern uniting these plays of the 1960s is the "treatment of myth and illusion" (64): the myths of Irish culture in *The Mundy Scheme* and *The Gentle Island* (74-7), the illusions of life itself in *Crystal and Fox* (73), and "the necessity of illusion for survival" in *Cass McGuire* (90). Whereas Tony Corbett reiterates McGrath's arguments about reality and illusion in his brief assessment of *Cass McGuire*, *Lovers*, and *Crystal and Fox* (Corbett, 109-13), his survey of *Philadelphia* moves from the familiar focus on Gar's split characterization to the consideration of various examples of generational tensions (35-43).

The studies of George O'Brien and Elmer Andrews address their attention to Friel's concern with character and individual psychology. O'Brien sees Friel's work into the early 1970s as constituting a veritable "theater of character" (O'Brien, 53) that shifts the analytical emphasis of love and family beyond the mere individual psyche to "various forms of division and connection – interpersonal, temporal,

intrapersonal" (53). Conversely, Andrews discerns within this group a single, though evolving, examination of the "split subject"; both as Freud's "dark, neglected recesses of consciousness" (Andrews, 76), as well as the "individual as subject to the forces of control in his or her society" (77). Andrews argues that these plays reflect the historical moment in which the Irish public first recognized the unsustainability of the myth of a uniform and unified culture. Although the riven character of Gar O'Donnell most readily adheres to his formulation, Andrews displays considerable skill in formulating his interpretation, even if he must occasionally broaden his critical position.

In keeping with this study's focus on Friel's political ideology, the overall trajectory of these next two chapters functions in a complementary manner, for which I have borrowed the broad specularly from David Lloyd's "Nationalisms against the State" and "Regarding Ireland in a Postcolonial Frame." Part of the strategy of these articles is Lloyd's intention to disentangle two discursive strategies that he considers generally entwined in postcolonial theory: one emerging from Antonio Gramsci's reading of political historiography, the other from Walter Benjamin's philosophy of cultural ideology. For Gramsci, the process that ends with the political seizure of the state and its Althusserian apparatuses transforms the previously subaltern into the emergent hegemonic, and this capture of government concludes the conventional historiographic narrative of revolution and initiates a new national narrative (Lloyd, *Ireland*, 24, 42). Compared to this "history of individual national blocks" (25), Lloyd discerns in Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" a compatible, though more supple analysis, which is also more liberating for projects to critically read culture. Rather than anticipating the convergence of the nation-state and popular cultural manifestations (which, of course, have their own politics), Benjamin shifts our focus to "the modern state formation, not the moment of national independence in itself" (Lloyd, *Ireland*, 40); by recognizing a dissonance between the cultures and politics of nationalism, Benjamin invites us to take into consideration the nationalist state's failure to assimilate fully even elements that function as its avowed or tacit allies both before and after political independence.

Whereas chapters 3 and 4 will map Friel's eventual repudiation of doctrinaire Irish nationalism as both a cultural and political discourse, Lloyd's division of the postcolonial into a patriarchal dialectic provides a heuristic framework for understanding Friel's literary trajectory throughout the 1960s and 1970s, one that moves through culture into politics. In short, Friel is not motivated to reject nationalism as the result of a singular incident; rather, the *Irish Press* articles betray an initial ambivalence that slowly evolves into a considered rejection of nationalist Irishness years later. The plays of the 1960s will form a palimpsest through which we can discern the author's initial attempt to lay claim to the cultural territory denied him by his Donegal neighbors of his journalistic pieces, that of spokesperson for the Republic's ideology of Irishness. However, if he convincingly insinuates his voice into the central narratives of nationalism by writing first about a medieval saint and then economic migrants, this decade's plays betray his increasing disillusionment with nationalist ideology. Subsequently, having realized the empty core of cultural nationalism, the plays of the 1970s turn Friel's new dramatic cynicism on the state itself and its ideological permeation of civil society.

The Enemy Within

Friel's career as playwright is recognized as formally beginning with *The Enemy Within*, which premiered at the Abbey Theatre in August 1962; however, this work is actually his fourth play, following such suppressed works as *A Sort of Freedom* and *A Doubtful Paradise*. Whereas the continuities between these tentative dramas and such early canonical works as *Philadelphia* and *Cass McGuire* will readily suggest themselves to the reader familiar with Friel's career, I will introduce my discussion of *The Enemy Within* by noting Friel's attempt to use this play to escape the preoccupations of these early plays, as if he intends to evade artistic topoi that had already become inhibiting. While these earlier works are rooted in the familiar life of contemporary Ulster, *The Enemy Within* forces Friel to abandon this previous reliance on his quotidian world by turning to the beginning of Irish history. Moreover, whereas four of these repudiated plays

directly examine a father's stifling influence upon his children, another focuses on a son's return home to his family in disgrace, and the last on two men's endeavor to construct a substitute for the families that they lack. Conversely, by situating the action within a monastery's group of roughly contemporaneous friends, *The Enemy Within* strenuously resists focusing its narrative on generational dynamics and the literal patriarchy. Of course, family does directly intrude in the play's second half, but even then Friel depicts a rivalry between brothers rather than a struggle with a father.

Set in the autumn of AD 587, the play portrays Columba as the 66-year-old monk in his monastery on Iona, ten years before his death. Columba is presented as remarkably healthy for his age, and his charismatic authority makes him central to all of the community's activities even though "He looks for no subservience" from his monks (*EW*, 16). However, the five weeks that the drama depicts constitute a sustained trial for Columba that visibly takes its toll on him, for in the final scene he finally "looks his years"; indeed, he is "Tired, weary, apathetic" (*EW*, 55). During this period he is twice petitioned by friends and relatives to return to Northern Ireland to sanction military operations whose purposes blend the religious and the political. While these temptations sorely test his political judgment and spiritual vocation, Columba's decline is linked to the unexpected death of the monk Caornán, to whom he is linked by "a special intimacy" (*EW*, 20), and the unexpected disappearance of the novice monk Oswald. Ultimately, Columba's spirits are restored at the play's end by the return of the "emaciated" Englishman who had been feared dead (*EW*, 71); indeed, Oswald is welcomed as a sign that the monastery's vitality and promise is "ready to begin again" (*EW*, 72).

The conventional interpretation of *The Enemy Within* follows from its easy incorporation into the Irish genre of exile narratives, which has been seminal to the culture's imagination since the Flight of the Earls in 1607. Columba has traditionally been regarded as one of Ireland's earliest exiles (Adomnán, *Life*, 15–16, 24), and Neil Corcoran describes the saint as "the type of the Irish exile: displaced, uneasy, failing to belong, nostalgic" (Corcoran, "Penalties," 16).⁵ Accordingly, the play's standard interpretation portrays its hero not so much a figure on the run,

as one seeking to reconstruct a psychological integrity from the fragmentation of exilic vacillation. In the very first study of Friel's career, Maxwell describes Columba as deeply divided between two experiential poles, with his love for Ireland opposed to his spiritual calling on Iona (Maxwell, 56). The subsequent treatments of the play have adopted this view of a monk as struggling to subordinate his public obligations of family and dynasty, to his private "commitment to his vocation": the spiritual duties that require him to sever these personal affiliations in the service of God (Andrews, 79).⁶ Andrews' examination of the play provides a detailed analysis of the various manifestations of the tension between religion and politics that prevent Columba from achieving "unity and consistency of character" even at the play's end (84). McGrath's later treatment perfunctorily describes this agon as "the internal struggle of Columba between his allegiance to his family and his allegiance to his spiritual vocation" in which his final repudiation of Ireland remains unconvincing (McGrath, 67); similarly, Corbett succinctly describes this opposition as between "the demands of both families: his kin and his monks" (Corbett, 6).

Ultimately, these various interpretations develop relatively harmonious analyses, which betray a shared critical disposition indicative of the ideological evolution underway in the 1960s. Following the retirement of Eamon de Valera from the active leadership of his party's government, the "special position" granted the Catholic Church in the 1937 Constitution, which was enhanced by the successive Fianna Fail governments, experienced a public and political reevaluation. Both the popular imagination and official ideology evolved towards a greater separation between the two institutions, viewing their interests to be increasingly divergent.⁷ These critical treatments of *The Enemy Within* adopt this ideological revisionism, accepting a fundamental incompatibility between the public/political and the private/religious, assuming that "[Columba's] embroilment in Irish politics will disqualify him as a spiritual leader" (Andrews, 79).

I will attempt to reform our reading of *The Enemy Within* by calling into question the critical reliance upon the two nationalist assumptions informing these interpretations: first, on the metatextual level, that the play is most constructively read within the genre of

exile narratives; second, on the textual level, that Friel anticipates this revisionist rejection of the church and state alliance when he wrote the play in 1962. Ultimately, I will argue that these nationalist frameworks incorporate the play into an interpretive nexus that diminishes the text and renders part of it literally unreadable. Conversely, my attempt to read against this doubly nationalist tradition seeks to explore the play in a manner resonant with the interventions practiced by such critics as David Lloyd and Aijaz Ahmad, who seek not to analyze literature through the prism of nationalist ideology, but to interrogate the ideological context along with narrative. Indeed, as Shaun Richards has demonstrated in his analysis of Friel's later history plays, a nationalist reading technique encourages nostalgic if not sentimental views of Irish culture and history; conversely, an oppositional strategy has the ability to uncover a "reading [that] is paradoxically both more disturbing and potentially sustaining" (Richards, "Placed Identities," 61).

In his preface to *The Enemy Within*, Friel refers to Columba's "voluntary exile," but this is a poor choice of words on his part, because by definition the exile is always forced from one's homeland and kept away against one's will. However, the work dismisses the assumption that either monastic rule or political concerns prohibit Columba's pastoral visits to Ulster; by referring to W. Reeves' introduction to Adomnán's *Life of St. Columba*, Friel recognizes that the monk made regular visits to his native land after settling on Iona (*EW*, 7). Indeed, the very survival of his constellation of monasteries relied upon his maintenance of personal relations with the region's kings, many of whom were his relatives. In short, the monastery on Iona cultivates an organic integration into the surrounding region and is depicted as surprisingly accessible; relatives and messengers from Columba's home freely visit the island during the play. Yet, while Iona allows Columba convenient access to his ancestral home, his separation is permanent, for he anticipates no eventual resettlement in Ireland. In other words, we would better understand his life on Iona as that of a migrant, for it has few of the traits of genuine exile.⁸

We would do well to remember that not all who embark are solitary outcasts and that migrants are often motivated not by

adversity but ambition. If we suspend our belief in the identification of Columba as the stereotypical Irish exile, we can recognize in Friel's recreation the profile of the imperialist colonizer. For more than one hundred years before the play's action, the Irish of Ulster had been settling the Scottish coastal islands and mainland, establishing the kingdom of Dalriada. In his introduction to Adomnán's ecclesiastical history, Richard Sharpe argues that Columba quickly attained a position of considerable religious influence within this new kingdom and ultimately achieved the stature of "spiritual leader of their territory by the kings of Dalriada," complementing his hereditary position within the ruling structure of his own Northern Uí Néill dynasty (Adomnán, *Life*, 27). Indeed, the historical monk played a major role in mediating between these kingdoms, and in 575 AD Columba brought their rulers together to forge an alliance against the Picts. While these Irish kings sought to protect their territories from the ascendant power of the Pictish King Bridei, Pictland was the focus of the saint's expansionist designs. Columba's biographer Adomnán describes several of his missionary expeditions into the Pictish kingdom; likewise, more than one hundred years after Columba's death, Bede attributes the conversion of the Pictish nation to his proselytizing missions (Bede, *History*, 146).

By recentering Iona more within the mainstream of Irish colonization of Scotland (Adomnán, *Life*, 22–4), Columba's colony regains its central role in its contemporary culture and the expansion of Christianity into the Pictish Highlands (Bardon, *Ulster*, 15). Similarly, the characterization of Columba as an evangelical imperialist – a literal soldier of God conquering new lands – is never far from Friel's concerns. Before the secular temptations that dominate the action of Acts 1 and 3, the play opens with his pastoral concern for his recent Pictish converts, which motivates him to prepare an expedition into Pictland to assess rumors of their return to "old Druidical practices in the mountains" (*EW*, 24). When we return to this topic at the opening of Act 2, Scene 2, Friel imbues the discussion between Columba and his advisor Grillaan with a war-room atmosphere for they are seated at a table reviewing a map of Pictish territory as Grillaan recounts his reconnaissance (*EW*, 45). Furthermore, whereas the play's previous interpretations rely upon the assumed incompatibility of service to church and state, in a 1964

interview, Friel fails to recognize any tension between Columba's religious and political endeavors (*EDI*, 2). In fact, in his brief introduction to the play, he cautions his audience against assuming simple homologies between medieval and modern societies by reminding his audience that "it was not until 804, over two hundred years after Columba's death, that monastic communities were formally exempted from military service" (*EW*, 7). In short, Friel imagines a culture where the monks legitimately and literally defend their faith, and the church calls upon them not to flee the world but to conquer it.

Columba's ability to function effectively in these contiguous political and religious spheres presents migrancy as a nexus of power resulting from its "excess of belonging." Friel creates a figure of authority whose polyvalence – within church and state, Uí Néill and Dalriada, and Irish and Pictish – occupies a confluence of hegemonic fields which cannot be limited to an individual religious or political sphere but derives authority from all. In diagnosing the migrant's "excess of belonging," Aijaz Ahmad seeks to explicate the social conditions that pertain specifically to migrants from the Third World in the contemporary postcolonial era (Ahmad, *In Theory*, 130). Thus, in his analysis of an intelligentsia thousands of miles from their home culture, he expresses his concern that such cultural dislocation ultimately entails the fracturing of identity under the strain of an alienating "entrapment in Discourses of Power which are at once discrete and overlapping," but not interpenetrating (Ahmad, *In Theory*, 130).⁹ Conversely, Friel's expansionist monk is not forced to fragment his identity to achieve a provisional authority within discrete cultures because his island forms a literal bridge uniting homeland and neighboring colonies, and as the imperialist colonizer he constructs a hegemonic system that radiates from its center in Iona. In other words, unlike the exile, whose impotence results from his alienation from both homeland and adopted land, the migrant's power results from his privileged position where he "actually belongs in all [cultures], by virtue of belonging properly in none" (Ahmad, *In Theory*, 130).

Each act of the play is punctuated by a scene in which Columba is tempted to join a relative's military expedition, and his responses underscore the necessary interpenetration of the political and spiritual.¹⁰ In the

first Act, during Columba's debate with Hugh's messenger Brian, he mentions that he has not participated in a battle since that at Coleraine seven years earlier; Brian quickly counters that on that occasion "Hugh stood by you like a man" in a military conflict that seems to have been primarily between two monastic communities: one ruled by Columba, the other by his rival Comgall (*EW*, 29). Although Friel provides little additional information concerning this skirmish, even this suggestion that the battle was between competing monasteries intertwines the interests of church and state. "On many occasions since," Columba admits to having been "tempted" to enter battle on behalf of various allies, but he proclaims that he has resisted; this time, however, he capitulates and joins Hugh (*EW*, 28). In our effort to appreciate the significance of this decision after his prolonged hiatus, we should not overlook that Columba coolly resists Brian's entreaties while the conversation dwells only on the political circumstances motivating the present conflict. Indeed, after stating his resolve at length, Columba changes the subject to trivial matters and seems determined to close the conversation; however, once Brian recasts this conflict as a religious campaign endangering Columba's monasteries, the saint's composure is shaken. Brian engages Columba not with the prospect of political upheaval but with the threat that the saint's "fifteen churches" on the Irish mainland will become the spoils of a priest loyal to Columba's former rival (*EW*, 29). Thus, while according to the nationalist interpretation we must ask, "A priest or a politician – which?," the question poses a false dichotomy, for this early medieval abbot requires the skills of both to save his churches from the dual threat of spiritual schism and material destruction (*EW*, 33).

In Act Three, Columba's brother Eoghan's proposed expedition against the Antrim Picts to retrieve his son's recently Christianized wife and child deftly shifts the focus from internecine rivalries within Catholicism to missionary crusades to convert pagans. Initially, when Eoghan attempts to convince his brother to accompany a delegation into Irish Pictland, ostensibly to "save two souls for the church of God" (*EW*, 66), he frames the enterprise in the evangelical terms of a crusade, repeatedly referring to the enemy as "heathens" and describing the affair as "a religious matter" and "God's cause" (*EW*, 65). As he

presents his plans to Columba, Eoghan declares that no army will be required for this mission, only a band of twenty men at most; likewise, he repeatedly asserts that "There will be no fighting," "Not a blow struck" (*EW*, 65). Evidently this ruse works, for Columba begins discussing the mission's tactics with his brother. Ultimately, Eoghan and his son Aedh themselves disabuse Columba, for they unwisely celebrate their coming victory, and their confidence that they will "rally a legion" (*EW*, 66) alerts the monk to their deception. Yet, Columba does not renege on his agreement until after Aedh unwittingly betrays the pecuniary objective of the raid: "And Antrim is rich! The booty there'll be!" (*EW*, 68). In short, Columba refuses to sanction an expedition that endangers the material safety of his churches or his spiritual mission to the Picts.

In these examples, Columba's intervention is sought not because he represents the stereotypic exile – isolated and disenfranchised – but because he is empowered both politically and spiritually. In fact, the play strategically encourages the perception of Columba as imperialist by casting his monastery as metropole. His nephew Aedh recognizes as much when he compares his uncle to the emperor of Rome *rather* than its bishop: "Columba of Iona! You would think he was the Emperor of Rome or something!" (*EW*, 59). Aedh rebukes his uncle for the monastery's rich horde of manuscripts, but earlier in the play Grillaan boasts of a related characteristic associated with imperial metropolises – an ability to attract a cosmopolitan elite. As he leads the initiate Oswald on his orientation to Iona, Grillaan describes the island as home for "scores of young men from all over the world: French and German and Italian and Spanish" (*EW*, 15).

Throughout the play, Columba's bearing and vocabulary betray the tenacious survival of a regal ethos beneath his monastic simplicity. Indeed, his gift to Aedh late in the play reveals much concerning Columba's own perception of his role in society at large. Initially believing that their visit expresses mere familial goodwill, Columba uses this opportunity to invest Aedh with the dynasty's symbol of authority, "a ring that was given by [Saint] Patrick" to their dynasty's founder (*EW*, 61). This ring was subsequently passed from father to son with Columba receiving it from his father Fedhlimidh; Columba's

qualification that he intends it expressly for Aedh's son allows him tangibly to recognize as the future king an infant who had been coolly received by Eoghan's subjects. While this act provides an example of Columba's intention to forge a common nation from both Irish and Picts, his possession of this monarchical signifier demonstrates his lifelong reluctance to abdicate his political authority. Eoghan's deference to his older brother clearly manifests his subordination even though he is the actual king (Adomnán, *Life*, 9); yet, his comment that he "wondered where that ring went to" informs the audience that Eoghan had not previously donated the ring because of any presumed religious significance (*EW*, 62). In short, originally given by a priest to a king, this relic establishes the wedding of church and state, and Columba's possession of it signifies a career modeled more after the priest-king than the desert hermit.

Finally, my effort to read *The Enemy Within* with a complexity beyond that demonstrated by the nationalist interpretive mode would be incomplete without considering the novice Oswald. This newcomer to Iona destabilizes the narrative whenever he appears: he is the foreigner who remains unincorporated into the monastic community and his adoration of Columba endows him with disquieting, psychotic intensity. Yet, if his fixation were all, he would cut a less intriguing figure; what suggests his significance is Columba's own complementary obsession with finding the youth after mistakenly driving him away (*EW*, 51). The specter of Oswald's disappearance dominates the final act, both with the unsettling spectacle of Columba's physical decline as he neglects his abbacy while searching for the youth and with the abbot's excessive joy over the bedraggled novice's return during the play's closing moments. While the play is populated by Friel's recreation of otherwise historical figures, this fictional addition, at once so disruptive and so peripheral, poses a more fundamental problem of interpretation than has hitherto been recognized. Previous discussions of the play adopt the convenient assumption either that the young man is merely a "himself-when-young" Columba (Pine, 117), because both are scions of influential families, or that he vaguely signals Columba's personal crises (Dantanus, 83).¹¹ Yet, the creation of this *English* figure within a play otherwise

featuring only Irish characters should alert the reader to Oswald's more densely packed significance.

Adomnán's hagiography does mention two Englishmen who were part of Columba's monastery: Pilu Saxo and Genereus Saxo. Friel chose not to fictionalize these otherwise anonymous monks; however, the tale of a secular Saxon prince named Oswald, who converted to Christianity at Iona, occupies a prominent position at the beginning of the medieval biography (Adomnán, *Life*, 110-11). Adomnán initiates his saint's life by describing how Columba's intervention on the side of the young Christian king led to his victory over Cadwallon of Gwynedd, who had previously defeated and murdered Oswald's pagan relatives (Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 81). Commanding "a modest force against many thousands," Oswald routed the enemy army, killed Cadwallon, and "was afterwards ordained by God as emperor of all Britain" (Adomnán, *Life*, 111). This victory and the king's close association to Iona led to the conversion of Northumbria and, as his realm expanded, so did the Christianization of the North:

For most, if not the whole of his reign, he was overlord of all the English kingdoms south of the Humber, and Bede describes him as lord of all nations and provinces of Briton, whether British, Pictish, Irish, or English.

(Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 82)

After his death in 641, many miracles were attributed to Oswald's spiritual intervention, and he was recognized as a saint less than fifty years after his death (Adomnán, *Life*, 250-1). Yet, though no other Oswald is part of Adomnán's chronicle, this legendary king cannot be Friel's conscious model, for he was born after Columba's death and the king encounters Iona's founder only in the realm of dream. Nonetheless, I would argue that this future English king is the unintended corrective destabilizing Friel's nationalist fantasy.

The play closes with the return of Oswald after hiding on the island for two weeks, and Columba heralds his appearance with the repeated declaration that all can "begin again"; yet we should recognize the motif not of Christian resurrection, but of Marx's farcical repetition

of history, preparing the audience for the reversal of Ireland's fortunes. I have argued that Columba signals the fleeting moment in history when the Irish colonized neighboring Scotland before English hegemony was established. Culturally and religiously heterogeneous, the warring Celts, Picts, and Saxons of the late seventh century inhabit a region in a crisis of history with the Irish poised to dominate Scotland and Northern England, expanding their kingdom and disseminating their religion. This dramatic Oswald only superficially suggests the colonial subject who has traveled to a metropole in the hopes of gaining citizenship in an ascendant empire. Admitting to a hatred of his Irish peers (*EW*, 49), Oswald is far from being an anonymous English novice, rather, he is Adomnán's "emperor of all Britain" – the colonizer of the future who will reverse history's tide to become the first English ruler of the Irish. Indeed, as both king and saint, he will even combine the power of Church and State to greater effect than his Irish patron. To that extent, Oswald constitutes Columba's "double and split": the fractured prism through which the play betrays both the collapse of Columba's empire and Friel's "psychic ambivalence or intellectual uncertainty" in the play's inherently nationalist revisionism (Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, 295). Perhaps the best way to assess Oswald's connotation is to recall that Gayatri Spivak points out that subaltern counternarratives to colonialism are characterized by the development of a strategy that "successfully shields this cognitive *failure*," creating a "success-in-failure" narrative (Spivak, *Other Worlds*, 199). In other words, we should recognize the play's disavowal of its own fiction, for no celebration of Ireland's past can deny its ultimate failure: Ireland's subsequent domination by England. Although Friel seeks to evade Ireland's past subjugation, *The Enemy Within* betrays his inability to convert Columba's power and influence into a coherent fable of past Irish hegemony.

Philadelphia, Here I Come! and The Loves of Cass McGuire

In *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* (1964) and *The Loves of Cass McGuire* (1966), Friel introduces metatheatrical elements to prevent his return to "the present" from becoming a regression to the stale set pieces that limited his earliest plays.¹² In *Philadelphia* and *Cass McGuire* the juxtaposition of Gar to Cass extends the exploration of migrancy

initiated in *The Enemy Within*, completing a paradigm of the stages of displaced identity: Columba's life as settler framed by Gar's anxious departure and Cass' dispirited return. However, despite the broad resonance that associates these three plays, the later two have frequently been considered "sister" plays that explore the generic conceptions of home, departure, and the relationship of the individual to the community.¹³ Whereas all three plays have been constructively read as "memory" plays, Gar and Cass are drawn into even closer orbit by their complementary reliance on fantasies to render their mundane tedium more palatable and reenvision their past deficiencies.¹⁴

Philadelphia portrays the final hours in the O'Donnell household before Gar leaves his home to live with his maternal aunt and her husband in Philadelphia. While his desire to emigrate resonates with the broader Irish experience in the early 1960s, Gar is portrayed as hesitant to leave. Indeed, the play stages the array of emotions and relationships that both compel him to emigrate and emotionally bind him to his father, housekeeper, teacher, former girl friend, and "boys" who had formed his only society. Conversely, *Cass McGuire* considers the aging, impoverished, and friendless Cass who returns to Ireland after enduring fifty-two years on New York's Skid Row (*CM*, 14). The play depicts her as ostracized from the family that no longer recognizes her; in fact, most of the action transpires in Eden House, the spartan retirement home where unwanted relatives are cast off from their families. Here Cass is befriended by Meurice Ingram and Trilbe Costello, who slowly entice her to enter their sentimental world where their pasts are slowly transformed into consoling fantasy versions that ennoble their otherwise pedestrian lives.

Rather than considering them as siblings, or directly explicating the more obvious implications of my previous migrancy analysis on them, I will argue for a mirroring that surpasses a merely filial relationship. Friel unintentionally creates more than two complementary plays; rather, *Cass McGuire* reiterates the structural and historical concerns of *Philadelphia* to suggest a single metanarrative preoccupation. Upon closer inspection, *Philadelphia* and *Cass McGuire* portray two main characters who share formative experiences despite their generational differences. For example, not only are Gar and Cass

romantically fixated on former lovers who subsequently married and remained in Ireland, but each retains surprising tenderness for a deceased parent of the opposite sex who was lost in each character's remote past; whereas Gar's mother died while he was an infant (*SP*, 37), Cass' father abandoned the family when she was "a kid" (*CM*, 18). Similarly, Gar and Cass' departures are hastened, if not largely motivated, by serious romances that failed to produce the marriages that they had expected; whereas Gar painfully reflects on his inability to request Senator Doogan's permission to wed his daughter (*SP*, 41-4), Cass seems to have expected her lover Connie Crowley to accompany her to America after their relationship was discovered by the local priest (*CM*, 19-20).

More significantly, whereas Gar's father and Cass' mother each remained at home as the "responsible, respectable" parent who raised the family (*SP*, 34), their deceased parents embody a strikingly similar resistance to domestication by the repressive socio-sexual morality rooted in the Young Ireland ideology of Irish moral rectitude. Cass' father escapes to Scotland to commence a second, bigamist marriage, though such emancipatory flight was unavailable to Gar's mother. Maire O'Donnell's untimely death preemptorily suffocated a woman who "went with a dozen [and] couldn't help herself" with men (*SP*, 87), one who proved beyond incorporation into the dominant social norms. Their parents' aberrance haunts both Gar and Cass, implying that their identities are constructed around their unsuccessful attempts to repress identification with their absent parent; whereas Gar's sentimental and unsatisfied curiosity regarding his mother repeatedly surfaces throughout *Philadelphia*, Cass' pilgrimage to her father's grave initiates her destructive tirade through town and her subsequent sequestration (*CM*, 11). Moreover, Gar's relocation to his aunt's home in Philadelphia is less a rejection of his father (*SP*, 88) than an attempt to grasp at the ephemera of mother and childhood (*SP*, 65-7). In other words, both plays stage a single motivation for Gar and Cass; having inherited their parent's irredentism, which is as much sexual as social, both protagonists seek the liberation promised by flight. However, in the chronology of Friel's career, Cass' return immediately follows, and thus pointedly recontextualizes, Gar's departure; thus, her failure to

The plays of the 1960s

Table 1

Historical chronology	Dramatic chronology
1896	Cass McGuire born (<i>CM</i> , 18)
1897 Victoria's Diamond Jubilee	S. B. O'Donnell born (<i>SP</i> , 37)
1906	Harry McGuire born (<i>CM</i> , 7)
1911	Cass' father abandons family (<i>CM</i> , 14)
1914 Home Rule Bill, Great War begins	Cass emigrates (<i>CM</i> , 18)
1916 Easter Rising	
1918 Great War ends	Maire Gallagher born (<i>SP</i> , 37)
1921-3 Irish Civil War	
1937 de Valera's Irish Constitution	S. B. marries Maire (<i>SP</i> , 37)
1937-8	Lizzy Gallagher emigrates (<i>SP</i> , 61)
1939 Second World War begins	Gar born (<i>SP</i> , 35), Maire dies (<i>SP</i> , 37)
1964	Gar emigrates
1966	Cass returns

have succeeded in America either economically or romantically forms an unequivocally pessimistic foreshadowing of Gar's fortunes in America.

However, despite her structural similarities to Gar, Cass splits and doubles the earlier play's characterizations through her synchronicity with Gar's father, S.B. O'Donnell (see Table 1). Born within one year of each other and at the apotheosis of British hegemony celebrated in Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, these figures represent the generation that matured during the triumph of Irish nationalism. As teenagers during the traumatic decade initiated by successful Home Rule legislation (1914) and brutally concluded by the Irish Civil War (1923), S.B. and Cass represent two divergent strategies to manage this rupture of the quotidian; whereas S.B. remained, Cass emigrated at the initial moment of political instability – the nearly simultaneous passage of Home Rule legislation and the outbreak of the Great War that forced its suspension. Notwithstanding their disparate responses, Friel fails to envision a successful strategy to negotiate these difficult events for those who either persevered in Ireland or fled abroad. Cass' failure is particularly manifest; whereas her vulgarity in comparison to her family and friends in Eden House suggests the coarsening affects

of her American sojourn, her economic failure compounds her lumpen associations. Indeed, Friel's inherent criticism of her decision to emigrate is suggested by both her ultimate romantic disappointment and economic marginality. Further, her failure to prosper in America exposes the unpalatable reality that mere flight from Ireland did not assure wealth abroad; rather, like many of her generation, she merely survives decades of privation. Conversely, though Ireland endured several economically bleak decades during her fifty-year absence, her brother Harry in Ireland prospered despite disadvantageous familial and social conditions; in fact, he rather tactlessly reveals that he was economically secure enough to bank the entire sum of Cass' comparatively insignificant monthly remittances (*CM*, 37).¹⁵

Although S.B. O'Donnell is Harry McGuire's senior by ten years, his experience in the seemingly more rural Ballybeg to the north reveals pervasive similarities. Whereas the luxuries on display in Harry's house (for example, the "Indian rug" and comfortable furniture [*CM*, 71]) initially suggest his financial superiority, the O'Donnells' comparative material inferiority may largely manifest differences in patriarchal temperament and the dramatic perspective inherent in the juxtaposition of S.B.'s "bachelor's kitchen" (*SP*, 26) to the "living room" used by Harry's wife and family (*CM*, 5). Although Harry is distinctly described as "wealthy" (*CM*, 5), his "good black coat [and] soft hat" (*CM*, 7) suggest a rough equivalent to S.B.'s "good dark suit, collar, and tie" (*SP*, 34). In short, as a "respectable citizen" employing a housekeeper, S.B. has also enjoyed commercial success during his long career; though perhaps not wealthy, his dapper business attire distinguishes him from his journeyman counterparts. In addition, his position as "county councillor" (*SP*, 29) further denotes both local influence and institutionalization into the bourgeois ruling class, such as it is in rural Donegal. However, unlike Cass' brother who was a child in 1914, S.B. would have been old enough to have enlisted at the outbreak of the Great War (aged 17) and in his mid twenties during the Irish Civil War (Table 1). Although one should not construct too rigorous an interpretation of an incidental description, Friel's introductory characterization of S.B. as a "responsible, respectable citizen" rather than a mere businessman or shopkeeper connotes

a community stature that extends into the political, predisposing the reader to assume that his title of "county councillor" may be more than honorific.

Friel reveals exceedingly little information concerning S.B.; with certainty we only know that he remained a bachelor throughout a period of considerable violence and social disruption, while we lack the ability to speculate on his possible involvement in or avoidance of the Great War, Black and Tan outrages, partition crisis, or Civil War. Nevertheless, his marriage to Maire Gallagher conveys emblematic significance beyond its slight biographical content. Indeed, only two dates are known for her life, yet they admit few rivals in their significance to twentieth-century Ireland: she was born in 1918, a year that culminated with the implementation of the Home Rule Bill and the first elections for Dáil Éireann (Macardle, *The Irish Republic*, 273–80); and she married S.B. in 1937, the year that de Valera's republican constitution was approved both by the Dáil and national plebiscite (Doherty and Hickey, *Chronology*, 221–2). In other words, while lacking the didactic intentionality that denotes the birth of Yolland's father in the much later *Translations*, Maire too was born at a political paradigm shift: Ireland's "Year One" when the island "cast off its old skin" and "a new world . . . was born" (*SP*, 416). Similarly, their marriage celebrates the completion of the statist process begun by S.B.'s generation at her birth: as if she were born the Free State's twin, they reach majority in the same year as well, for in 1937 the Free State ended its international minority by becoming an independent republic and Maire became a married woman. In other words, Friel prevents S.B. from marrying until he is the citizen of an independent nation and able to marry an Irish woman who had not been born under colonial rule; with the work completed in constructing the Irish Republic, S.B. and Maire turn to the work of raising a family for the new state.

If the comparison ended there, in 1937, the juxtaposition of S.B. O'Donnell and Cass McGuire could not be more extreme. S.B. was considered "the grandest gentleman" (*SP*, 37), a "guy with a big store" (*SP*, 62), while Cass struggled for survival amid the squalor of New York's Skid Row during the depths of the Depression. S.B. had married the embodiment of Ireland's future; conversely, through her relationship

with Jeff Olsen, who was tormented by the leg he lost in the Great War, Cass had fallen into an unsanctioned relationship with the detritus of the past's blighted youth. Although their paths do not subsequently converge, Maire's death reverses S.B.'s private fortunes, rendering him isolated by the play's exposition in 1964, with only a sulky son embarrassed by his father (*SP*, 49).

This hypothesis that Friel portrays the Republic's creation as an event concluding a period of edenic naiveté and inaugurating a lapsarian era of disenchantment and privation receives its confirmation in the setting of *Dancing at Lughnasa* during 1936. Although written twenty-six years after *Philadelphia* and admitting no intentional references to events in the O'Donnell house,¹⁶ *Lughnasa* stages the social milieu of Ballybeg conducive to S.B.'s attempt to domesticate Maire, a woman embodying the survival of both a libidinal and primitive Ireland:

She was small, Madge says, and wild, and young, Madge says, from a place called Bailtefree beyond the mountains; and her eyes were bright, and her hair loose, and she carried her shoes under her arm until she came to the edge of the village, Madge says, and then she put them on . . .

(*SP*, 37)

By appending *free* to the name of Maire's town, Friel forcibly denotes the uninhibited climate of Maire's origin that is reenforced by a description that accentuates her recalcitrance to bourgeois domestication. While her initial description as "wild" and disheveled conveys merely an unrefined peasant ethos, her reluctance to don shoes until she enters the village succinctly suggests her association with a chthonic sensuality unbridled by modernity's repressive ethos. Indeed, whereas this description retains a thin veil over Maire's libidinal appetites, Madge's later assertion that "she went with a dozen – that was the kind of her – she couldn't help herself" (*SP*, 87) suggests that de Valera's repressive morality for the new Irish state may have contributed to her subsequent unhappiness (*SP*, 37).

In short, Maire anticipates the "savages . . . from the back hills" whose "pagan practices" and bacchanal sexuality terrify the bourgeois Ballybeg depicted in *Lughnasa* (*DL*, 17). In an atmosphere made giddy

by fine August weather in 1936, which chronotropically overlaps with S.B.'s courtship of Maire, *Lughnasa* reveals a Ballybeg family similarly poised to establish an edenic and sexually liberated Ireland. Uncle Jack's infectious animism renders the Lughnasa bacchanal less pagan and savage, while Gerry Evans' renewed romantic ardor for Chris Mundy promises to redeem the family from the shame of their illegitimate son. However, in this later play the collapse of the family's utopian gambit to construct a less restrictive society is intentionally synchronized to the creation of the Republic. Uncle Jack dies "within a year of his homecoming" in mid July (*DL*, 60); as if he cannot live in an Ireland repressively allied to the Catholic Church, Friel situates his death in the period during which the Dáil and populace approved the new constitution of 1937, but before its provisions became law. Similarly, though Gerry continues to intermittently court Chris through the beginning of the Second World War, the play depicts the end of their romance, for his subsequent visits constitute an increasingly insincere parody of the authentic passions depicted in the staged action (*DL*, 61).

Although envisioning the transitional era between Ireland's colonial past and the mundane present, with its portrayal of the social milieu relevant to the background of *Philadelphia*, *Lughnasa* enables us to glimpse the ideological associations made by Friel regarding this generation's historical moment.¹⁷ Within this context, the doomed marriage of S.B. to Maire forms a poignant emblem for the entire generation. Indeed, once this analysis is deployed more horizontally across *Philadelphia*, *Cass McGuire*, and *Lughnasa* we can fully appreciate that Ireland's decolonizing generation experienced failure regardless of the individual's decision to remain in Ireland or to emigrate. With his wealth, spouse, and progeny, Harry McGuire – the sole character too young to have participated in Ireland's transition from colony to Free State – is the only exception to this pervasive sterility; of the five Gallagher sisters, only one survives and one other bore a single son (thus establishing a tropic correspondence between the Gallagher sisters in *Philadelphia* and the Mundy sisters in *Lughnasa*); Madge has only her nieces and nephews to boast of; while the denizens of Eden House, the English Meurice Ingram and Irish Trilbe Costello, have only

their fantasies of past romantic possibilities to ameliorate their present desolation. Of course, Cass and Lizzy Gallagher paint a single portrait of the Irish emigrant whose coarse Americanization and reproductive sterility emphasize that escape from Ireland's social strictures assures neither wealth nor happiness.¹⁸

Before leaving *Philadelphia* behind and extending this historicizing analysis to Friel's other early plays, a few words must be said about the influence of this generation upon those coming of age in the 1960s. S.B. and Senator Doogan remind us that the Republic had been governed by an institutionalized revolutionary generation that had tenaciously retained power throughout the half century from Ireland's independence into the 1960s. In this respect, the prolonged adolescence manifested by Gar and his comrades reveals a generation grown restive by their elders' refusal to cede even minimal authority to them. While Ned complains that his financial dependence on his father prevents him from buying even a trivial present for Gar (*SP*, 75), Gar's complaint specifically identifies the adolescence that is forced upon him: "I'm twenty-five, and you treat me as if I were five" (*SP*, 49). Thus, Gar's decision to emigrate results less from the economic privation of Co. Donegal, than from his inability to usurp the older generation, embodied in the play's patriarchs.

To this extent, *Philadelphia* significantly departs from the narratological model suggested by such conventional immigration plays as Augusta Gregory's *Twenty-Five*, in which Christy Henderson had emigrated to accrue the wealth that would enable him to marry his Kate upon his return. Christy's sojourn was necessitated by the Irish version of economic underdevelopment created by the colonial economy based upon mandated exportation to England; thus, his victimization is conditioned by economic structures, rather than by any personal conflict with those in his native Kilbecanty.¹⁹ Thus, upon his return, Christy initiates a plan to preserve Kate's marriage and restore her husband's fortunes in implicit recognition of their shared domination.

By contrast, Gar's decision is not motivated by economic privation or social disadvantage; indeed, not only has he a father who has enjoyed at least modest success in local business and politics, but he himself attended University College, Dublin, until his voluntary

withdrawal to return home (*SP*, 35). Rather, Gar intends to leave Ireland because of his inability to wrest the prerogatives of adulthood from the patriarchy, and no scene demonstrates this more than his interview with Senator Doogan. Despite Kate's pronounced encouragement and her father's polite vacillation, Gar's retreat from the senator memorably demonstrates the combined effects of low self-esteem and intimidation by authority (*SP*, 42-4). Moreover, slightly earlier in this scene, Gar realizes that an economic confrontation with his own father to secure a salary appropriate for a married man must necessarily accompany his matrimonial aspirations (*SP*, 41-2). In other words, Gar abandons Kate and ultimately Ireland because he is unable to confront this empowered generation; his fundamental motivation is revealed as the decision "to sustain the desire of the father" as manifested in both Doogan and O'Donnell (Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 38).

The claim that Gar intends to fulfill his father's desire does not assume that S.B. wishes his son's departure, perhaps for ever; rather, we should note Gar's determination to reaffirm his filial relationship to his father despite the rebellious disposition of his "alter ego" (*SP*, 27): Gar implies that he would remain if his father asked him (*SP*, 49, 88), or if he confirmed the importance of Gar's memory of fishing at Lough na Cloc Cor (*SP*, 83, 94-5). Ultimately, Gar's actions contradictorily seek to reenforce the adolescence against which he chafes; indeed, his obsession with Cloc Cor memorializes his childhood surrender to the enthralling world of a father's comprehensive love and protection. In other words, Gar's failure to marry and reluctance to emigrate betray the excessive filial devotion that we will witness later in Ben Butler and Casimir O'Donnell.

Maureen Hawkins, Elmer Andrews, and Anthony Roche have each constructed probing explorations of the play's psychological structure.²⁰ Hawkins presents a comprehensive consideration of several of the play's characters within the context of clinic psychology's definitions of schizophrenia and establishes the terms for a strict psychological reading of the play (Hawkins, "Schizophrenia," 465-9). Andrews deftly explores the more amorphous topic of the diverse quality played by fantasy for Gar as well as several of the play's other

characters, tracing the impressions of desire even through Gar's memories and predilection for Burke's description of the French queen (Andrews, 84–95). Ultimately, Roche's focused analysis of Gar's psychological profile provides the most rigorous and insightful reading of this character (Roche, *Contemporary Irish Drama*, 85–102). However, Jacques Lacan's analysis of the hysteric – one “for whom the technical term ‘acting out’ takes on its literal meaning since he is acting outside himself” (Lacan, *Écrits*, 90) – promises to broaden our understanding of Gar and the dilemma faced by his generation, by directing our attention to the dichotomy between Private Gar's bravado and Public Gar's timidity when confronting the patriarchy.

To borrow from Slavoj Žižek's discussion of “the hysterical demand,” S.B. is Gar's “unbearable enigma of the desire of the Other” that confronts him with unanswerable question after question throughout the play (Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 118): what was the relationship between Maire and S.B., will S.B. confide in Gar before he leaves, and of course does he remember Lough na Cloc Cor? But Gar is rendered doubly inadequate because he is both intimidated by S.B.'s silence and unable to discover answers for these imagined questions himself. For Žižek, this “*Che vuoi?* [is] everywhere in the political domain” (Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 114), and we will see in my analysis of the plays of the next decade that Friel depicts the revolution's children as equally hysterical by the enigma of Ireland's founders. *Philadelphia* has continued to attract considerable critical interest because Gar is seen as representative of his generation.²¹ What Gar betrays is not merely a generation obsessed with biological fathers (S.B.), presumptive fathers (Master Boyle), and surrogate fathers (Senator Doogan and Canon O'Byrne), but one equally intimidated by Ireland's revolutionary generation which had led the nation to independence.

Lovers

The paired plays of *Lovers* (1967), “Winners” and “Losers,” complete and conclude the theatrical experimentation developed in the previous dramas, allowing Friel to initiate the intentional exploration of new themes in the decade's final plays, where he will generally

employ a more naturalistic exposition. "Winners" interweaves two metanarratives – one delivered by two Beckettian ciphers, another enacted by two dead teenagers – and continues Friel's reliance on Brechtian *verfremdung* to dissipate the melodrama inherent in his narrative.²² This short play depicts the last hours spent by two teens who have escaped from the confines of both home and school to spend the unexpectedly warm day studying for their final exams. Although Mag and Joe have been removed from school because of her pregnancy, they plan to soon marry, and they frequently interrupt their studies to discuss the recent turmoil that her pregnancy has caused in their families and to share their hopes for the future. Yet, the title suggests that they are the "winners" even though they will both unexpectedly drown later that day. Conversely, Andy, the narrator of "Losers," recalls Cass McGuire in his ability to challenge theatrical naturalism by speaking directly to the audience, and his story is one of love found late in life. Although Andy's "mind is simple" (*Lovers*, 52), he tells his story of romantic disillusionment with considerable insight: from the initial passion that he shared with Hanna that they were forced to conceal from her frail mother, through his subordination to the rigid Catholic morality imposed upon him by the unexpected alliance of Hanna and her mother after they wed.

Whereas his previous plays topographically wander in search of locations for his examinations of Ireland, *Lovers* returns to Friel's home. The first short play, "Winners," is set in County Tyrone in western Northern Ireland, where Catholic nationalists form the majority of the population, albeit a politically disenfranchised one; the location of the second, "Losers," is less clear, though it too transpires in the province's countryside, for at one point Andy notes that he married to avoid transfer to Belfast (*Lovers*, 68). Friel was born in County Tyrone, and though his family moved to nearby Derry when he was a child, the county would have remained well known to him. Yet, aside from the topical *Freedom of the City* (1973), which memorializes Derry's Bloody Sunday massacre, *Lovers* is Friel's only drama set in the portion of Ireland still subject to English rule. However, not only have other commentators failed to note the political relevance of the play's setting, but they have overlooked the significance of its

timing as well. Friel must have been composing *Lovers* during the period of reflection that culminated in his decision to leave Northern Ireland and settle in the Republic; in fact, he moved to Derry's republican hinterland in the year of the play's premiere. Yet, rather than regarding the pair of short plays as a sentimental farewell to his homeland of nearly forty years, these plays betray Friel's fundamental disillusionment with the North. Although the Troubles had not yet erupted and the North's Catholic minority had been winning marginal political concessions since the early 1960s, *Lovers* depicts a society in which life for Catholics is unlivable, in which they subsist in an existential limbo.

Despite the significance of its dramatic setting, the two plays constituting *Lovers* have attracted little critical attention. Two books on Friel devote a mere paragraph to the work (Corbett, 111; McGrath, 72), Pine scatters several references to "Winners" or "Losers" throughout the first half of his study, and the collections ignore it altogether. Maxwell provides not just the earliest comparison of the two plays, but also one that resists the easy assumption that Mag and Joe are the "winners" (Maxwell, 82–3). While O'Brien reviews possible interpretations for the two short plays' relationship (O'Brien, 59–63), Dantanus' comprehensive survey of the play's themes and reception reminds us that throughout the 1970s *Lovers* remained one of Friel's most popular works (Dantanus, 108–15). Dantanus also carefully reviews the relationship of "Losers" to Friel's earlier short story "The Highwayman and the Saint." However, Andrews' analysis of the plays within the context of his focus on subjectivity and representation provides by far the most nuanced examination to date (Andrews, 111–18). Ultimately, these interpretive efforts seem constrained by the textual lure that Friel successfully uses to distract both his theatrical and critical audiences from engaging with the play: the relationship of the two constituent plays *vis-à-vis* their titles.²³

Such radio plays as *A Sort of Freedom* and *A Doubtful Paradise* are set in Belfast and Derry respectively; however, these plays date from the waning Brookeborough premiership, and transpire in a distinctly different North than the one depicted in *Lovers* less than ten years later. Sabine Wichert characterizes the 1950s as a period of

considerable material development for the province's families regardless of religious affiliation (Wichert, *Northern Ireland*, 82–3). Northern Ireland was included in Westminster's postwar social legislation of the late 1940s and 1950s, and the resultant qualitative advances in education and health services considerably improved the lives of the Catholic population despite the slow pace of change and Stormont's desultory implementation (Bardon, *Ulster*, 593–8). Notwithstanding this social progress, the Protestant Unionist grip on political power was rigidly maintained by the Brookeborough government throughout the period through both electoral gerrymandering and statist intimidation perpetrated by allied Loyalist vigilante groups (Bardon, *Ulster*, 600–1, 610–12). Indeed, throughout his long premiership, Brookeborough resisted all ministerial proposals to broaden Catholic political or civil participation and strategically scapegoated the minority to enforce Unionist solidarity (Bardon, *Ulster*, 611). However, Terence O'Neill replaced him in 1962 and initiated a public rapprochement with the Dublin government and Northern Catholics that publicly conveyed his determination "to find accommodation for the civil and political ambitions of the increasingly better educated minority community" (Wichert, *Northern Ireland*, 89). Indeed, in 1965, just two years before the premiere of *Lovers*, the tenor of O'Neill's accommodationalist intentions was established by his unprecedented meeting in Belfast with the Irish Taoiseach Sean Lemass and his ability to convince the Nationalist Party, under the leadership of Eddie McAteer, to enter the Stormont government as the official opposition (Bardon, *Ulster*, 633).

Yet, O'Neill's political springtime of sectarian rapprochement was shortlived; thus, as readers we must reinscribe a background of the traumatic events that fatally reversed O'Neill's fortunes to our reading of the deceptively peaceful days depicted in *Lovers*. For both sectarian communities, 1966 marked the fiftieth anniversary of emotionally charged events: nationalist observances of the Easter Rising (24–29 April) were held "in all the principal Catholic districts of the region" during the spring, inspiring considerable anticipatory panic in the Unionist community (Bardon, *Ulster*, 634), while Loyalist commemorations of the Battle of the Somme (1–2 July) inaugurated a particularly restive marching season.²⁴ In fact, the events portrayed

in "Winners" on 4 June 1966 occur amid a May and June of riots attributed to Ian Paisley's incendiary rhetoric and terrorism conducted by a revived Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) that culminated in the murder of three Catholics on 26 June 1966 (Bardon, *Ulster*, 634–6). Unfortunately, the mismanaged responses by both local Protestant authorities as well as the Stormont government was at the time characterized as punitively hostile towards the Catholics and indecisively lenient towards the Protestants. Ultimately, the season's sectarian violence reversed the tentative political progress engendered by O'Neill's personal commitment to reconciliation and further alienated the two communities, creating the social disaffection that in three years erupted into the sustained violence of the Troubles.

The specificity of Friel's dating for "Winners" becomes apparent when the dating conventions employed in his other plays as well as his involvement in Derry politics are jointly taken into consideration. His two previous plays were generically set in "the present," and throughout his career Friel has relied on such a generalizing temporal setting for both the Ballybeg plays and those set elsewhere; several other plays are merely situated no more specifically than in a particular month of a specified year, and such plays as *Faith Healer* provide no calendrical setting whatsoever.²⁵ In short, no other play of his forty-year career transpires upon an exact date; moreover, since *Lovers* premiered in July 1967, Friel would have retained fresh, personal memories of the previous summer's events while writing it. By the mid 1960s, Friel's involvement in local politics had been considerable; not only was his father Paddy serving the last of his three terms as an elected councilor for the Derry City Corporation (Dantanus, 34), but Friel himself had volunteered for Eddie McAteer's reelection in 1962 and would participate in the city's civil rights marches even after his relocation to Muff. More to the point, on at least one occasion he demonstrates a keen memory for dates of local political significance. In the course of an interview in early 1970, Friel specifically cites 5 October 1968 as a date of unrivaled importance in the city's contemporary politics (*EDI*, 28); thus, it is unlikely that he would have been oblivious to the significance of setting *Lovers* in the late spring of 1966.²⁶

The plays of the 1960s

The peaceful day of 4 June 1966, that culminated in the accidental deaths of Mag Enright and Joe Brennan, follows a restive May during which the UVF had formally declared war against the IRA in Northern Ireland and carried out numerous attacks that terrorized, wounded, and killed. More sinisterly, the play transpires only two days before Paisley's infamous march across Belfast's Albert Bridge, which sparked rioting that led to a long and "intense battle" between Catholics and the police. Paisley's subsequent trial and conviction for his role in this march sparked numerous riots by Loyalists, and shootings of Catholics throughout June and July; Protestant support for O'Neill quickly and publicly evaporated, and within the year O'Neill was forced from the premiership.²⁷

Friel creates a deceptively tranquil location for *Lovers* that positions the play on the fringe of the unrest and violence, rather than far removed from it. The setting in County Tyrone, rather than Friel's home of Derry, suggests an intention to avoid the specific depiction of an urban, Catholic ghetto, while nonetheless choosing a county that had experienced its own considerable unrest during 1966. While less apparent to those removed from the date and location, throughout 1966 the peace of County Tyrone was disrupted repeatedly by Catholic protests against the injustices perpetrated by local Loyalist governments in such cities as Dungannon. Thus, despite Friel's intention to bury the region's violence under the play's veneer of placidity, I will argue that this contemporary unrest infects the two short plays and poisons their portrayal of even an ostensibly depoliticized Catholic culture. Or, to put it more directly, Friel portrays the Catholic, nationalist community of Northern Ireland as figuratively dead.

Friel's previous plays increasingly stage his characters' seminal encounters with death, and this thematic subtext is unleashed to become the textual obsession of *Lovers*. Columba's guilt and subsequent remorse over Coarnan's death is sublimated into his exaggerated concern over the whereabouts of the recently arrived novice Oswald, thus shifting the dramatic focus from death to the rebirth trumpeted in his last lines (*EW*, 71–2). Gar's persistent interest in his mother is dramatized less as a macabre fascination with death than as

a manifestation and extension of his agon with his father; similarly, this endeavor to excavate a hypothetical Gallagher identity is essential to his psychological project of self creation. Conversely, the characters of *Cass McGuire* indulge in a sentimental romanticization of their dead that expands the topos into a thematic preoccupation. Trilbe's Wagnerian association with the tragic Isolde and Ingram's melancholic fantasy of his wife's drowning characterize Eden House as a community in which a celebration of the dead offers the only relief from the residents' unarticulated understanding that their insufferable boredom will be alleviated only through their own deaths. Cass herself distills the play's fascination into her dual preoccupation with her dead father and lover. While Jeff Olsen's death precipitated her return to Ireland, her pilgrimage to her father's grave site violently unleashes repressed passions that force her from her brother's home (*CM*, 9, 13–14). Indeed, the play ends only after she has resurrected the dead in her fantasy and reconciled herself with them in her final surrender to a wistful reconstruction of the past (*CM*, 64).

If the two short plays of *Lovers* refuse any gothic impulse to pile upon the stage the corpses of slaughtered innocence, they pervasively incorporate covert and overt images of death. Whereas Mag and Joe invigorate the first play's dead couple in an extended *Trauerspiel*, or play of mourning, the second play transubstantiates images of the dead onto the living.²⁸ Of course, "Winners" is replete with images of death crowding into the final hours of Joe's and Mag's lives: from their vantage on Ardnageeha, Mag speculates on their future burial in the distant cemetery (*Lovers*, 47); Mag and her mother are both keenly conscious of Mag's absent twin brother who died shortly after birth (*Lovers*, 20); Joe ghoulishly recounts signing a lease in a slaughterhouse, while his blood-splattered landlord shoots cattle; the young couple prepare to occupy an apartment that overlooks this same slaughter yard (*Lovers*, 16–7); and, of course, the Commentators repeatedly remind us of the circumstances of the couple's death and burial. Similarly, death serves as a dominant theme in "Losers" from its opening monologue delivered by Andy to the audience. According to Andy, Mrs. Wilson's discovery of her husband's corpse caused her to suffer a complementary symbolic death that forces her to occupy a

sickbed throughout the play. Moreover, Andy initiates the play by recognizing himself as a proxy for Hanna's dead father: self-consciously occupying his chair of idleness in the narrow garden and adopting his birdwatching ruse (*Lovers*, 52). When Friel converted an earlier short story into "Losers," he changed the poem that Andy recites while making love to Hanna from Alfred Noyes' "The Highwayman" to Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard." While both poems celebrate death, Gray's poem meditates on the buried dead and their ultimate social and corporeal disintegration, while Noyes' ballad focuses on heroic sacrifice in life and the love that survives the grave. In short, even this rather inconspicuous substitution betrays Friel's distillation of these diverse themes into an unremitting focus on the grave.

In Slavoj Žižek's discussion of the dead's harrowing return to the realm of the living in the horror genre, he initiates his analysis with "a naive and elementary question: why do the dead return?" (Žižek, *Looking Awry*, 23). His exposition juxtaposes instances of the vengeful undead in such contemporary narratives as *Pet Sematary* and *The Night of the Living Dead* to their canonical archetypes in *Hamlet* and *Antigone* with Freud's *Totem and Taboo* as the master text deciphering them all (Žižek, *Looking Awry*, 23–9). Despite the temptation to follow Žižek's lead, we should rather note the homology of the living and the dead in these short plays which renders the dead's return unnecessary for they have never left the living behind. Unlike Friel's later *Living Quarters* (1977), where the dead father Frank Butler eternally returns to haunt his living children, in their separate ways "Winners" and "Losers" dissolve the distinction separating the two existential modes: the dead of "Winners" are portrayed in their last hours of life, while the living of "Losers" exist in an anticipatory death; the dead fail to haunt either play because their society fails to differentiate the living from the dead. Whereas Žižek argues that the dead return to demand a proper performance of their burial rites and concomitant social functions, Friel's characters need not return, his plays suggest, because even in life, they linger in a social death.

That *Freedom of the City* (1973) shares this obsession with the dead is far from coincidental, for it is Friel's only other play set in

Northern Ireland, a "society" Friel described in a 1970 interview as "absolutely dead" (*EDI*, 28). In *Freedom*, the play fluctuates between stagings of the trio's final hours of life, various events that can occur only after their deaths (for example, their joint funeral and the court proceedings), and others that occur in a chronotropic liminality that lacks anchoring reference points in the verisimilar narrative (the spirits' monologues or the commentaries offered by Dodds); nevertheless, the audience recognizes Skinner, Lily, and Michael as murdered innocents, haunting the world of the play. In that respect, the import of Friel's joke in his newspaper column unravels the logic of *Freedom of the City* as well as *Lovers*: "Dear Mr. Friel . . . have been notified by the Ministry of Health that you are dead. Call in at your convenience" (*Irish Press*, 9 February 1963). Indeed, if "Mr. Friel" is trapped within the interminable interstices of nonexistence, as the article's title "In the Waiting Room" suggests, so too are his characters in Northern Ireland incapable of returning after death, because all Catholics within the province are always-already dead to the state.

Friel closes his "Self-Portrait" of 1972 with a complaint against the "People" who urge him "to write a play 'about the troubles in the North'"; their failure to recognize *Lovers* as such a play supports his implication that they expect one full of sensationalist depictions of sectarian outrages and social injustices (*EDI*, 46). Conversely, with unappreciated subtlety, *Lovers* exposes a troubled society in which the cultural trauma of the nationalist community has become a pathological normality. Prevented from rebuking a Protestant shopmate who mocks his religion, Andy transfers the violence inherent in this sectarian assault onto the doubly colonized, his wife and mother-in-law, who themselves respond indirectly through repression and frigidity (*Lovers*, 69–71, 75–6). Conversely, rather than assuming that Joe and Mag are "winners," lovers fortunate in the untimely death that prevents them from romantic disillusionment, we should recognize that they belatedly join Mag's twin, "smothered by a pillow" five days after his birth, to depict a Northern Ireland that suffocates its Catholics. In other words, Friel's subtitles function as a lure to distract his audience from the plays' actual moral that there are no "winners" in Northern Ireland.

Crystal and Fox

If *Lovers* proves to be a grim farewell to Northern Ireland, *Crystal and Fox* betrays a surprisingly disillusioned assessment of his new nation. Although their production dates are separated by only one year, there is reason to believe that this intervening year, 1967, was momentous for the author personally. As previously noted, by moving the short distance from Derry to Muff, he moved from the territory administered by the "absurd" and "iniquitous" Stormont jurisdiction to that of Dublin (*EDI*, 28). However, though such a geographic move suggests his embrace of the Republic, in this same year Friel distanced himself from republican ideology by resigning from the Nationalist Party (Hickey and Smith, *Paler Shade*, 221). He claims as late as 1970 to be "left with this very vigorous nationalism"; nonetheless, he quickly qualifies this loyalty with a sharp criticism of the Irish government: "the turn the Republic has taken over the past nine or ten years has been distressing, very disquieting" (*EDI*, 26–7). In other words, by choosing to relocate to the Republic, he merely chooses the least of two objectionable nations; whereas he sharply criticizes the Republic's political and cultural decline as intellectually "terrifying" (*EDI*, 27), the accelerating statist violence and intimidation in Northern Ireland over this same period made his continued residence there impossible. Thus, his shift to the Republic's side of the border expresses a rejection of one rather than an embrace of the other.

Whereas *The Enemy Within* initiates a geographic as well as conceptual odyssey in which Friel searches for the imaginative locale to adopt as his artistic home, *Crystal and Fox* returns him to his imaginary coastal town of Ballybeg at the biographical moment of his relocation to the Republic. Nonetheless, this homecoming is far from emancipatory; it resonates with the author's estrangement from the rural society chronicled in his Donegal Diary for *The Irish Press*. Indeed, along with the next Ballybeg play, *The Gentle Island* (1971), Donegal emerges as a considerably more menacing area than at any time in his career; rapidly developing from intimidation and offstage violence in *Crystal and Fox* to staged violence and attempted murder in *The Gentle Island*, this Ballybeg recalls his newspaper column's rebuke of the Donegal people as "Savages!" (21 July 1962). In other

words, if *Lovers* stages a dramatic dead end convincing Friel that Northern Ireland is beyond representation, except as the hystericized society of *Freedom of the City*, then in returning to coastal Donegal *Crystal and Fox* retextualizes and amplifies the alienation that Friel records in his Donegal Diary for *The Irish Press*.

Whereas most of Friel's plays depict familiar, albeit diverse elements of Irish society, *Crystal and Fox* focuses on a class all but absent from late twentieth-century Ireland: itinerant Irish performers who staged vaudeville entertainment in small towns across the island. Fox Melarkey travels with a small troupe consisting of actors and animal trainers, but the drama itself concerns Fox's inexplicable animus against everyone; indeed, he slowly forces each member of his company, family, and even his beloved wife Crystal, to abandon him through antagonism or sabotage. Although the audience is never quite sure of Fox's exact motivations, he attempts to confess to both his son and wife that he has grown malcontented by "a vague memory of what [he] thought [he] saw" more than thirty years earlier, when he and Crystal had just married (*CF*, 48).

Maxwell's study of Friel's early career offers the most varied survey of the play, ranging from concise assessments of many of the characters to insightful observations on the play's radical departures from the atmospheric tone shared by the earlier plays (Maxwell, 87–94). Although subsequent treatments of *Crystal and Fox* have focused on Fox, the critics' failure to reach consensus on this embittered impresario's character or intentions reflects his problematic characterization. Dantanus describes Fox's brinkmanship as the expression of his daring and doomed challenge of Fate (Dantanus, 118), while O'Brien also reflects on Fox's struggle with time, love, and chance (O'Brien, 66–8). Similarly, Andrews conveys his respect for this "mythic ringmaster" with "god-like powers" who falls victim to a "deadly kind of idealism" that ultimately isolates and destroys him (Andrews, 105, 108). Unfortunately, the other monographs tend to dispense with the play rather peremptorily in one or two paragraphs. While reproving other critics for having misunderstood the play, McGrath peremptorily dismisses it by saying that "We never understand Fox's motives" (McGrath, 73). Similarly, Corbett curtly

dismisses the play as "heavy-handed" and Fox as a tawdry showman who "fails to convince us that his self-destructive streak is rooted in a realistically created character" (Corbett, 113).²⁹ Finally, while there have been very few articles on the play, Giovanni Tallone provides a more engaged comparison of it to *Faith Healer*, its obvious analogue in Friel's oeuvre, than can be found in any of the monographs, providing an especially thorough exploration of the play's self-referential critique of art (Tallone, "Friel's Fox Melarkey," 28–38).

Crystal and Fox is a play about unincorporated transients existing on the fringe of conventional society; in fact, the play strongly implies that the Melarkeys have wandered throughout Ireland, finding no permanent home, for the previous thirty years, with the itinerant period for Crystal and her father being almost certainly longer (*CF*, 24–5). Although set ostensibly in Ballybeg, the drama begins on the town's periphery where Fox's traveling review has set up its temporary stage. The troupe's status as suspect outsiders is soon signaled by the local policeman who appears late one night to intimidate them and coerce Fox into decamping the next morning (*CF*, 28–31). Indeed, the animosity between the acting company and society at large is demonstrated throughout the play. Fox mocks his audience and its Gaelic heritage as part of his banter while the actors change scenes (*CF*, 12–13); similarly, Fox's son Gabriel describes his attempt to adapt to sedentary society as a series of conflicts: "If I had a pound for every fight I've been in since [leaving home], I'd be a rich man . . . a bloody millionaire" (*CF*, 36). If Friel defines the carnival world as an insular subculture with its own norms and ethos (*CF*, 21, 56–7), he portrays civil society's intolerance of them as equally monolithic. Not only is Fox heckled by members of the audience before he begins his satire on Gaelic speakers' ignorance (*CF*, 12–13), but the police deride the Melarkeys as "Stinking gypsies" (*CF*, 50).

Friel resists the temptation to portray Fox and his entourage as easily quantifiable outcasts, Irish Travelers or tinkers; rather than intending to stage the plight of a recognizable minority that has been historically ostracized and maligned, Friel makes Fox the representative Irishman who has become alienated from a state that has abandoned the Irish people. Indeed, in interviews following the production

of *Crystal and Fox*, he repeatedly derides both the state and national culture for having lost an organic connection to its "old culture" (*EDI*, 27), for having dismantled its "specific national identity" (*EDI*, 49), and for the failure of its theaters to nurture Irish society (*EDI*, 56). To that extent, *The Mundy Scheme* (1969), complements this work by portraying the corrupt state on a macropolitical level, while *Crystal and Fox* explores its effects on a micropolitical and cultural level.

Early in the 1960s, Friel claims that *Philadelphia* is an "angry" play that articulates a contemporary disillusionment with Ireland's moribund politics and culture (*EDI*, 3),³⁰ while *Crystal and Fox* continues this critique at the decade's end, it also shares with this earlier play a latent romanticization of the revolutionary era. However, this play also signals Friel's movement away from his historical subtext as well. In his previous plays he included the specific dates and ages that would allow the reader to reconstruct detailed histories; among the many examples, Gar announces the exact date of his parents' wedding, while Cass reveals her age. Conversely, as if he intentionally seeks to obscure the embedded history that informs the play, *Crystal and Fox* refuses to divulge any significant dates. Fox is identified only as "about fifty," while Crystal's age is equally general ("a few years younger"); in addition, Friel refuses even the most indistinct temporal setting: not even vaguely identified as in "the present," the play fails to note when the action transpires (a singularity it shares, significantly, with *Faith Healer*).

Near the play's end, Fox aligns his utopian vision for the future with a return to the conjunction of his nation's birth and his marriage's idealistic beginning "thirty years ago" (*CF*, 55), suggesting that like the O'Donnells' marriage in *Philadelphia*, the Melarkeys' union can be dated to the Republic's creation. Friel has repeatedly returned to stage characters who, like Fox, obsessively desire to recapture an illusion, a past seminal moment, and glean from it a transcendent meaning that defies articulation. Fox's notorious struggle, his determination to winnow all superfluous contingencies from his life, is motivated by his desire to capture his life's ordinary moment, the secret of which he believes promises that he and Crystal will be able

to set out unencumbered like Adam and Eve in a future that recovers the past:

there'll be just you and me and the old accordion and the old rickety wheel – all we had thirty years ago, remember? You and me. And we'll laugh again at silly things and I'll plait seaweed into your hair again. And we'll only go to the fairs we want to go to, and stop at the towns we want to stop at, and eat when we want to eat, and lie down when we feel like it. . . . I'd say that heaven's just round the corner.

(*CF*, 55)

Fox is tormented by more than nostalgia over their youth, before they were beset by their poverty and disappointments; Fox's utopian epiphany culminates and thematizes his efforts to remember an elusive, "vague memory" (*CF*, 48) that has tormented him throughout the play: embodied in their past encounter with nature in its most numinous form. Two weeks after their marriage, one morning at dawn on the Galway coast, the pair slipped out for a swim, but their plan was disrupted by hundreds of flat fish that barred their way and eventually overturned them into the water. Soaked, Fox braided seaweed into Crystal's hair and the pair "danced on the sand" (*CF*, 54). Throughout the play this elusive "good thing you think you saw" torments Fox (*CF*, 48), and his desire to recapture this edenic moment compels him to orchestrate El Cid and Tanya's departure from his troupe, Pedro's personal collapse, and even Crystal's emotional devastation once he realizes that she fails to share his subjection to the vision.

Such a constituent memory – of vital significance to the speaker, yet trivial to the historical event's partner – recalls Gar's attempt to validate the mythic status of his fishing expedition on Lough na Cloc Cor with his father. Moreover, echoes of Fox's epiphany recur in several other scenes throughout Friel's career: Crystal's "mad notion of going for a swim" (*CF*, 53) envisions a comic resolution to Mag's "crazy" desire to dance on every island of Lough Gorm in *Lovers* (*Lovers*, 48), the fish that disrupt the still dawn is reimagined with greater numinous intensity in Frank's dionysian dolphin in *Wonderful Tennessee* (*WT*, 59), while the lover's beatific, though momentary

dance punctuates such plays as *Translations*, *Communication Cord*, and *Dancing at Lughnasa*. Most of these events acquire their emotional intensity in retrospect, only after they have been become elusive memory; in other words, once they acquire the psychological resonance of Lacan's encounter with the real, expressed as the individual's repetitive return that is always missed (Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 54–5).³¹ Fox's obsession with this seminal event betrays Friel's own recurrent fascination with staging the intensely private and emotionally powerful transcendent moment between two individuals, and as the playwright further recasts it in various permutations throughout his career, he variously explores it in its enactment or dissects its distortions and magnifications once it has been translated into memory. However, as in many of the plays cited above, such an idealistic pursuit is not without risk; in Fox's case, his obsession increasingly estranges him from Irish society and even his family.

If *Crystal and Fox* returns to the historical moment thematized in *Philadelphia* and *Cass McGuire*, it reveals a pronounced evolution in and distancing from this preoccupation. Having been born after the Easter Rising of 1916, Fox's nearest contemporaries in the plays of the 1960s are Maire Gallagher and Harry McGuire, at best shadowy or secondary figures in their plays. Thus, Friel's focus on Fox allows him to dramatize the generation that matured during the Republic's adolescence. Conversely, S.B. and Cass were well into their late thirties during this period and entering their old age during the 1960s. More pointedly, unlike Cass who lived in America and S.B. whose portrayal avoids Ireland's overt political culture, Fox's fortunes serve as a Frielian barometer for the Republic's health. Flushed with the self-confidence that would be chastened by its political isolation following the Second World War and subsequent economic war with the United Kingdom, the young Republic resembled the play's foolhardy couple, typified by "more courage than sense" and "more hope than courage" (*CF*, 25). Moreover, according to Friel both the Melarkeys and the Republic share a single pinnacle of cultural success in the late 1950s and early 1960s; according to Pedro, Fox "had the country in the palm of his hand" between 1958 and 1960 (*CF*, 22), while in a 1970 interview Friel

The plays of the 1960s

notes that the Republic's "distressing" turn can be dated to 1960 or 1961 (*EDI*, 27). Thus, by the play's date of 1968, Ireland has irrevocably drifted from the cultural traditions the loss of which Friel laments, while over this same period the Melarkeys have endured the professional decline that Pedro, Crystal, and Fox attribute to the changed tastes of a more technologically modern and affluent society (*CF*, 26). However, Friel refuses to portray Fox as the maudlin victim of Ireland's cultural evolution; we are denied knowledge of the events that transformed Fox into the play's embittered misanthrope and purveyor of bromides. Rather, the audience witnesses only Fox's incompatibility with a contemporary Irish culture which his troupe no longer satisfies. The same is true for the Irish Republic; in none of the early plays do we witness the diachronic decline of the state, only the present where it is portrayed as as hostile and uncultured as Melarkey's road show.

3 **The plays of the 1970s: Interrogating nationalism**

From the production of *The Mundy Scheme* in 1969 through that of *Volunteers* in 1975, three of Friel's four plays present a particularly focused critique of contemporary politicized life in Ireland. For those who view Friel's nationalism as purely cultural, this dramatization of public society may seem an uncharacteristic detour from his ostensible avoidance of such topics. While in interviews Friel admits a commitment to nationalist ideology that evolved from the passionate in 1964 to the attenuated by 1972, he eschews any direct relationship to political nationalism; his interest in politics as been relegated to, and all but forgotten in, his *Irish Press* articles. One of his first columns recounts his frustrating day volunteering for Eddie McAteer's reelection campaign in 1962 (9 June 1962), but more revealing are his later incidental admissions of his fantasies of a more direct political involvement. In his "New Year's Diary" of 1963 he dreams of assuming the chairmanship of the "Orange and Green talks" (5 January 1963), while the following week he fantasizes that he is another Charles Stewart Parnell demanding the union of the island (12 January 1963). Later in 1963 he ruminates on Lord Brookeborough's ouster from the Stormont premiership and feels its immediacy even on the streets of New York City (11 May 1963). In short, these essays reveal a political engagement complementing his commitment to cultural nationalism.

If the plays of the 1960s stage Friel's intention to expose the cultural striations within nationalism that splinter its stereotype of Irishness disseminated by the de Valera brand of national identity, to a large extent they also suggest a latent interest in politics that the author suppresses as the province's unrest slowly devolves into civil

strife. Such withdrawn plays as *A Sort of Freedom* (1958), with its setting amid labor union activity in Belfast, and *The Blind Mice* (1963), which Dantanus describes as “the first play to permit elements of the Northern Irish conflict to develop” (Dantanus, 70), suggest that Friel could have evolved into a political playwright not unlike Belfast’s Sam Thompson or Martin Lynch. However, such *Irish Press* columns as “Stalked by the Police: The Daylight Torture of Brian Friel” expose Friel’s psychological internalization of the threat posed by the state’s intimidatory climate in Northern Ireland, which may have discouraged him from writing overtly politicized drama while residing in the British province (3 November 1962).

Both *The Enemy Within* and *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* reveal an abiding attraction to staging political life balanced against his learned wariness compelling him to withdraw from the topic; if in *Columba* we witness the final symbolic abdication of a political leader who had relinquished the tangible prerogatives of kingship a generation earlier, the political authority of Senator Doogan and County Councilor O’Donnell forms the unexplored margins of Gar’s narrative of social alienation. Subsequently, political references disappear from the overt content of *The Loves of Cass McGuire*, while even the momentous social and political turmoil of 1966 are submerged into the psycho-social contexts of *Lovers*. However, once Friel adopts the Republic for his primary citizenship in 1967, his work admits a tentative repoliticization, which is manifested in the portrayal of Ireland’s marginal social order and the adversarial police presence in *Crystal and Fox*.

Within the context of this intention to restore Friel’s ideological context, which is effaced in the critical focus on aesthetic issues, Friel’s return to political drama in 1969 should not be wholly unexpected. As if benefiting from the greater freedom of living in the Republic, the plays that inaugurate the 1970s center on the state for their social milieu: how it functions and its potential to devastate the lives of its citizens. Indeed, the accelerating and interconnected crises in Northern Ireland and the Republic become the overt subject of *The Mundy Scheme* (1969), *The Freedom of the City* (1973), and *Volunteers* (1975). Taken as a whole, the plays of the 1970s explore not

Irish society as distinct from politics, but as fundamentally intertwined with it. Certainly the lives of those murdered or imprisoned by the state demonstrate this connection, but it remains an operative subtext even in the later narratives of soldiers seeking promotion into the hierarchy of Dublin's military complex in *Living Quarters* (1977), or the failure of Ireland's Catholic gentry in *Aristocrats* (1979). Only after examining political power and tracing it in the lives of those ostensibly untouched by it does Friel use the final plays of the decade to return to the social order existing on the seemingly untouched fringes of society in *Faith Healer* (1979).

Self-Portrait

Before I proceed into an analysis of the plays, I would like to explore the phrase "Friel's ideological context" more fully. In "Self-Portrait," an elusive attempt at autobiography from 1972, Brian Friel offers more a thematic than a biographical review of his life. Rather than providing insight into Friel's family or daily activities, this short essay paints the author's ideological portrait, and his declarations on nationalism and patriarchy form the shadow text deciphering much of his dramatic work of the decade. While generally avoiding personal details, Friel uses "Self-Portrait" to explore "the mixed holding I had inherited" (*EDI*, 41), a phrase so aptly descriptive for him that he repeats it later in this brief work. In the first case, one can easily assume that he refers to his personal condition as "an Irish Catholic teacher with a nationalist background, living in [the] schizophrenic community" of Northern Ireland in the 1950s and 1960s. This example alone would be noteworthy because of Friel's choice of the word "mixed" to describe the union of nationalism and Catholicism, which in Northern Ireland implies both a tense ambivalence towards the two ideologies as well as their blending.¹ Yet, when Friel returns to this phrase a few pages later, this "mixed holding I had inherited" acquires more generational connotations and is intended to illustrate "how difficult it is for an Irish writer to find his faith" (*EDI*, 45). In this instance, one might assume that his oblique reference alludes to religion alone, or even to the difficulties associated with sectarian passions in the North, which had recently erupted in the Bloody Sunday murders. Or, in light of the

earlier statement, one might even believe that Friel refers to the relationship of the artist to the Catholic Church, which had been for him a difficult and frustrating struggle (*EDI*, 26). However, Friel soon reveals that his discussion of "faith" does not pertain to religion, but the more nationalist idea of "our Irishness."

Friel is keenly aware of both the religion of Irish identity and his own distance from "the generation of Irish writers immediately before mine" who "took their genetic purity for granted" (*EDI*, 45). Clearly speaking for the children born after the revolution, he expresses the cultural dislocation that results when a nationalist ideology loses its historical and contrastive enemy. Throughout the long nineteenth century from 1790 through the wars of the 1910s, Irish nationalism had one opponent upon which to focus, and consequently the idea of the noble Gael developed in isolated contradistinction to the treacherous *Sassanach*, or Englishman; however, Irish independence unleashed diverse internal ideological forces that eroded this previous ability to maintain a myopic cultural Other opposed to Irishness. In his critique of nationalism, Michael Billig argues that modern nationalism creates not a single, generic "Other," which indiscriminately serves to identify all outsiders, but an array of external and internal "foreign" entities, each of which provides a unique nuance in any nationalist identitarian ideology (Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 80-3).² Similarly, the Irish nationalism that evolved in the Free State and Republic soon established a series of non-Irish characteristics that fragmented the former English/Irish dichotomy (Lloyd, *Ireland*, 28).

Intuiting such an ideological evolution, Friel states that his predecessors "learned to speak Irish, took their genetic purity for granted, and soldiered on" in a conflict with Ireland's colonizer that was defined in the broadest manichean terms of domination versus subordination, oppressor versus oppressed. In such a culture, Friel implies that learning Irish carried the equivalent significance to speaking it from birth, and being born in Ireland allowed both Catholic and Anglo-Irish nationalists to assert an essentially equivalent "genetic purity." Conversely, in the decades that followed the Second World War, Ireland's continuing territorial crisis with the

Northern enclave forced the island's citizens to parse identity with a specificity unknown in the earlier era:

For us today the situation is more complex. We are more concerned with defining our Irishness than with pursuing it. We want to know what the word "native" means, what the word "foreign" means. We want to know if the words have any meaning at all.

(*EDI*, 45)

Clearly, within the context of this passage's focus on constructing Irishness in its postcolonial context, "native" and "foreign" no longer refer to the Irish and some non-Irish Other, be they specifically English or generically British, but primarily to an Irishness constructed within Ireland by Gaelic nationalism and all internal, disenfranchised Others: Anglo-Irish and suspected "West Britons," Protestants of all shades, middle-class businessmen, feminists, homosexuals, Dubliners. By the time of his essay's composition, doctrinaire Irishness had become an increasingly confining concept for all of the island's inhabitants. At the end of the de Valera era, the state-sponsored ideal for Irishness – the union of Gaelic culture and Roman Catholicism with an aversion to urbanization and industrialization – left a majority of Ireland's citizens beyond the definition of sanctioned identity. Indeed, Declan Kiberd's discussion of the artistic climate of dissent created by state censorship (Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 580–2) and Christopher Murray's treatment of the psychological affect of de Valera's ruinous economic policies (Murray, *Twentieth-century Irish drama*, 164) portray the generation coming of age in the early 1960s as one disillusioned with nationalist ideals.

Here in "Self-Portrait," more than anywhere else in his career, Friel blatantly articulates the issues that problematize the nationalism that his generation inherited. But rather than confront this contentious semantic fray by offering his generation's definitions of "Irishness," "native," and "foreign," Friel is unable to construct these essentialist concepts for his audience. Indeed, as if he has broached topics too vexed, political, and personal to explore, Friel awkwardly veers away from his argument to complain of the public, especially

their expectation that he "write a play 'about the troubles in the North'" (*EDI*, 46). Having retreated from his discussion of identity, Friel abruptly ends the essay empty-handed: "you ask me have I anything to declare and I say, only this and this, I assume that you will look beyond the innocent outspread hands" (*EDI*, 46). Beneath the opaque surface of this ultimate evasion, Friel cannot conceal his desire to assess his "mixed" inheritance; indeed, the second time he approaches the topic, he explores it with greater specificity and engagement. Nonetheless, while the subject thwarts his efforts on this occasion, within the context of his other non-dramatic statements we can recognize that this disruption marks the unresolved midpoint in his evolving ideological relationship to Irish nationalism.

Friel formally left the Nationalist Party in 1967 (Hickey and Smith, *Paler Shade*, 221), yet as late as 1962, he was willing to express unmitigated loyalty to the Republic: "I'm a nationalist too, you know. I feel very emotionally about this country . . . I get myself involved in stupid controversies about the border . . ." (*EDI*, 1). However, in less than ten years, Friel's "Self-Portrait" expresses his growing concern "with defining our Irishness" (*EDI*, 45), and he refers to his nationalist affiliations in the most attenuated terms: he describes himself as being someone with "a nationalist background" (*EDI*, 41). By 1982, Friel's skeptical distance from Republican nationalism is so evident that his interviewer Fintan O'Toole asks him, "What is it about the South of Ireland that makes it impossible for you to give your loyalty to it?" (*EDI*, 112). In response, Friel defines his loyalty to the Republic as akin to the feelings one has for "the old parent who is now beginning to ramble."

From 1986 through 2004, Friel has generally avoided the topic of national character in all its forms, whether termed "identity," "Irishness," or even "the Northern thing." In fact, his 1986 interview with Laurence Finnegan is conspicuous for his cantankerous refusal to elaborate upon the very ideas that had so interested him in his earlier public statements. For example, when asked to "say a word or two about . . . this ideological crisis facing us . . . as a nation" (*EDI*, 126), Friel circumvents the question by replying that the artist's role is "to find who he is and what *he* is" apart from his relationship to

the state and nationalist ideology (*italics in original*). Friel's determination to separate the artist from nationalism even leads him to denounce the Abbey Theatre, which had premiered several of his plays by 1980, revived many more, and was to launch all of his works in the 1990s:

No reason for it at all, no reason for its existence . . . I don't understand what a national theatre is any more. I don't understand the need for a national theatre because it would imply that there is some kind of national voice . . .

(*EDI*, 131)

Finally, he even asserts, "I don't know what a [national] culture is, really" (*EDI*, 131).

Friel's evolving disillusion with nationalism is symptomatic of his generation's desire for distance from the increasingly confining political and ideological program of Irishness. The history of mainstream Irish nationalism from its emergence in the nineteenth century through its institutionalization following independence is a rigorously documented and discussed topic.³ Yet, the Irish form shares with all Western variants the reliance upon the belief in a narrow articulation of essentialist traits and values that constitute "Irishness" and distinguish it from the Irish perception of other national, ethnic, or cultural identities, such as those found in France and England, or Wales and Brittany. As Billig emphasizes, though much of the ideological self-fashioning is performed surreptitiously, if not subconsciously, its goal is nonetheless to suppress or assimilate the dissident or variant discourses that arise in reaction to it from *within* the nation and its culture (Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 71). Yet, even when competing parties within a state struggle over the identitarian significance of historical events and actors, they do so in broad agreement on the actors and events that are seminal to any postulation of national identity (Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 96). Or, as David Lloyd puts it, "the principal organizing metaphor of Irish nationalism is that of a proper paternity": a monologic articulation that hegemonically establishes an authoritative version of history constituting, in essence, the nation's genealogy (Lloyd, *Anomalous States*, 105).

Like any genealogy, nationalism strenuously asserts the possibility of only a single line of descent through each generation, Lloyd's "lineage of the fathers," and this ideological leveling seeks to erase the heteroglossia of diverse, if not unaligned, movements with a providential history of a single proto-nationalism. Such a reductive chronicle draws a line from the 1798 Uprising to independence, from Robert Emmet, through Daniel O'Connell and Charles Stewart Parnell to Eamon de Valera. In his analysis of the independence movement of 1916–22, Lloyd argues that a comparable revisionist leveling occurs horizontally as well. Although we may naively view this period as that during which *the* nationalist movement culminated in Irish independence, Lloyd asserts that we would more accurately recognize this era as one typified by opportunistic, shifting alliances between "a broad ideological spectrum of social and political movements," that included racialist nationalism, republican socialism, pacifist feminism, cultural nationalism, and socialist feminism (Lloyd, *Ireland*, 28). However, once independence was achieved, nationalist ideology revises "such popular movements out of history" (Lloyd, *Ireland*, 24). In response to the ideological homogenization enforced by nationalism, Lloyd describes the densely hybridized narrative structure of James Joyce's *Ulysses* as an example of the anti-nationalistic discourse that resists nationalism's patriarchal organization. Using the "Cyclops" chapter as his example, he argues that Joyce constructs an "adulterated" text that resists the reader's attempt to sort the competing voices into distinct narratives, which themselves could be reorganized to reaffirm the order which places nationalist ideology in a position against which various subalternities define themselves. In short, Joyce creates an adulterated text in which there "is not an opposition, conversational or polemical, between coherent 'voices,' but their entire intercontamination" (Lloyd, *Anomalous States*, 108).

Before leaving Friel's essays to consider his drama, I will return to an emblematic moment for his concept of narrative structure. Whereas Lloyd identifies nationalist ideology as a jealously paternal narrative, Friel also envisions narratives as overwhelmingly preoccupied with an anxiety over the patriarchal, that fleeting authoritative version of events that tantalizingly eludes the son's reconstruction.

Not surprisingly, Friel relies upon his own epiphanic memory of a childhood fishing expedition with his father that directly informs the desperate attempt by Gar O'Donnell to regain his own prelapsarian, adolescent harmony with his father in *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* (*SP*, 94–5). Both author's and character's attempts to recapture their edenic memory founder because of the recollection's factual impossibility once it is subjected to historical reconstruction.⁴ Whereas in the play this unresolved crisis finalizes Gar's (presumed) resolve to emigrate, Friel treats his own memory's instability as indicative of the mind's capability to create a more liberating "truth of its own" (*EDI*, 39). Seeking to avoid the impression that such a fictional memory is a specious conflation of two incompatible narrativities (the truthful and the false) demanding correction, Friel constructs a continuum of verisimilitude to sanction fictionalized truth:

What is a fact in the context of autobiography? A fact is something that happened to me or something I experienced. It can also be something I thought happened to me, something I thought I experienced. Or indeed an autobiographical fact can be pure fiction and no less true or reliable for that.

(*EDI*, 38)

In this terse leveling of the distinction between fiction and fact, Friel realigns the polar opposition of Truth to its flawed mistelling to dismantle the inherent hierarchy that privileges truth over falsehood. Moreover, by dissolving the boundaries between authentic truth and intentional fiction, Friel erases the distinction between the Objective, which can be proven, and the Subjective, which can be refuted. In short, by defending the "truth" of his factually inconsistent account from his early childhood, Friel dismisses the paternal master narrative that could only be offered by his father who, being an adult at the time of the event, could claim possession of an authoritative version. Thus, rather than seeking to recover and restore monologic Truth within the patriarchal hierarchy, Friel harmonizes contradictory versions into a relationship of complementarity between subjective narratives of relative value.

In this chapter, I intend to argue that the crisis of history that erupted in Northern Ireland's Troubles engulfed Friel within a

cultural emergency that compelled him to critique nationalist ideology in a manner analogous to Lloyd's reading of Joyce's *Ulysses*. Friel's relocation to the Republic failed to shield him from the political and social trauma of Northern Ireland, which spilled across the border, spawning considerable violence and political instability in the Republic as well. Indeed, Friel's expected refuge quickly became the focus of his dramatic critiques of failure. I will seek to trace the arch of Friel's development which broadly oscillates from political critiques of the state in the early decade to the social in the late decade. However, on the ideological level, the plays will be shown to share an evolving interest in both the patriarchal narrative, between the state and its citizens, and the paternal, between fathers and sons.⁵ Rather than postulating the disintegration of monologic nationalism into a competition of Bakhtinian voices, Friel's plays will fixate on the Gordian knot of oedipal conflict within the family and the state – ultimately the family as the state. Friel too exposes the lie of patriarchy; however, if for Joyce such iconoclasm unleashes a polyphony that is both ludic and liberating, for Friel it uncovers the dislocation of both state and family.

The Mundy Scheme, Volunteers, and Freedom of the City

Although separated by two intervening plays and six turbulent years, I will discuss *The Mundy Scheme* (1969) and *Volunteers* (1975) in sequence to focus on Friel's evolving critique of the politics of the Republic. While *Freedom of the City* will subsequently be shown to share traits with *Volunteers*, its setting in Northern Ireland necessitates its separate analysis. By drawing *The Mundy Scheme* and *Volunteers* into a proximity which is not otherwise exploited, I wish to emphasize the unexpected redirection of Friel's artistic scope. As discussed as the background to my reading of *Lovers*, Friel's relocation to the Republic should not be read as its endorsement; indeed, the production of *The Mundy Scheme* merely two years after his patriation transparently demonstrates the extent of his disillusionment with his new government.

Although this is Friel's only play to depict the actual workings of politicians, the action nevertheless transpires in Taoiseach F. X. Ryan's

drawing room, in the house that he shares with his mother. The taoiseach has been housebound by an attack of labyrinthitis, yet despite his illness the Republic's fiscal crisis, which threatens the survival of his government, forces him to meet with various ministers in his home, thus virtually transforming it into an office and angering his mother. Having failed to either receive loan extensions from international creditors or create internal revenue through domestic programs, Ryan and his ministers decide to adopt the Mundy Scheme. Homer Mundy, an Irish-American living in Texas, proposes to lease all available land in Counties Mayo, Sligo, Galway, Roscommon, Leitrim, and eventually Donegal – more than 5,000 square miles – to transform Western Ireland into a graveyard for the wealthy of Europe and America (*Mundy*, 199–204). Indeed, he plans to create “an all-inclusive package-deal burial” industry that will fuel both local industry and tourism (*Mundy*, 228). Although Ryan and his ministers recognize that the Irish “are addicted to death as it is” (*Mundy*, 220), they adopt the scheme both to cynically preserve their political power and enrich themselves.

The Mundy Scheme

Inhabits the interstice between the dramatist's own acknowledged and renounced oeuvre. Unlike *The Blind Mice* or *A Doubtful Paradise*, Friel allowed its initial publication to coincide with its production, though it remains the only published play not currently available in a collection or reissued by the Gallery Press.⁶ The play has similarly languished as undeserving of critical analysis as well; indeed, aside from Andrews' examination, the other critics present brief explanations of its failure both on the stage and the page.⁷ Maxwell's synopsis of the play shortly after its publication concludes with a general catalogue of the political traits that make “the Republic . . . the North's not-so-secret weapon”: “shoneenism, xenophobia, time-serving religion, [and] the Irish death-wish” (Maxwell, 85, 87). Dantanus provides an informative discussion of the Abbey's controversial rejection of the play, as well as a careful argument attributing the play's failure to an “unbalanced bias” that undermines its satire (Dantanus, 121). The pronouncements of Maxwell and Dantanus dominate the

subsequent criticism, seemingly leaving little left to be argued about. O'Brien's extensive plot summary is followed by a series of scattered identifications of the various targets of Friel's "verbal demolition job" (O'Brien, 70), while Pine includes references to the play only as part of broader discussions of *Freedom of the City* and *Aristocrats* (Pine, 130, 197). Only Andrews initiates a focused exploration of the play's themes and its excoriation of a political leadership ready to manipulate "the Irish addiction to death" to augment its own "abuse of power and privilege" (Andrews, 120). Surprisingly, despite the play's recognition of its own postcoloniality in the introductory voiceover (Mundy, 157-8), McGrath fails to engage seriously with the work. Although he echoes Maxwell's and Andrews' discussions of political corruption, his vague allusion to the play's relationship to the work of "postcolonial critics like Eagleton and Lloyd" is indicative of the book's frequently superficial relationship to postcolonial interpretive strategies (McGrath, 75).

Notwithstanding such criticism of the play, Frantz Fanon's essay "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness" reveals how astutely Friel understood the postcoloniality of Ireland's national underdevelopment more than thirty years after independence. However, before aligning Friel's play with Fanon's analysis, one must recognize that these Irish dynamics are beyond the intended scope of Fanon's work. "Pitfalls" explicates the immediate aftermath of independence, the chaotic period in which the anticolonial struggle is transformed into a proto-national phase of one-party, tribalized dictatorship, and it largely takes central and northern Africa as both its models and its audience (Fanon, *Wretched*, 177ff.). Moreover, unlike the Irish condition, the essay explores the additional cultural disadvantages of building a democratic structure for self-government in the absence of a broad-based "bourgeoisie similar to that which developed in Europe," where literacy and a tradition of electoral participation are widespread (Fanon, *Wretched*, 175). Nevertheless, the deployment of Fanon's essay into Friel's satire allows us to recognize the institutionalization of the governmental corruption and ineptitude that Fanon associates with emergent nationalism; moreover, by reading the play against the essay we are capable of recognizing the functioning of David

Lloyd's postcolonial differential "in which quite specific cultural forms emerge in relation to [the] universalizing process" posited by Fanon (Lloyd, *Ireland*, 3). In other words, while the corruption excoriated in *The Mundy Scheme* must be recognized as Irish in its particularity, it adheres to a broad postcolonial specularity. One example will suffice to demonstrate the mutation of Fanon's model into related Irish manifestations. Fanon argues that "the army ... becomes the arbiter" of power, guaranteeing a corrupt regime's survival despite "discontent among the mass of the people" (Fanon, *Wretched*, 174); similarly, in Friel's play the government relies upon the Gardaí to intimidate the citizens who mobilize against it, to forcefully evict the disgruntled dockworkers who have occupied the Law Courts (*Mundy*, 185), and to contain the "students with their bloody placards and banners" who protest against government policy (*Mundy*, 299).

Although Fanon admits that "the bankruptcy of the bourgeoisie is not apparent in the economic field only," it is certainly the target for some of his most sustained criticism (Fanon, *Wretched*, 163). The new national government inherits a country largely devoid of industry, because most forms of economic colonization were structured to facilitate the extraction of minerals and agricultural products rather than the construction of an industrial infrastructure.⁸ As a result of the new government's mixture of inexperience and insecurity, it relies upon and reenforces the inefficient agricultural structures constructed by the colonizer rather than embarking on a program of even moderate reform or industrialization; thus, the former colony continues either to export its raw materials or "go on being Europe's small farmers" (Fanon, *Wretched*, 152). Similarly, having been deprived of the industrialized northeast of Ulster following partition, the Irish Free State was largely a nation of pasture farmers dependent on the British market (Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 522–3).⁹ While industrial output remained anemic or actually declined, and agriculture productivity was "abysmally low" during the decades after independence, politicians were most concerned with rewarding their loyal supporters in agriculture rather than encouraging the modernization of farming practices:

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three decades of financial, economic, and social conservatism . . . viewing the farmers as embodying the essence of the national ideals, sacrificed the material and cultural well-being of other groups to their interests.

(Cairn and Richards, *Writing Ireland*, 139)

Although the politicians in Friel's play inhabit an Irish state fifty years after independence, we witness a nation similarly dependent on the exploitation of the land. When faced with the mounting economic crisis, Ryan and his ministers consider only schemes to lease harbors to the American navy (*Mundy*, 174–6) or convert the west of Ireland into a cemetery for the wealthy and privileged of America, France, and England (*Mundy*, 203–4). In fact, their choice to import rich nations' corporal refuse represents merely the late twentieth-century inversion of the traditional extractive flow between developed and undeveloped nations, resembling the economic dynamics that compel other poor nations to import the developed world's municipal garbage or hazardous waste.

Ireland's economic underdevelopment in *The Mundy Scheme* is shown to serve Western interests, so not surprisingly the West is partially responsible for its looming economic collapse. Indeed, Ryan's government has been left no alternative but to turn Ireland into an international charnel house because, the taoiseach complains, "England won't let me" devalue the currency and the ministers of international world banking in Zurich have refused his finance minister's personal appeal to extend the country's credit for a third time (*Mundy*, 174). Here too, Friel's satire resonates with Fanon's assertion that newly independent countries are destabilized by a continuous economic emergency in which budgets are "balanced through loans and gifts, while every three or four months the chief ministers themselves . . . come to the erstwhile mother countries or elsewhere, fishing for capital" (Fanon, *Wretched*, 167). Ultimately, facing the imminent collapse of their government, Ryan's cabinet adopts the Mundy Scheme to transform Ireland into the world's acknowledged center of necro-tourism, which is of course a symptomatically Irish response to the industrial bourgeoisie's demand for various forms of tourism:

centers of rest and relaxation and pleasure resorts . . . meet the wishes of the Western bourgeoisie. Such activity is given the name of tourism, and for the occasion will be built up as a national industry.

(Fanon, *Wretched*, 153)

Indeed, along with hyperbolic expectations of "a flood of capital investment" and "full employment in depressed areas," the Ryan government anticipates "a 300 percent leap in tourism" from mourning relatives "who come here for a quiet, restful holiday" (*Mundy*, 194, 234). However, just as tourism symbolizes the antithesis of industrialization and modernization through its catering to a foreign elite's demand for romanticized simulacra of natural beauty and national character, so too the enduring and damning image for the Mundy Scheme is its perverse revitalization of the traditional Irish potato digger: "all those fine young Mayo lads standing to attention with their shovels, waiting to fill in the graves" (*Mundy*, 296).

Although Fanon offers a productive master text for further penetrating Friel's minor play, I would like to end by considering perhaps its most pronounced anomaly: the relationship of the taoiseach to his mother. By forcing the negotiation of the affairs of state to transpire in Ryan's home, *The Mundy Scheme* stages the enjambment of the public and the private, or more accurately the invasion of the personal sphere by the political. Ryan's mother, who is described as "a virago and . . . doting as well" (*Mundy*, 181), is added to the play in part to demonstrate how unwelcome this intrusion is; furthermore, her primary function is to encourage a suspicion that Ryan is underdeveloped both sexually and psychologically. On the stage alone, Friel cannot sufficiently convey the aberrance of Ryan's attachment to his mother; thus, he twice emphasizes it through the stage directions: he concludes his introductory description of Ryan by noting that "He is secretly devoted to his mother" (*Mundy*, 162), and when Mrs. Ryan is introduced, he adds that "When they are alone together, his dependence on her is obvious and total" (*Mundy*, 181). Although overlooked in the other discussions of the play, we should not disregard the significance of Friel's inclusion of a maternal character, which is perhaps the rarest immediate family

member in his drama. They otherwise occur only as Cass' mother, identified merely as "Mother," who functions as an empty cipher on the fringe of *The Loves of Cass McGuire*, and Mrs. Wilson in "Losers," who anchors the benighted matrilineal order arrayed against her son-in-law Andy.

Even though Ryan's father has been completely erased from *The Mundy Scheme*, this absent father has not been usurped by the victorious oedipal son; rather than heading both family and state as combined patriarch, Ryan's dependence upon his mother betrays his constituent underdevelopment. Indeed, Ryan's mother embodies the Phallic Mother, symbolizing not attainable desire, but the "demand" that cannot be satisfied: "that Other to be situated *some way short of* any needs which it might gratify" (Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality*, 80; italics in original). Nowhere does Mrs. Ryan operate within the play's structure more as the psychological affect that promises, yet withholds satisfaction of her son's demand than in her manipulation of the "drops" that treat his debilitating bouts of labyrinthitis (*Mundy*, 179–82). Indeed, this linkage to her son's vertigo is far from accidental, for Friel wishes to imply that Ryan's debility is psychological rather than physical in its origin.

Born in 1919, the year immediately following Ireland's withdrawal from the United Kingdom, Ryan represents the generation without direct experience in Ireland's struggle for independence (*Mundy*, 162). However, if the argument in chapter 2 demonstrated the lingering link between such fathers as S. B. O'Donnell and Fox Melarky and Irish independence, this chapter's discussion of *Living Quarters* and *Aristocrats* will demonstrate the intertwining of patriarchy with nationalism. With varying emphases and narrative strategies, the plays of the 1970s repeatedly portray the postindependence generation's attempt to either redefine nationalism or exert control over the aging patriarchs of romantic Irishness who dominate the play despite their physical marginalization. Ryan seeks to reconstruct his link to his father's generation through his dependence on his mother, just as the psychological subject misdirects the patriarchal onto the Phallic Mother, forcing it to assume the Father's position; however, Friel conveys the fundamental deviance of such a mother-son

relationship by ending his satire with Ryan's submission to his mother's nocturnal household schedule which is at odds with normal social order (*Mundy*, 313–15). In lacking a father, Ryan lacks direct access to the generation that won Irish independence and, thus, the direct transmission of its ideology; in other words, within Friel's manifest logic, Ryan's misdirected dependence on his mother signifies his frustrated desire to recover his link to Irish independence, nationalism, and originary ideological legitimacy.

Volunteers could also be described as a play inhabiting the periphery of Friel's dramatic corpus, because the hostility of its initial reviews and the play's own elusive ideological strategy have made it relatively absent from both the Irish and London stages. Indeed, after its premiere at the Abbey Theatre in 1975, the play was not produced again until 1987, and then only at Cork's Ivernia Theatre, though it was subsequently well received in its London premiere in 1988 (Burke, "Them Class," 45–6).¹⁰

The play depicts five political prisoners who have been volunteer excavators for an archeological dig of a small medieval homestead on the final day before the site is unexpectedly closed. The overt action focuses on the personal interactions, and often antagonisms, that characterize this somewhat arbitrarily assembled group of workers and professionals; however, the play quickly establishes that two men are the charismatic poles around which all the other men orient themselves: Keeney, whose "public mask of the joker" allows him to both entertain and challenge the men with whom he works (*Vol*, 17); and Butt, "a quiet man . . . of strength and obstinacy and self-knowledge" (*Vol*, 16). As the play slowly works towards the verbal confrontation between these two prisoners, the action interrogates archeology as a practice: whether knowledge gained from it is reliable, whether its artifacts can be deciphered, and whether archeology itself can prevail against careerist opportunism, politics, and business. Ultimately, the drama ends and the site closes before basic questions regarding the past of the Viking "Lief" or the future of the volunteers have been answered.

Coming between the more sensational *Freedom of the City* (1973) and the series of plays that conclude the 1970s, *Volunteers* has

frequently been ignored by the critical community as well; indeed, it is one of the least discussed of Friel's plays in article form, with the first scholarly treatment not appearing until ten years after the play's premier.¹¹ However, the drama has enjoyed considerable attention in the formal studies of Friel's career, in part because of its perceived relationship to the themes that will dominate the criticism of his mature career. In "Brian Friel: The Double Stage," Seamus Deane is the first to suggest the centrality of *Volunteers*, both to the recognition of latent topics in earlier plays, such as "the link between authority and love," and the maturation of Friel's later expositions of "the hidden story" and "the splintering of authority" (Deane, "Celtic," 166–9). Warily declaring that the play "does not lend itself to easy interpretation" (Dantanus, 160), Dantanus follows Deane's critical valuation but offers only tentative interpretations frequently qualified by such phrases as "what may be Friel's intention" (156), "it seems to me" (158), or "that could suggest some kind of" (159). Yet, despite this caution, Dantanus identifies many of the topics that will be more rigorously explored in the later criticism: the play's political allusion to the reintroduction of internment in Northern Ireland (154); the dig as metaphor for the *longue durée* of Irish history (156); the prisoners' narrative thematization of the medieval Viking Lief as representing such "wounds" of Irish history as "the Penal Laws, absentee landlordism and evictions"; and the Irish "willingness to worship . . . the role of the victim" (Dantanus, 157, 158).¹²

In their later analyses, Rudiger Imhof, Elmer Andrews, and F. C. McGrath argue for the primacy of language as structuring these social topics. Indeed, while Imhof identifies the volunteers, several of the props, and even Charles Stuart Parnell (who is the subject of a limerick) as the play's "casualties of language" (Imhof, "Re-writing History," 88–90), Andrews asserts that "the heart of Friel's theme" for the play as a whole is an idea rather at odds with a play about imprisonment: "the individual's relation to his society [is] fundamentally a matter of language, of which 'story' he happens to believe" (Andrews, 145). McGrath similarly identifies *Volunteers* as "one of Friel's earliest language plays" (McGrath, 126), and he presents the most comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the limericks, songs,

verbal banter, and stories “that [establish] the discourses, sets the horizons, and limits the possibilities within which the prisoners/diggers must work out their destiny” (McGrath, 127). Moreover, whereas earlier treatments of *Volunteers* broadly hypothesize on the referential structure of the various fictional histories attributed to the tenth-century Viking Lief, McGrath seeks historical antecedents in myth and nineteenth or early twentieth-century history (McGrath, 131–3).¹³

Ruth Niel and Richard Pine are the first critics to pursue Seamus Heaney’s insight that Hamlet is more than merely an idiosyncratic rhetorical reference for the play’s antic showman Keeney (Heaney, *Preoccupations*, 215). Niel’s diverse strategies for reading Keeney ultimately seek to resolve this character’s discrepancies through his association with Shakespeare’s vexed hero who can only dig for truth with language (Niel, “Digging,” 42–3). According to Pine’s allusive reading of *Volunteers*, the play “has little to do with internment” but, like *Hamlet*, has much to do with digging into one’s psyche and “the spectacle of self-destruction” (Pine, 143–4). McGrath and to a much lesser extent Patrick Burke follow Pine in the effort to interpret *Volunteers* within the context of *Hamlet*, and all identify the Shakespearian character’s feigned madness as the deciphering antecedent for Keeney’s actions. McGrath notes the excavation pit’s resonance with the grave-digging scene in *Hamlet*, productively retaining the tension in the dual identification of Keeney with both Hamlet and the philosopher clown (McGrath, 126), while Burke suggests further analogies between various characters in the two plays (Burke, “Them Class,” 47).

Despite Heaney’s spirited defense of the play as one of Friel’s most focused critiques of contemporary political society (Heaney, *Preoccupations*, 214), the critical attempts to delineate historical and literary allusions for the drama’s characters and tropes demonstrate a common retreat into familiar interpretive strategies, generally glossing over the play’s pointed political content. When such critics as Dantanus and McGrath do allude to the play’s political content, either they make general references to the repressive regime in the North (Dantanus, 154) or sweeping allusions to colonial Ireland (McGrath,

131–3). In contrast, I will attempt to demonstrate that this strategy also expresses a certain willed denial of the extent to which Friel's play magnifies and specifies the political cynicism manifest in *The Mundy Scheme*, ultimately to offer a Dostoyevskian indictment of the contemporary Republic. Or, to reorient the use of *Hamlet* as the shadow play for *Volunteers*, I will demonstrate that Friel's intention is to reveal that "[the Republic's] a prison" (II. ii. 236) as much as Northern Ireland.

Aspiring to a universalism embracing all of the Republic, the play avoids specifically situating the action in Dublin, preferring the circumlocutionary "the city" in "Ireland" (*Vol*, 9); however, the assumption that the play transpires in the capital is assured by the action's resemblance to Dublin's Wood Quay excavation, which was embroiled in a well-publicized controversy throughout the 1970s. More to the point, despite the frequent critical effort to read a criticism of Northern Ireland's repressive regime into the play, *Volunteers* itself avoids all reference to injustices there. In the earliest arguments for such a political reading, Dantanus and O'Brien posited a schizophrenic dichotomy functioning within the play, asserting that at times the play refers to conditions within the southern Republic and at other times to the northern province. However there is no internal evidence to suggest that Friel wishes to associate the play's actions or politics with the Northern regime; in fact, he conspicuously avoids it in such examples as the history of Smiler, who lived in the west of County Donegal and organized a protest march against the Dublin government (*Vol*, 55–6). In other words, we are asked by such criticism to accept the unlikely assumption that the portrayal of protest against the Republic and internment in the Republic is intended to represent conditions in Northern Ireland through some hypothetical transference not suggested within the play. While the later criticism shifts its attention away from this political equivocation to explore purely aesthetic topics, the examinations of Andrews and McGrath uncritically accept the assumed identification with Northern Ireland, though McGrath does conclude his lengthy examination of language to opine that Friel's critique encompasses nationalist ideology as well.¹⁴

Although the character Wilson, the volunteers' guard, derides their status as "political prisoners" (*Vol*, 14), by Keeney's own admission, the five men who have volunteered for the dig are among those "interned" for public security (*Vol*, 52, 55). Although governments in both the North and South had employed internment broadly against Republican activists during the Second World War and against the IRA during its border campaign of 1957–62, only the Stormont government in Northern Ireland revived the practice during Troubles, in August 1971.¹⁵ Earlier, in December 1970, Taoiseach Jack Lynch had announced his intention to renew internment without trial in the Republic in response to specific threats against ministers of his government; however, he soon retreated from this proposed policy in the face of substantial public protest and formal opposition (Dwyer, *Nice Fellow*, 245–8). Throughout the remainder of his premiership, which survived through February 1973, Lynch's government refused to reactivate internment despite the strenuous requests of both the Stormont and Westminster premiers (Dwyer, *Nice Fellow*, 274–5). Despite this calculated repudiation of internment, in late 1971 the Lynch government facilitated the ability of the police to win convictions against suspected militant Republicans by amending the Offences Against the State Act to "allow a senior garda to give evidence in court as to his belief that an accused was a member of an illegal organisation" (Dwyer, *Nice Fellow*, 297).¹⁶

During 1974, the probable period of the play's composition, violence from the North increasingly spread into the Republic and the Irish state seemed to careen precipitously close to widespread civil unrest. Not only did Dublin and Monaghan suffer the largest loss of life in a single day as a result of the Bloody Friday bombings (11 May 1974), but the year's political kidnappings and robberies were overshadowed by the IRA's murder of Senator Billy Fox and the bombing of Dublin's Central Criminal Court (Coogan, *Disillusioned Decades*, 26–7). The Dublin government, under the leadership of Liam Cosgrave who succeeded Lynch, adopted "a firm 'law and order' approach" (Coogan, *Disillusioned Decades*, 25) in an effort to quell the mounting violence; it passed legislation allowing the arrest and trial of people accused of murder in the North, adopted various

"stronger measures against subversives," increased police intervention, and refused to negotiate with IRA militants (Lee, *Ireland*, 479–80). In short, *Volunteers* was composed amid a period of escalating civil strife and statist repression in the Republic as well as Northern Ireland.¹⁷ Rather than ignoring this dire political context, I will pursue it into the structure of Friel's play, to argue that it magnifies the apprehension with the Irish state that was portrayed by Friel as merely "at hand" in *The Mundy Scheme*, staging what J. J. Lee described as the "nasty taste in the public mouth" regarding the Cosgrave government's authoritarian tactics (Lee, *Ireland*, 480). Indeed, I will suggest that the play's portrayal of internment is intended not to redirect the audience's attention to repressive policies in the North, but to alert it to the creeping authoritarianism of the Irish Republic.

Magnifying the treatment initiated in *The Mundy Scheme*, *Volunteers* exposes not merely a government that has drifted from its idealistic foundations, but one that has become inimical to them. Not only does Friel present a government that effectively practices internment, but his condemnation of the Cosgrave administration is revealed in the fleeting portraits of the individuals it chooses to confine. What strikes the audience of *Volunteers* is not the vicious character of the "tough men" (*Vol*, 15) imprisoned by the Republic, but their apparent harmlessness. Rather than portraying the work crew as composed of murderers, explosive experts, or saboteurs, the most serious crimes against the state revealed in the play are those of Knox, who naively carried messages for "subversives" (*Vol*, 70). While nothing is revealed to justify the others' imprisonment, George and even their jailer Wilson demonstrate their casual trust of these supposed criminals. Not only does Des, the junior academic, aspire to a genuine camaraderie among them, but he even provides Butt a package of razor blades, which he would hardly have given to a notoriously dangerous man (*Vol*, 31). In short, Friel avoids a militarizing portrayal of the prisoners by leaving their personal histories banally obscure. Even when Butt privately recognizes Keeney as having been "one of the best men in the movement" (*Vol*, 72), he does not describe Keeney's status with such recognized paramilitary

terminology as "OC," "quartermaster," "adjutant," or "soldier" (Bishop and Mallie, *Provisional IRA*, 247), rather, Keeney remains innocuously "a bank-clerk who had courage and who had brains." In fact, even when they effectively revolt against George's civil authority, they refrain from overtly harming or intimidating him, vandalizing the site, or escaping themselves (*Vol*, 54–72). Finally, Keeney, Butt, and Pyne may well have brutal pasts, but when more dangerous men would plan a defense against the sentence of their comrades' "kangaroo court" (*Vol*, 52), Keeney remains uncharacteristically silent, while Pyne and Butt surrender all hope (*Vol*, 81–2).

If Friel encourages his audience to doubt the necessity of the volunteers' internment through these portrayals, the stories of Smiler and Butt condemn the Republic's treatment of its citizens with considerably less equivocation. Both characters suggest the de Valera ideal of the Gaelic citizen: agrarian workers in the west far removed from the corrupting influence of cities, factories, and foreign influences. A steward in a stonemason quarry with only six other workers, Smiler essentially led a civil rights march on Dublin in protest against the internment of a fellow worker (*Vol*, 55). Indeed, Keeney's romanticized recreation of Smiler's naive patriotism recalls the heroism of the previous generations of Irish nationalism, or the type of determined activism that would have been championed by the Republic had he protested against Stormont. However, Friel clearly denounces Smiler's own government for his destruction:

Six thick quarrymen from the back of nowhere, led by Smiler, thumping across the country behind a tatty banner . . . Well, of course they got about as far as the Derry border and there they whipped Smiler off to jail in Dublin and beat the tar out of him for twelve consecutive hours – you know, just as a warning . . . Course they give him the odd bleaching still – you know – just to keep him trim.

(*Vol*, 56)

Starting his march in rural Donegal, heading to Dublin, and without the suggestion of militant or partisan affiliations, Smiler's

brutalization exposes the *Gárda Síochána* as indistinguishable from the B Specials, Northern Ireland's notorious agents of wanton state violence. In short, Smiler's history is the most elaborate provided in the play because Friel intends to expose the Republic's brutalization of its own innocent people.

While Butt's exact story is more elusive and less sensational, it too resonates with sentimental Irish stereotypes, in this case the self-sufficient Gaelic farmer. Friel himself seeks to emphasize the association of Butt to the land by fixing his identity as that of "a countryman" in the stage directions upon his entrance into the play (*Vol*, 16). Similarly, Butt is the only character identified as "Gaelic"; not only does Keeney refer to Butt's "Gaelic head" early in the play to reenforce and contextualize his association to agrarian stereotypes (*Vol*, 25), but later also when the two men engage in their narratological duel over Lief's story after Keeney has savagely mocked Knox (*Vol*, 71). In response to Butt's "burning" eyes, Keeney seems to avoid accepting the challenge to debase his rival's history, by tersely recounting a series of Viking stories about a slave, a blacksmith, and a carpenter, only finally to approach Butt's tale when, dropping any "Viking" allusions, Lief becomes "a crofter who sucked a living from a few acres of soggy hill-farm – a married man with a large family."¹⁸ Rather than reading this appropriation of Lief as historicized allegories, plunging the reader back into distant Irish myth or past colonization, I will follow the play's convention to read such narratives as thinly veiled expositions of the characters' own contemporary lives.¹⁹

The previous stories about Pyne and Knox apply a meager patina of medieval topicality to the characters' biographies, which strenuously resist a simple critical retreat into romanticizations of historical injustices. Whereas the similarities between Knox's life and Keeney's story are painfully apparent, even Pyne's fiction of Lief signing on to a "tanker" (*Vol*, 62) and taking a foreign wife serve to establish their primary allusion to Pyne's own maritime career and marriage to an Englishwoman, which itself would hardly have been common practice with paramilitary fighters (*Vol*, 19). Likewise, the temptation is great to simplify and sanitize the political reference inherent in Butt's story by deflecting it into nineteenth-century

paradigms which rely upon the easy target of English imperialism. However, Butt's exploitation and eventual eviction recast the contemporary Irish state into the role traditionally associated with colonial England: legitimizing and facilitating eviction. Keeney's final narrative of eviction suggests a modern innovation on the stereotypical injustice; rather than the hereditary landlord clearing his ancestral land, Butt is evicted by a "new landlord" who had bought up "the whole valley." Although not directly attributed to state intervention, the sum of Keeney's four brief narratives, with their emphasis on collective "masters" and society (in the form of the "village"), align this final betrayal of agrarian workers with state complicity. In this sense, the state is suggested as complicit with "moneyed interests" (*Vol*, 46) in the exploitation of both Ireland's public heritage, the archeological site closed to facilitate the construction of "an enormous glass and steel hotel" (*Vol*, 82), and its private heritage as well, the small-holding farmer "evicted because he had no title" (*Vol*, 72).

With its genesis in Friel's own participation in Derry's violently disrupted civil rights march later to be known as Bloody Sunday (*EDI*, 110),²⁰ *The Freedom of the City* focuses on three hapless marchers who unwittingly take temporary refuge in the mayor's parlor of Derry's Guildhall: the symbol of Protestant power and authority for Catholic and Protestant alike.²¹ In this play, premiered barely a year after the fatalities, Friel intends to avoid melodramatic recreation by juxtapositioning their execution to the ambiguous and dissonant responses parasitically dependent upon it. The drama's first image is that of the bodies of Lily, Michael, and Skinner being photographed and provided last rites, moments after their murders by the British army, and the play recreates their last hours of life in a tale whose emotive power is barely allayed by this initial revelation that announces the disruption of both chronological and naturalistic mimesis. Friel repeatedly frustrates the audience's desire to suspend its belief and surrender to the trio's tragedy by creating various interlocutors such as the priest, judge, sociologist, balladeer, and reporter, who interrupt the core narrative and employ the jargon of their respective fields in their attempts to assert ideological control of the trio's story.

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In other words, Friel creates a Brechtian "epic," in which the "narrative turns the spectator into an observer . . . forces him to take decisions [and] face something," especially the political forces, whose actions are staged in the drama (Brecht, *On Theatre*, 37).²²

The Freedom of the City was first briefly discussed in Maxwell's study of Friel shortly after the play's premiere, and in some ways remains the most politically cautious response to the play's appropriation of Bloody Sunday. Similarly, though Elizabeth Winkler's early article carefully explicates the diverse discourses characterizing the play's dichotomy between the "human" and the "military" (Winkler, "Historical Actuality," 24), she repeatedly asserts that Friel's dramatic goal is less political and more social (Winkler, "Historical Actuality," 16, 18, 23, 24, 27). If these early readings express a desire to resist a politicization of the criticism, the subsequent interpretations have presented diverse readings of Friel's relationship to both Irish and English politics.²³ In his discussion, Dantanus seeks to prevent the play's "Catholic point of view" (Dantanus, 134) from leading to an "anti-British, anti-Army, and anti-tribunal . . . simplification" (139), and to encourage this neutrality he argues for the American sociologist's importance to exposing the play's emphasis on poverty as a determining factor for understanding the trio. However, Dantanus coyly retreats from his own reading of the play as an analysis of poverty by eventually rejecting Professor Dodds' importance, warning against the temptation to reductively read the play "in terms of poverty alone" (Dantanus, 142). Conversely, Pine's study adopts the most unapologetically nationalist reading of the play:

two separate truths are emerging during the play. The final verdicts represent the two ways of living in Northern Ireland, either for or against authority and its implicit oppression of minorities and the individual.

(Pine, 135)

Indeed, Pine asserts that "in such circumstances . . . artists cannot be neutral," and he faults the play for not more clearly providing "the right marching songs" for the Irish people (Pine, 142). Although not responding to Pine in particular, Bernice Schrank offers the most

comprehensive argument against so reading the play, tracing Friel's deployment of theatrical space and employment of language to negotiate between "the Manichean terms" of the Northern conflict (Schrack, "Politics," 127).

The critical treatments by Elizabeth Hale Winkler and Elmer Andrews shift the interpretive focus from the central trio to the ideologues who seek to manipulate them. Appearing less than ten years after the play's premiere, Winkler's probing examination resists the temptation to simplistically read the play's various choric figures against their broadly associated ideologies, neither demonizing the English, nor apologizing for the Republicans. Writing in the midst of the very Troubles that form the play's background, Winkler cautiously strives to defuse the play's political critique of both the English military and militant Republicanism. Conversely, Andrews argues that Friel intends to deploy a Bakhtinian polyphony to expose "the bogus language of the corrupt state authority and . . . the equally bogus language of traditional Nationalist mythology" (Andrews, 130). Indeed, his argument regarding Michael, Lily, and Skinner reveals these ostensibly nationalist characters' ambivalence towards a republican ideology that has little to offer those seeking immediate and local redress to their state-sponsored poverty and political disenfranchisement (Andrews, 130-3).²⁴

Andrews' deployment of Bakhtin as an interpretive wedge to pry open the play has influenced two skillful readings of *Freedom*. Michael Parker employs the idea of polyphony to constructively assess the ideological strategies of the judge, priest, Prof. Dodds and RTE reporter (Parker, "Forms of Redress," 51-5), producing the criticism's most nuanced understanding of the characters' relationships to each other (Parker, "Forms of Redress," 57-63). Helen Fulton expands Andrews' analysis of hegemonic discourses to demonstrate the extent to which even ostensibly nationalist figures such as the priest, television reporter, and even Michael and Lily "contribute to the hegemonic consensus" that subjugates the Catholic nationalists of Northern Ireland (Fulton, "Hegemonic Discourses," 72-7). Finally, Corbett attentively examines the evolving characterizations of the judge, reporter, and balladeer to achieve a nuanced reading of these

secondary characters' evolution (Corbett, 147–58). Additionally, he provides an admirable synopsis of the play's historical and dramatic contexts (Corbett, 142–6).

In some ways, McGrath completes the critical oscillation away from a focus on Michael, Skinner, and Lily by arguing that unlike Oedipus or Macbeth, the trio cannot be considered the play's protagonists, because their actions and decisions "contribute nothing to advance the plot" (McGrath, 103).²⁵ McGrath's discussion also benefits from both the careful comparison of the Widgery Tribunal's report into the events of Bloody Sunday to the dramatic judge's findings, as well as of the relationship of the play's sociologist Professor Dodds to the American sociologist Oscar Lewis (McGrath, 105–7, 112–18).²⁶ Despite the overall merit of McGrath's argument, I will introduce my reading of *Freedom of the City* by noting a curious semantic sleight of hand that dominates his conclusion. McGrath seeks to position *Freedom of the City* on Friel's developmental cusp between "modernist and postmodernist epistemologies," "modernist and postmodernist modes," and "modernist and postmodernist views" (McGrath, 121–2). Once this proposition has been sufficiently asserted, in the argument's final paragraph he asserts that this modal equilibrium signals a "transition in Friel's oeuvre from a colonial to a postcolonial consciousness" as well (McGrath, 122). The reader is forced to wonder whether in McGrath's perspective there is any distinction between the two interpretive strategies. Ultimately, McGrath posits a postcolonial narrative strategy relying on a retreat into postmodern *différance*, a guarding of the question that renders all inquiries into the ideological context of *Freedom of the City* as necessary but impossible to answer, effectively asserting that this deeply political play aspires to a renunciation of its advocacy (McGrath, 120–2).

A similar question over theoretical taxonomy motivates Kwame Anthony Appiah in his essay "The Postcolonial and the Postmodern," where he seeks to untangle the postmodern from the postcolonial as he has encountered them in West Africa. In an argument that partially anticipates Lloyd's strategy in "Adulteration and the Nation" (1993), Appiah emphasizes that the postcolonial defines itself through its rejection of the failed ideology of institutionalized

nationalism, which adopts many of the former colonizers' denigrated stereotypes of native identity. Similarly for Appiah, the postcolonial narrative embodies a rejection of the literary realism associated with such independence-era authors as Achebe (Appiah, *Father's House*, 150). Although these ideological exigencies may seemingly ally the postcolonial to the postmodern, which similarly rejects such master narratives of nationalism and realism, Appiah unequivocally argues that distinctions in agency presuppose postcolonialism's fundamental incompatibility with postmodernity: the postcolonial "is grounded in an appeal to an ethical universalism . . . hardly likely to make common cause with [postmodern] relativism" (Appiah, *Father's House*, 152). In other words, though postcolonial practice is indebted to postmodern theory for its initial articulation, it ultimately applies its methods to the unequivocal advocacy of identifiable cultural, ethical values. Thus, Appiah would differentiate between the postcolonial novelist such as Syl Cheney-Coker, who employs magic realism to commemorate the dense layering of diverse cultures in his native Sierra Leone, and the postmodern author such as Salman Rushdie, who celebrates the free-floating hybridity of diasporic culture in such imperial metropolises as London and New York.²⁷

With Appiah's distinction in mind, I will argue that Friel does not endow the play with its striated narrative to blur the political and ideological issues inherent in Northern Ireland's conflict. Such a supposition of indifference is insupportable, for the play stages a clear condemnation of the actions of both the English army and the English tribunal that later justified an action clearly portrayed as murder. Yet, I will offer an argument with limited sympathy with Andrews' hypothesis that Friel seeks to indict both "state authority and . . . Nationalist mythology" (Andrews, 130). Whereas *Freedom of the City* does intend to interrogate the British administration, and by extension the Unionism supported by it, his treatment of Republican nationalism betrays a more nuanced strategy; rather than subjecting Republicanism to a scathing denunciation commensurate to that reserved for the Anglo-Ulster nexus, he seeks to covertly erase nationalist ideology from his portrayal of Derry's impoverished community. My previous arguments have well documented the ambivalence that

defines Friel's nationalism throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s; yet, while no longer passionately endorsing Republicanism, he is far from prepared to denounce it. In other words, though one cannot doubt Friel's admission that he wrote the play "out of some kind of heat and some kind of immediate passion" against the statist violence and the travesty of the subsequent Widgery investigation (*EDI*, 110), he specifically resisted any impulse to endorse Republicanism. Seeking a narrative strategy that allowed him neither to endorse nor condemn nationalism, Friel portrays the Derry citizens as existing in an ideological vacuum, ultimately leaving Michael, Lily, and Skinner unaligned, embodying the "plenitudinous present" of the subaltern, the nation-people as they fleetingly exist before they are absorbed into ideology's narrative of history (Bhabha, *Location*, 151).

The testimony of the many histories and autobiographies concerned with the Troubles, and Bloody Sunday in particular, uniformly depict both collaborative and militant nationalists as functioning in tandem in Derry's civil rights movement throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Yet, when critical readers review the drama, they cannot but note that both accommodationalist and militant nationalist affiliations have been sanitized from the play on the level of both structure and narrative. Structurally, one looks in vain for a nationalist spokesperson to counter the roles of the judge, brigadier, and their associated colleagues. Father Brosnan awkwardly seeks to manipulate his congregation to separate the Church's Catholic interests from those of "Godless communism," which Andrews assumes refers directly to the civil rights movement (Andrews, 135), but could equally apply to nationalist militants as well in light of the official IRA's adoption of a socialist program during the late 1960s.²⁸ Without any character clearly defined as a politician or IRA spokesperson to articulate a Republican or nationalist interpretation of the Guildhall events, this responsibility falls to the balladeer, a drunken stage-Irishman whose farcical singing interludes, complete with a children's chorus, present merely a caricatured castration of Republicanism (*SP*, 118, 148).

In the characterization of the central trio, Friel has conscientiously avoided the inclusion of nationalist sympathies among his representation of Derry's activist community. Michael's devotion to

middle-class aspirations and nonviolence is rigorously emphasized throughout the play, but though Friel allows him repeatedly to state his support specifically for the civil rights movement and its language of political universalism (*SP*, 140), such statements conspicuously fail to express agreement with, or recognition of, even an accommodationalist nationalist agenda. Indeed, his vocabulary has been sanitized of all overt references to nationalism, employing only such neutral terms as “civil rights” (*SP*, 127) or “dignified” (*SP*, 129) for those tenets he supports and such euphemisms as “hooligan” (*SP*, 127) or “revolutionary” (*SP*, 132) for those he opposes. To that extent, Michael is a narrowly one-dimensional character who fails to reflect the pronounced Catholic and, after the notorious Derry civil rights march of 5 October 1968, increasingly Republican character of the movement (Bardon, *Ulster*, 663–4). Similarly, Lily is portrayed as entirely innocent of all but the most broadly generic political affiliations to the extent that she fails to recognize that several of the civil rights demands had been granted “six months ago” by the government (*SP*, 154). Having given dramatic reality to two stereotypical factions of Derry’s marching community – the civil rights idealist who identifies with “high and low, doctors, accountants, plumbers, teachers, bricklayers” (*SP*, 129), and the accidental activist who represents the politically uninformed “culture of poverty” (*SP*, 110) – Friel’s final character Skinner should represent the nationalist faction, if not its militant wing.

Skinner’s cynical appraisal of the ineffectiveness of civil rights marching underscores the suspicious incongruity of his presence among the marchers, recalling that Martin McGuinness and “almost the entire membership of the Derry units” of the Provisional IRA members marched on Bloody Sunday (Bishop and Mallie, *Provisional IRA*, 162). Skinner’s composition generically suggests several of the traits associated with the IRA sympathizer: a young man who uses a pseudonym, admits to no fixed address, and moves about, even to England or Scotland (*SP*, 152). Yet he suggests possible IRA affiliations more in the performative traits associated with paramilitary training: “Recruits were lectured and tested on ... political education and security procedures” (Bishop and Mallie, *Provisional IRA*, 117). Beneath Skinner’s disdain for collaborationist engagement is an

appreciation of the socio-political conditions that is superior to Michael's and suggests an ideological education of their own:

Mr. Hegarty is of the belief that if five thousand of us are demonstrating peacefully and they come along and shoot us down, then automatically we . . . we . . . (*To Michael*) Sorry, what's that theory again?

(*SP*, 141)

Nowhere is Skinner's recognition of abstract global-economic forces more apparent than in his fleeting, but impassioned attempt to awaken Lily to what the character Professor Dodds would identify as "an objective view of their condition" (*SP*, 111):²⁹

for the first time in your life you grumbled and someone else grumbled and someone else, and you heard each other, and became aware that there were hundreds, thousands, millions of us all over the world . . . It's about us – the poor – the majority – stirring in our sleep. And if that's not what it's all about, then it has nothing to do with us.

(*SP*, 154)

In addition, throughout the play's action the audience is allowed glimpses suggesting that Skinner combines this ideological awareness with evidence of training in "security procedures." To that end, his entrance into the play marks a striking contrast to the fumbblings of the other two beleaguered marchers: while they are debilitated by the tear gas, Skinner "races on from right" alert and uneffected, as if he had been prepared for the gas (*SP*, 112). Within moments he further contrasts himself to Michael when he reacts to a burst of gunfire: "Skinner *SP*, flat on his face until the burst is over" as Michael coughs (*SP*, 113). Indeed, whether he is "examining [the room] with quick, lithe efficiency" (*SP*, 113), "deftly" forcing a lock with his penknife (*SP*, 119), or coolly assessing the gathering army (*SP*, 139), Skinner demonstrates his tactical skills.

In other words, Skinner is a "hooligan"; indeed, that he has been soaked by a water cannon suggests that while Michael positioned himself nearest the speakers' platform (*SP*, 114), Skinner

positioned himself nearest the troops, perhaps to join fellow hooligans battling the army. Set in 1970, the play transpires during the initial period when large numbers of young men joined the newly formed Provisional IRA, reinvigorating militant Republicanism after a decade in which the IRA had suffered declining membership and inactivity.³⁰ Many of Derry's "Sixty-niners," young men who joined the Provisionals in the wake of the Battle of the Bogside in 1969, found their way into paramilitary activity through such an initial period of hooliganism: street fighting, opportunistic sabotage, and barricade construction (Bishop and Mallie, *Provisional IRA*, 116–20). Thus, this association with hooliganism situates Skinner within the demographic of young men who in 1970 were drifting towards formal paramilitary involvement.³¹ Skinner combines these characteristics with a hatred of English domination that expresses itself through such acts of symbolic violence as his imaginary sword fight against "the British army" (*SP*, 153) and his later use of a ceremonial sword to skewer the portrait of Sir Joshua Hetherington (*SP*, 161). Indeed, in his afterlife soliloquy, his aspiration to drive the English from Ireland, "to take them on" is given priority (*SP*, 150). In short, despite Friel's intention to make Skinner the cynical conflation of Michael's intelligence and Lily's political naiveté, he cannot completely purge from the character the logic of paramilitary Republicanism. To this end and as if he anticipated that Skinner's character alone resonated with associations to IRA terrorism, Friel provides the necessity for him to strip to his bare chest as if to demonstrate to the audience that he conceals no weapons (*SP*, 123–4).

As with any attempted erasure, Friel's desire to excise Derry's Republican discourse from the play leaves it as a palimpsest discernible beneath the narrative surface. But, by retrieving the nationalist context from the play's text, I do not wish to reinscribe it in a position of alterity to the statist violence perpetrated by the combined forces of Ulster and empire; rather, as Friel's contemporaneous "Self-Portrait" confirms, his ambivalence towards Ireland's political and cultural nationalism compels him to create a narrative "of the nation that continually evoke[s] and erase[s] its totalizing boundaries . . . through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities" (Bhabha, *Location*, 149). Friel seeks to productively expose and exploit the space between the

traditional polarity of the historical metanarratives of England and Ireland to suggest the ideological flux and chaotic identity of the subaltern as they exist between these two poles and before incorporation into their grand narratives of history and its ideologies.

My above reference to Homi Bhabha describes the ideological end to which *Freedom of the City* elicits our sympathy after indicting British and excising Irish nationalism. Bhabha discusses the lives of the nation-people, the individuals within the state, as "the cutting edge between the totalizing powers of the 'social' as homogeneous, consensual community, and the . . . contentious, unequal interests and identities within the population" (Bhabha, *Location*, 146); they exist in that instant of individuated action before it is reductively normalized into nationalism's paternal genealogy of ideological stereotype. Without the collective program to unify it, the nation-people exist as the "plenitudinous present" (Bhabha, *Location*, 151) and embody a mixture of motivations ranging from the purely ideological to the purely personal.³² Thus, for example, though Michael marches out of his studied conviction to civil rights, his political motivation cannot be separated from his bourgeois aspirations for professional advancement into the middle class or his libidinal logic that such progress will enhance the productivity of his marriage (*SP*, 127–8). Similarly, Lily's habitual marching can be seen as a combined protest against her bleak marriage, desperate poverty, and despair for her son (*SP*, 155). However, as the play's final scene emphasizes with its union of Catholic bishops and Dáil politicians, the chaotic polyphony of this trio is "forgotten" upon their deaths (even in the hours before their deaths) to be replaced by the homogeneous, sanitized narrative of nationalism that absorbs them into its monolithic history. In short, they are absorbed into what Kevin Whelan has referred to as the Plutarchan tendency in Irish history to create "an edifying story in which all that was not heroic or simple [is] erased" (Whelan, "Filiation," 96).

In Bhabha's analysis, such an act of cultural aphasia is the violent "syntax of forgetting" crucial to every nationalist construction of communal identity from the gross particulars of individual biography (Bhabha, *Location*, 160). The narrative of nation is able to convert

the performative subject, of which the nation is composed, into the pedagogical object, which the nation composes, only through such an act of ontological slippage that is at once covertly transgressive and overtly mundane. Similarly, in the final moments of Friel's play, we witness Derry city, the Irish Republic, and the Catholic Church united in a funeral service that itself testifies to the rapidity with which Lily, Michael, and Skinner's discrepant individualities succumb to the willed amnesia necessitated by an Althusserian alliance of these state apparatuses. These instances of forgetting range from the emblematic moment when the RTE correspondent misidentifies Skinner's name (*SP*, 168) to the Church's disregard for Father Brosnan's earlier sermon demonizing the trio's supposed socialist politics (*SP*, 156). In the final moment when the surrendering trio endures the volley of automatic gunfire to remain standing, we witness the ultimate act of forgetting: their euhemerization from mortal individuals into nationalist spirits, in spite of Friel's intention both to discredit this very process and to write nationalism out of the dramatic representation.

The Gentle Island

The trio of political plays from 1969 through 1975 is interrupted by *The Gentle Island* (1971), a drama that retreats from urban Dublin and Derry to the depopulated island of Inishkeen off Ballybeg's coast. The initial scene depicts the desolate island's evacuation after all but one family voted to resettle either on the Irish mainland or more distant English urban centers (*GI*, 16–18). The single family that remains is ruled over by Manus Sweeney, and his two sons remain out of filial loyalty; indeed, the audience quickly realizes that the eldest son Philly and his wife Sarah plan to leave after the salmon season has provided them the funds to relocate (*GI*, 24). The island's awkward stillness is interrupted by the arrival of two tourists from Dublin, Peter and Shane, who have stumbled across the island in their tour of remote islands (*GI*, 28). The pair provides a welcome distraction to the Sweeneys, and Peter becomes enamored of the island's romantic setting; in fact, Manus and the elder Peter seem to form a genuine bond of mutual respect. However, Shane elicits strong and contradictory emotions from Philly and his wife Sarah; after rejecting Sarah's sexual

invitations, she later accuses him of a homosexual encounter with Philly. Ultimately, Shane almost convinces Manus of his innocence and escapes the island, but Sarah uses Manus' gun to gravely wound him at the drama's conclusion.

In the early discussions by Maxwell and Dantanus, it is considered a watershed in Friel's dramaturgy. For Maxwell, the play "marks a new direction," characterized by "new themes and . . . new methods" (Maxwell, 100), not the least of which is Friel's artistic maturation demonstrated in the characters' subtle dialogue and nuanced reticence (Maxwell, 97-9). While Dantanus also considers this play as signaling a greater refinement for the playwright, he cites Friel's newfound ability to portray "more elusive subjects in general" accompanied with "an increasing historical dimension" (Dantanus, 132). In addition, Maxwell and Dantanus define the critical split between a focus on Sarah, a character Maxwell praises for her complexity and pathos (Maxwell, 99), and Shane, the first of Friel's many antic chameleons (Dantanus, 130-1).³³ Notwithstanding these initial valuations and subsequent analyses, the play has been occasionally overlooked by such later critics as Pine, while McGrath peremptorily dismisses it for perceived flaws of tone, characterization, and narrative development (McGrath, 76-7). Conversely, the play has received its more probing analyses in article form, as is the case with José Lanter's discussion of the play's treatment of violence, sacrifice, and transference (Lanter, "Violence and Sacrifice," 163-70).

In one form or another, discussions of this play all share a concern with Friel's unmasking of a naive Irishness that he will later develop in such plays as *Translations* (1980) and *Communication Cord* (1982). Maxwell's early consideration of the play broadly juxtaposes Peter's embrace of the island's arcadian tranquility with the inherent danger that renders it Apache territory to Shane (Maxwell, 96); conversely, Dantanus suggests Peadar O'Donnell's "angry protest over 'the impounding of the Gael'" as the cultural ethos informing this "confrontation between the East and West of Ireland" (Dantanus, 127-8). Andrews explores this topic in the guise of a continental conflict between Tradition and Modernity that "bitterly" reworks such stereotypes as the Noble Peasant and the family as "bastion of moral value"

(Andrews, 125–6). Even Helen Lojek's recent reading of the play within the contexts of Synge's *Western World* and such American Westerns as *Shane* and *High Noon* continues to refine and expand arguments for the play's polyvalent engagement with pastoral archetypes. However, with her detailed consideration of the play's portrayal of homosexuality and its impact upon such younger playwrights as Frank McGuinness, Lojek also presents the first argument that assesses both the cultural and artistic impact of Friel's depiction of homosexuality in a homophobic Ireland (Lojek, "Lamentation," 55–9).³⁴

With the play's intended antipastoral context assured, I would like to change the nature of the question asked about the cultural dynamics of *The Gentle Island*; indeed, I intend to explore its unintended relationship between patriarchy and sexuality to initiate a new reading strategy for the play. Éibhear Walshe reminds us in his essay on the career of Micheál Mac Liammóir that homosexuality was illegal in the Republic until 1993, more than twenty years after the premiere of Friel's play. While Mac Liammóir himself lived as half of the only openly gay couple in all of Ireland (Walshe, *Sex, Nation*, 151), the radical nature of Friel's staging of homosexuality in 1971 is recaptured only through its comparison to Mac Liammóir's own efforts to expunge any identifiable homosexuality from his plays, even his 1963 drama of Oscar Wilde's trial and imprisonment *The Importance of Being Oscar* (Walshe, *Sex, Nation*, 157–9). Nonetheless, Friel is far from being a writer concerned with interrogating sexuality even in its heterosexual construction; rather, his drama depicts a normatively heterosexual world, albeit one where the expression of romantic passion often tragically disrupts communal order. Thus, a productive strategy for reading the play should explore Friel's employment of homosociality as a comprador partner of nationalist ideology rather than his portrayal of homosexuality itself.

During the first decade of Friel's career he portrays a decidedly homosocial world. While the constellation of male relationships in *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* is broadened to include the maternal in Madge and Lizzy and the romantic in Kate, the early plays rely upon the depiction of men in a masculinist social order. With *The Gentle Island*, Friel returns to the staging of the claustrophobically homosocial

that recalls the closed male world of *The Enemy Within*. Indeed, the events of *The Gentle Island*, *The Freedom of the City*, and *Volunteers*, all written between 1971 and 1975, transpire on a stage overwhelmingly dominated by men.³⁵ In its return to the masculine stage of *The Enemy Within*, *Volunteers* culminates this five-year period of his increasingly homosocial drama. Afterwards such plays as *Living Quarters* (1977) and *Aristocrats* (1979) prominently feature women to an extent unknown to his earlier plays, while Friel's later drama becomes notable for the portrayal of women in such works as *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990) and *Molly Sweeney* (1995).

Not only does *The Gentle Island* portray a culture dominated by such traditional male occupations as salmon fishing and turf cutting, it conveys a homosocial milieu that approaches the misogynistic. The play emblematically opens with the sadistically lighthearted description of Nora Dan viciously attacking the men who have decided to transfer her into another boat against her will, while the island's original use as a monastery, a male refuge, historicizes its exclusion of women. Whereas the legend of the doomed monks has alternatively been read as the play's polyvalent emblem of generational revolt, punished sexual desire, or frustrated escape, it is also notable for its portrayal of the abbot's niece as disrupting the tranquility of male society (*GI*, 32–3).³⁶ Sarah is similarly ostracized and forced to occupy the margin of contemporary Inishkeen, despite her disruptive challenges to the shibboleths of the patriarchy. Having failed to produce heirs for Manus' kingdom, her disenfranchisement is reflected in Manus' failure to even mention her when he introduces the few inhabitants of the island:

And it's seldom enough we have company. This is my son, Joe.
And I'm Manus Sweeney . . .

You'll have to meet Philly. The best fisherman on this coast. And Joe here's our farmer. And I'm the – what's the word for it? – I'm the coordinator. That's it. We're a self-contained community here.

(*GI*, 30)

Significantly, Manus has not forgotten Sarah; in fact, his speech quoted above is interrupted by his rough command to her to make

tea for Peter and Shane, and she similarly figures as the one who is expected to make dinner (*GI*, 39) and supper (*GI*, 53).

Manus' "self-contained community" proves sufficiently elastic to incorporate Peter and Shane because their homosexuality is easily subsumed into the island's dominant homosocial structure. Indeed, the islanders' sustained accommodation of the men could hardly have been maintained in ignorance of their sexuality. Midway through the action, Philly's crude joke associating a dog's wailing with "the bucks below in the tent" clearly reveals that his family understands the Dubliners' sexual preferences (*GI*, 49); nonetheless, Manus later demonstrates how genuinely accepted they are. Late into their last night on the island, Peter effectively confesses that he lost his teaching job because of his love for Shane and clearly implies that they are an established couple: "Between us we manage. We have enough" (*GI*, 55). For his part, Manus responds to Peter's intimacy by presenting him with a clock with both sentimental and functional value to the household; significantly, his gesture precedes Sarah's vindictive exposure of Manus' secrets, so his act cannot be read as motivated by embarrassment or an attempt to compensate for a loss of dignity. Rather, Manus befriends Peter because of their similarities and shared values; indeed, Peter desires a position not dissimilar to Manus' patriarchal suzerainty. Such a patriarchal mirroring can also be pursued into their domination of their "sons" as well. While Shane complains of the "obligations" that Peter demands him to fulfill year after year (*GI*, 42), Joe and Philly are kept on the island and under Manus' roof by manipulation (*GI*, 19) and promised inheritances (*GI*, 22). Peter's admiration of Manus' "permanence" (*GI*, 54) is succinctly conveyed in his own expectation of "a modest permanence" from Shane (*GI*, 42).

Although the homosocial and the homosexual may share limited social practices and tactics, unleashed homosexual drives threaten to disrupt the patriarchal imperatives that sustain the homosocial through procreative heterosexuality. Nonetheless, though Manus accuses Shane of having "[stolen] my son" and threatens to shoot him, his resolve falters in his reluctance to vouchsafe either Sarah or Shane's version of events (*GI*, 67). In short, Manus seems hesitant to extend his paternal authority to sanction either outcast

from the homosocial patriarchy: the barren woman who has failed to continue the patriarchal order or the homosexual who has corrupted the supposedly heterosexual.³⁷ Not surprisingly, while the play textualizes the suspected feminine resistance to male authority by opening with Nora Dan's savage attack on male authority, the play ends amid the destructive aftermath of Sarah's usurpation of it.

Friel's conflation of homosexuality with a mimetic desire for the hegemonic attributes of patriarchy is further suggested by the recognition that deviance from the heterosocial norm occurs in only two plays, and significantly they are two that occur in sequence: *The Mundy Scheme* and *The Gentle Island*. Written during a period of increasing political crisis in the Irish state, these two plays portray the culture of Ireland's metropole as manifesting a correspondingly psychosocial crisis through its demand for the absent patriarchy. While F. X. Ryan's attachment to his mother admits no simple equation to Peter's homosexuality, in both plays Dublin society is defined by the postindependence generation's frustrated and misdirected attempts to reinscribe the paternal.³⁸ F. X. relies upon the Phallic Mother to reconstruct the patriarchal order that he has lost, while Peter makes pilgrimage to Ireland's West in search of the patriarchal stereotype whose nation criminalizes his sexual identity. Finally, the mathematical application of the plays' chronological statements confirms the cultural analogy between the two with uncanny precision: both F. X. and Peter were born in 1919.³⁹ As we shall see in Friel's treatment of Frank Butler in *Living Quarters*, this generation aspires to emulate their fathers' seminal accomplishments in a world that no longer allows either revolution or heroism.

Living Quarters, Faith Healer, and Aristocrats

Living Quarters presents its narrative in one of Friel's most experimental forms; rather than staging Frank Butler's vertiginous fall from heroic homecoming to despondent suicide, the play presents a meta-textual reconstruction of the tragic day under the direction of Sir, a character construct whose Ledger dictates events. Frank has returned to his family of three daughters, one son, and new wife shortly after earning glory rescuing nine fellow soldiers during a peacekeeping

operation in the Middle East. Indeed, the celebration that will culminate in a state dinner and presumed promotion impresses even his adult children who have grown critical of their father since their mother's death. However, the night is punctuated not by Frank's success, but the confession of his recent bride Anna that she had conducted an affair with his son Ben while Frank was deployed, a bold declaration that stuns the assembled family and drives Frank to kill himself.

The critical reception of *Living Quarters* has focused primarily on the play's reinterpretation of Euripides' *Hippolytus* and the related concerns over the ontological status of Sir and his ledger as they pertain to the ancient Greek concept of fate.⁴⁰ While this reading of Friel's play will not further pursue the correspondences between the two, it should be noted that Friel chooses to adapt a play that explores the correspondence between the paternal, within the family, and the patriarchal, a governmental principle embodying male authority. Although the play's Theseus figure, Frank Butler, is merely a soldier and not a king, his heroism promises to promote him into the government, and the play depicts his inauguration into nationalism's patriarchy. Thus, I will argue that Friel retains Euripides' interest in this dual register of male authority, albeit buried within the subtexts of the play's actions.⁴¹

The initial criticism by Dantanus, O'Brien, and Pine briefly seeks to correlate the play's structure to its Euripidean antecedent; however, the complexity of this relationship has solicited sustained analysis throughout the 1990s. In 1992, Alan Peacock presented a considerably nuanced examination in which he argues that Friel creates a hybridized tragedy that both reverses the ancient ironic perspective while leavening its hellenic ethos with the comic banality of middle-class provincial life inherent in Chekhov's tragedies (Peacock, "Translating the Past," 114-17). Although Andrews also explores this shift "from a divine to a human principle of causation" (Andrews, 139), he focuses on the characters' obsession with the past, an "enchantment with the moment of failure" leading the Butler family to retreat "from the challenge of reality into a lost time before the Fall" (Andrews, 140). Continuing this reading of Friel's shift away from "the great Greek

agon between freedom and determinism," Redmond O'Hanlon seeks to explore not the play's circumscription of free will as the characters reiterate the past, but the degree to which they "discover some meaning . . . in the events of the day" or "various degrees of responsibility for Frank's suicide" (O'Hanlon, "Friel's Dialogue," 111). Similarly, Richard Cave has recently interpreted *Living Quarters* as a communal "dreaming back" for the Butler family that hybridizes the Greek and Japanese Noh dramatic traditions, allowing the characters to search for "some moment of choice" and through it "some degree of atonement" for Frank's suicide (Cave, "After *Hippolytus*," 105).

Notwithstanding this core focus, *Living Quarters* has also elicited diverse responses, beginning with Dantanus who offers the play's most robust defense: directly responding to Robert Hogan's criticism of the play's "gimmicks" (Hogan, *Since O'Casey*, 129), exploring its Pirandellian conceits, and deftly assessing the portrayal of family dynamics (Dantanus, 142–51).⁴² Pine's revised study of Friel retains much of his earlier caution against asking the narratological question "What is the play *about*?" (Pine, 153), preferring to explore Friel's experiment with "the distinction between the public drama . . . and the private play-within-play which confuses the imagined world with the actual" (Pine, 322). In their later studies, McGrath and Corbett seek to expand the critical purview into more particularized concerns; McGrath enumerates the deployment of Sir as "author, narrator, director, stage manager, and script manager" (McGrath, 137–45),⁴³ while Corbett explores the plays' language of memory to suggest "the consequences of a long-ingrained inability to communicate" (Corbett, 48). Finally, concluding his comments on the play's "brooding concern with loyalty," Robert Welch observes that "While not explicitly political at all this play may, in fact, be one of Friel's deepest anatomies of the political unconscious," an insight that I will pursue below (Welch, *Abbey Theatre*, 196–7).⁴⁴

Whereas *The Mundy Scheme* and *The Gentle Island* respectively intertwine and hypostatize Friel's overtly political examinations with patriarch concerns that thematize his preoccupation, *Living Quarters* concludes his political series by exploring a family on the fraught interface between the political and the familial. If the

desire to restore their psychological connection to a paternal narrative supplements our understanding of the previous plays' characters F. X. and Peter, Frank's tragedy can only be correctly apprehended by recognizing his attempt to embody the paternal on both social and political registers. Although he is the contemporary of F. X. and Peter, he overcomes their alienation from both the paternal and nationalism's patriarchal; in fact, no other figure in Friel's oeuvre demonstrates so close an association of nationalism's paternal narrative with the literal father. Although lacking overtly political aspirations, the Butler family considers itself part of the Irish aristocracy (*SP*, 183, 215), and Frank comfortably dominates his children as the self-sufficient patriarch untroubled by the specter of his own fathers, be they literal or presumptive; indeed, throughout the day's celebrations, no mention is made of his parents, their absence, or their pride in their son's achievements even from beyond the grave. Moreover, Frank exudes a virility uncustomary for a "man in his early fifties" (*SP*, 175): not only has he the romantic hubris to marry a woman half his age, but he demonstrated his physical power by serially carrying nine men for half an hour each from the field of battle (*SP*, 194). In short, as the day opens with his expectation of promotion, transfer, and matrimonial rejuvenation, Frank Butler resembles Theseus most in his initial guise as a potential dynast.

Born in the mid 1920s and maturing long after the tumultuous events of independence, Frank Butler represents the aspirations of the Irish nation to escape from its manichean identification with England; indeed, Frank embodies the challenge facing Friel's entire generation, as discussed in this chapter's introduction, to "[define] our Irishness." To that extent, Frank must establish new cultural paradigms; he must find opportunities for military heroism in the aftermath of Ireland's centuries of contradictory service both as agents of the British empire and rebels against English hegemony. Moreover, because Ireland did not participate in the Second World War, Frank, like his nation, enters the world stage for the first time. Thus, his triumphal performance commanding "an outpost called Hari" somewhere "in the Middle East" in the service of the United Nations (*SP*, 178), which focuses on the number of men saved rather than killed, signals the shift in

Irish strategy away from the archaic imperative of waging a regional rebellion to the contemporary ideal of maintaining global peace.

Since the early 1960s Irish troops had participated in UN peacekeeping missions, and by the end of the 1960s "peace-keeping [had become] a central feature of Irish foreign policy" (Keatinge, *A Place*, 158). Initially, such service posed a particular challenge "for an army which had never served overseas and was without combat experience" (Keatinge, *A Place*, 159); nonetheless, the Irish army participated in seven separate deployments by 1970, which despite their casualties were seen as "a manifestation of national prestige" (Keatinge, *A Place*, 161). In creating his fictive hero, Friel seems to adopt such historical models as Lieutenant Patrick Riordan or Trooper Anthony Browne as Frank Butler's antecedents. Browne, for example, was known throughout the 1960s as "the hero of Niemba" for saving a single comrade during an ambush in southeastern Congo and was the first soldier to be awarded the Irish Military Medal for Gallantry. Whereas these historical figures died in their acts of valor, Frank Butler, "the hero of Hari" (*SP*, 193, 237), embodies the Irish fantasy for a heroism complementing their emerging national status and explores the extent to which Ireland can accommodate a new model of heroism.

Structurally, *Living Quarters* emerges as a Janus-structured work, simultaneously composing and deconstructing the fictive linearity of paternal genealogy as embodied in a history that is both personal, concerning the Butler family, and national, concerning Ireland's first military hero of the postindependence generation. Indeed, Frank is confident that his heroism will lead to his transfer to Dublin and promotion into the hierarchy of the national political/military complex (*SP*, 232-3); a transformation tantamount to his institutionalization at the nexus of male authority. Significantly, Frank undertakes both his patriarchal and paternal risks nearly simultaneously: the former, represented by his military deployment, and the latter ten days earlier, by his marriage to Anna. Both involve Frank's gamble to transcend his life's previous disappointments at a lackluster career and loveless marriage, and the play reveals both are inextricably bound together in success or failure. Thus, Frank emerges

as the archetypal oedipal father of Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, a mythic Father-of-Enjoyment attempting to monopolize both libidinal and political economies. Not surprisingly, Friel emphasizes the rapidity with which Frank becomes a national icon for the media and a figure for opportunistic exploitation by Ireland's president and taoiseach (*SP*, 193). In this light, it is fitting that Frank's tragedy also transpires at the very intersection of the personal and political, for the taoiseach's speech reveals the state's intention to induct Frank into its pantheon of heroes (*SP*, 233) at the same time that it goads Anna into her declaration of infidelity (*SP*, 235). In short, while Friel's tale is doubly paternal, Frank's tragedy is doubly oedipal as well, for his suicide ruptures the construction of both family and nation.

Frank's death culminates in the cautionary tale of paternal hegemony overreaching the limits of both family and state; moreover, his children's eerie paralytic remoteness during his suicide endows his act with an aura of their participation in a death that suggests an oedipal rite. While Frank himself considers his marriage to Anna, who is thirty years his junior, a risky personal gamble that disturbs him with the fear "that somehow he can't cope with so great a joy" (*SP*, 222), his older children resent his abrupt marriage to this "child bride" within a year of their mother's death (*SP*, 190). While Ben unintentionally but decisively usurps his father through his incestuous affair with his step-mother, we would be oversimplifying the narrative if we ignored the angst and confusion that Frank's inappropriate marriage to Anna elicits also from his older daughters Miriam and Helen (*SP*, 189, 195). These adult children are bound to their father by the ambivalent passions that allow them to resent Frank even while they seek his approval by polishing his shoes and pressing his uniform, encouraging them to share culpability for a suicide that is also willed patricide. Similarly, reminding us that the story of Oedipus is the original tale of misplaced, or mediated, desire for the father's love, René Girard's paradigm of "triangular desire" allows us to recognize Ben's oedipal affair as his most intense testimony of a filial obsession that expresses both his hatred and devotion: "I just hope he was able to sense an expression of some k-k-k-k- – of some kind of love for him – even if it was only in my perfidy" (*SP*, 245).⁴⁵

The plays of the 1970s

As the play demonstrates, the family's obsessive fascination with Frank's last day perpetuates his position of centrality and authority beyond the grave, or in the words of Slavoj Žižek, in his analysis of the specter of sacrificed primal father, "the dead father turns out to be stronger than the living one" (Žižek, *Looking Awry*, 24). In fact, their guilt compels them to construct Sir as a reified Father: "the ultimate arbiter ... who knows those tiny little details and interprets them accurately" (*SP*, 177–8). Indeed, not only does Ben address his father as "Sir" (*SP*, 211, 230), but the siblings collectively create Sir in the image of an euhemerized Frank: a "middle-aged" man whose control is complete, whose authority unassailable (indeed, all his pronouncements are sanctioned by the Ledger), and whose dark suit and "black, highly polished shoes" suggest a uniform of their own (*SP*, 175). The siblings even replicate their contradictory feelings for their father onto Sir: "And yet no sooner do they conceive me with my authority and my knowledge than they begin flirting with the idea of circumventing me, of foxing me, and outwitting me" (*SP*, 178). In fact, in the final moments of the play after Frank's exit, Sir's conflation with Frank as symbolic surrogate is suggested by his gentle solicitations towards Anna (*SP*, 243) and receives confirmation when Ben seeks to solicit Sir's interest in the same epiphanic moment of father/son communion to which Frank had refused to listen earlier (*SP*, 244–5). In this instance, this otherwise "endlessly patient and tolerant" figure ignores Ben in a manner no less paternalistically dismissive than Frank's rebuke and no less humiliating for Ben (*SP*, 228). Thus, having sought to modernize the myth of Hippolytus as one of oedipal usurpation of the paternal and the national, we find that Friel devises a play that reconstitutes paternal tyranny beyond the grave in an imagined disciplining nexus that incarcerates all the play's characters.

The studies that adopt a chronological structure for their discussions of Friel's career all surreptitiously reverse the order of the two plays of 1979: examining *Aristocrats* before *Faith Healer* though the former was completed in May 1978 (*EDI*, 69) while the latter in "the autumn of 1977" (Dantanus, 172). Similarly, the National Library of Ireland collection list for the Brian Friel Papers lists *Faith Healer* as the earlier

of the two. Although *Faith Healer* was staged by Boston's Colonial Theater the month before *Aristocrats*, it did not receive its formal premiere on Broadway until April 1979, the month following *Aristocrats* (*BFC*, 242). In a complementary manner, after its failure in New York, *Faith Healer* entered the Irish cultural consciousness more than eighteen months after *Aristocrats*, with the "triumphant success of the Abbey Theatre production in August 1980" (Dantanus, 172). Since at the time Friel participated in several interviews to promote the imminent inauguration of the Field Day Theatre Company in Derry barely a month later, the success of *Faith Healer* became an ancillary subject of these interviews, thus associating these two plays in the popular imagination. Consequently, the criticism has adopted the convention of treating *Aristocrats* as an earlier and separate work; however, I will argue that the most accurate typification of their relationship may be that of twins: two plays that explore a shared, though evolving, concern.

If "Winners," *The Freedom of the City*, and *Living Quarters*, experiment with diverse strategies for narrating events to reflect how death has the effect of recontextualizing one's life, *Faith Healer* is Friel's last and most austere example in the first half of his career.⁴⁶ This play is devoid of character interaction and consists of four monologues delivered by three characters who wandered England, Scotland, and Wales together: Frank Hardy, his partner Grace, and their manager Teddy. All their stories converge on the events surrounding their return to Ireland and Frank's sacrificial murder in Ballybeg. Frank delivers the first and last monologues, reflecting on the healing gift that occasionally responded to his summons, the moments when he miraculously transformed lives, and the failure to heal a crippled man named McGarvey that leads to his murder. While Grace and Teddy recount some of the same events, their stories fail to simply endorse Frank's version; indeed, though they do not always agree, their accounts suggest that Frank denies a different death that haunts them: his stillborn child born to Grace in the Scottish highlands.

Faith Healer has elicited considerable critical attention, yet within five years of its Dublin premiere two essays were published that have defined, if not dominated, much of the subsequent criticism: Richard Kearney's "Language Play: Brian Friel and

Ireland's Verbal Theatre" (1983) and Declan Kiberd's "Brian Friel's *Faith Healer*" (1985). Kearney's article makes the memorable assertion that "Brian Friel's plays in the eighties . . . constitute not just a theatre of language but a theatre about language" (Kearney, "Language Play," 24; original italics), in which *Faith Healer*, *Translations* (1980), and *The Communication Cord* (1982) represent Friel's sustained attempt to redefine "our ontological attitude to language" (Kearney, "Language Play," 28). Kearney's analysis of *Faith Healer* asserts that it marks a crisis in Friel's faith in language and its "aesthetic power to recreate reality in fiction" (Kearney, "Language Play," 28). By asserting that Friel's relationship to "the creative word vacillates between the despondency of the skeptic and the ecstasy of the believer" (Kearney, "Language Play," 28), he rigorously explores the play's religious analogies that will concern such later critics as Paul Robison ("An Irishman," 225-6), Christopher Morash (*A History*, 249-51), and Corbett (116-19). Additionally, Kearney initiates the analysis of the three characters' competing memories of their shared past; however, since his critical focus remains on Frank as language's priest and sacrifice, he refrains from exploring their narratological struggle by merely suggesting that their discrepancies imply that they have long since "ceased to communicate" (Kearney, "Language Play," 31).⁴⁷ While such later critics as McGrath have demonstrated that these conflicting narratives cannot be reconciled even through detailed examination, only analyzed as psychological symptoms (McGrath, 159-72), Anthony Roche's treatment of the play as theatrical performance radically expands the work's discussion into interpretatively new territory (Roche, *Contemporary Irish Drama*, 107-14).

Kearney also recognized in Frank Hardy the image of "the creative artist overobsessed" with his art (Kearney, "Language Play," 32), an image that he readily adopted as a transparent metaphor for the playwright and his "craft of writing" (Kearney, "Language Play," 28). This analysis of literary self-referentiality became an interpretive point of departure for the early assessments of both Deane in his introduction to Friel's *Selected Plays* (*SP*, 20) and Maxwell (*Modern Irish Drama*, 203); however, Kiberd's essay "Brian Friel's *Faith Healer*" exhaustively develops this insight's interpretive potential,

rendering most successive treatments little more than elaborations of his comprehensive argument.⁴⁸ The theses that have had the most pervasive influence upon subsequent criticism have been Kiberd's diagnosis of the play's emphasis on the debilitating effects of the artist's self-consciousness, the vital importance for the artist to surrender to the unreliability and unpredictability of inspiration, and the necessary antagonism between artistic production and social mores (Kiberd, "*Faith Healer*," 109–12). Kiberd frames his aesthetic analysis within the High Modernist heroization of the writer, which even tempts him to justify Frank's mistreatment of Grace (Kiberd, "*Faith Healer*," 115–16). O'Brien later notes that such aesthetic valuations "cannot justify or explain" Frank's actions (O'Brien, 101), while a considerably more nuanced critique of Grace's objectification within Frank's aesthetic paradigm is offered by José Lanters ("Gender and Identity," 283–5).⁴⁹

Although Kearney asserts that the "festering wound" of the Northern crisis generally functions "as a phantom limb haunting [Friel's] work," his discussion of *Faith Healer* limits itself to the drama's world of the abstract, rather than the Irish, stage (Kearney, "Language Play," 26); similarly, Deane articulates the common assumption that "*Faith Healer* has no political background" whatsoever (*SP*, 19). Conversely, Dantanus offers the first positioning of the characters within a specifically Irish cultural context by associating their monologues with the storytelling tradition of the seanachie and the characters themselves with Arnoldian stereotypes of the Saxon and Celt (Dantanus, 172–3). The potential of Dantanus' observation to articulate an alternative interpretive context for Friel's play is most effectively exploited by Roche's consideration of "the play as a drama of national identity" (Roche, *Contemporary Irish Drama*, 117).⁵⁰ Although Roche perceptively discusses Friel's manipulation of racial stereotypes in his construction of Frank and Teddy, his treatment of Grace fluctuates between accepting Frank's identification of her as Yorkshire mistress and her self-representation as Irish gentry (Roche, *Contemporary Irish Drama*, 118–19). Unfortunately, rather than resolving this contradictory identification, Roche explores her as an embodiment of the rationality and orderliness that constitute

Arnoldian Englishness (Roche, *Contemporary Irish Drama*, 119), and his subsequent argument turns to her construction through language: the “taboo on speech” that forces Grace to “adopt the language of the outlaw,” leading to her “betrayal finally of language” (Roche, *Contemporary Irish Drama*, 123).

Despite such notable exceptions as Roche and Lanters, these critical strategies for reading *Faith Healer* largely defer to preferences articulated by Friel in both the play itself and subsequent interviews (*BFC*, 124, 173, 199). Indeed, the criticism generally following Friel’s artistic intentions, confining discussions of the work to a narrow High Modernist etiquette focused on language and the artist. I would argue, by contrast, that few of Friel’s dramas more warrants resistance to a critical tradition that has become interpretively confining.⁵¹ In the following pages I will extend Roche’s focus on national stereotypes into a reading of *Faith Healer* as contributing to the decade’s critique of nationalist ideology and the patriarchy. The potential for such a redirection of routinized readings is suggested by Slavoj Žižek in his description of what he refers to as Lacan’s game of linked narrative triads (Žižek, *Looking Awry*, 98). Since Kearney’s article, *Faith Healer* has been accepted as the initial work of a triad focused on language: *Faith Healer*, *Translations*, and *Communication Cord*. Conversely, if we reposition the play to reflect its order of composition and staging, another triad emerges depicting the collapse of Ireland’s patriarchy: *Living Quarters*, *Faith Healer*, and *Aristocrats*. Even the most superficial consideration of this alternative chronology betrays the plays’ shared fascination with the dissolution of the old order, alternatively defined as that of the “noblesse oblige” in *Living Quarters* (*SP*, 183), the “patrician” in *Faith Healer* (*SP*, 347, 348), or the aristocratic in *Aristocrats*.

These melancholy narratives of a dynasty’s economic drift, political decline, and social collapse are encapsulated with increasing force in the fraught and unsuccessful marriages of three daughters who choose husbands from the lower class: Helen, who marries her father’s batman, Grace, who marries the itinerant son of a factory worker (*SP*, 345–6), and Alice, who marries the grandson of one of the family’s maids. Similarly, these dramas return to the emblematic moment of

generational transition symbolized by the death of the patriarch, whose life embodies both the professional service and personal discipline of the past ruling class. Indeed, the Butlers' retrospective obsession with Frank's death in *Living Quarters* and the impact of Judge O'Donnell's death in *Aristocrats* have their counterpart in Grace's memory of her last visit to her failing and feeble father shortly before his death, her only account of her family (*SP*, 347–9). However, rather than exploring the more diffuse affinities that unite this triad, I will employ the remaining space to construct a more focused exploration of the resonance between the companion plays that share the same period of composition: *Faith Healer* and *Aristocrats*.

Faith Healer alludes to its shadowy and partial doubling of *Aristocrats* in Frank's introductory remarks where he defines his mystical power as capable of momentarily rendering him "in a manner of speaking, an aristocrat" (*SP*, 333). However, Grace's description of her home establishes more tangible similarities between the two plays and their families, the O'Dwyers of Knockmoyle (*SP*, 350) and the O'Donnells of Ballybeg.⁵² Grace returns for her final visit to her ancestral home in her seventh year of marriage to Frank, when the manor is in the initial stage of physical and economic decay; accordingly, she finds her home still in repair and employing at least one housekeeper (*SP*, 347). As she approaches her ancestral home, she discerns "the chaotic vegetable plot" that recalls her mother's life "in and out of the mental hospital" (*SP*, 347). Thus, Friel endows both plays' families with an emotionally fragile mother associated with bouts of mental instability. More importantly, both families are dominated by a retired judge, whose past authority is chillingly juxtaposed to his physical deterioration; indeed, both Judge O'Dwyer and Judge O'Donnell suffer from the effects of the strokes that render them unable to recognize their children (*SP*, 289–90, 347). Moreover, both patriarchs are portrayed as captives of fleeting memories of their careers on the bench, even passing sentence on local recidivists in their imagination (*SP*, 258, 348).

Although Grace admits to no siblings sharing in her fate as this Big House's last generation, her story mirrors elements that will characterize various O'Donnell children. As mentioned earlier, Grace and

Alice both marry beneath their social station and emigrate from Ireland, while their husbands both express regret over their wives' inability to bear children (*SP*, 279, 372). Like Casimir, Grace disappointed her father's expectations that she follow the family tradition of entering the legal profession (*SP*, 348). However, whereas Casimir lacks the temperament and discipline to continue the O'Donnell tradition, Grace's abandonment of "the family profession" after she had passed the bar constitutes an unequivocal rejection of the O'Dwyer professional heritage and her parents' expectations (*SP*, 348). In this respect, Grace resembles Judith as well, the O'Donnell daughter whose "great betrayal" haunts her dying father (*SP*, 257). Whereas Judith's transgression is represented by her participation in street politics and her conception of an illegitimate child, Grace vividly recalls her father rebuking her for the shame that her relationship "with the mountebank" Frank inflicted on the family (*SP*, 348).

Turning to *Faith Healer* itself, Grace's account of her return to Ireland complements Frank's uncannily resonant memory of his only visit to his homeland before their fatal homecoming to Ballybeg.⁵³ For both characters the specter of Grace's stillborn baby at Kinlochbervie haunts their memories and is linked to their final encounters with their fathers. By associating Kinlochbervie only with his mother's death, Frank seems to resist the painful disclosure of his remorse over the infant's miscarriage by sublimating it within the real or imagined scene of his shared grief with his father (*SP*, 337–8). Conversely, while Grace's flight home is partially motivated by her abjection over two previous miscarriages (*SP*, 346), her final pregnancy that ends in Kinlochbervie is narratologically, if not chronologically, linked to her final repudiation of her father (*SP*, 349). Moreover, both patriarchs initially fail to recognize their prodigal children, and both must be informed by their children of their identities (*SP*, 337, 347–8). Finally, in each instance the absence of other relatives and the mother's associated death imbues these scenes with an austerity that transforms each episode into the character's farewell not just to their fathers but to Ireland altogether.⁵⁴ In other words, both Frank and Grace articulate a narrative of desolation that simultaneously encompasses the death of both progenitors and descendants, Ireland's past

and future, concluding only with their own deaths in the present.⁵⁵ Within this reading of *Faith Healer* as a staging of the confrontation with the burden of patriarchal Irishness, Teddy's perspective betrays the play's grim moral calculus. This Englishman's monologue recounts no encounter with relatives, nor does he admit to anxiety regarding parents or children; within Friel's play such familial obsessions with obligation, inadequacy, and death are strictly the purview of the Irish.

With Frank's multiple associations to the working class of the Republic (*SP*, 333, 346) and Grace's to the professional aristocracy of the North, the couple embodies not so much the contentious marriage of the two Irelands as their mutual failure. As we will see more clearly in *The Communication Cord*, Friel's ongoing critique of nationalism and the Republic makes him pointedly aware of the differences between the North and South, and consequently the difficulty of their union. Indeed, Frank's inability to remember whether Grace is Irish (surnamed O'Dwyer or O'Connell) or English (Elliot or Dodsmith) succinctly articulates the broader Irish inability to comprehend Northern identity independent of the nationalist paradigms that impinge upon it. Moreover, his determined ambivalence towards her, which assumes that she will grudgingly subordinate her destiny to his, aptly portrays the nationalist strategy for assimilating the North. However, if Frank represents Irish nationalism as Roche implies (*Contemporary Irish Drama*, 120–1), Grace's disillusioned surrender to Frank's "career of chicanery" (*SP*, 371) recalls Friel's similar acquiescence to a Republic that fails to inspire his faith. Ultimately, Friel cannot imagine them living together on the island or socially legitimating their "mixed" marriage through progeny. They finally achieve a fleeting reconciliation in Ballybeg, and chapter 4 will explore Donegal as Friel's potential bridge between Northern identity and Irishness. To that extent, Friel admits his ultimate inability to imagine an accommodating Irishness, for the nation they find is embodied by McGarvey – crippled, neglected, recalcitrant, and not receptive to Frank's miraculous transformations (*SP*, 375).

Aristocrats opens with Casimir O'Donnell barely able to contain his childlike thrill over returning to the family manor after having

lived in Germany for eleven years. As in *Living Quarters*, which presents a celebratory homecoming that turns tragic, the four siblings in *Aristocrats* reunite to celebrate a family event, only to have their youngest sister's wedding postponed by their ailing father's death. Although the staged events transpire over merely two days, the audience soon realizes that the O'Donnell family, Ballybeg's wealthiest and most influential in the nineteenth century, has lost its wealth and power by the mid 1970s; indeed, by play's end, the siblings must admit that they can no longer afford to maintain the manor, Ballybeg Hall. The play also explores the burden of history, for the O'Donnell's legendary flamboyance and influence forms a bitter contrast with the destitution endured by Judith and Claire, the two sisters who struggle to maintain the manor. Not only has this final O'Donnell generation been financially and psychologically circumscribed by the family's past, but they struggle to establish their family's relevance in contemporary Irish society. Ultimately, though their father's death severs their link to the family's storied past, it also intimates his children's liberation from the burden of history.

Dantanus first discussed the play's debt to "Foundry House," Friel's short story about the aristocracy in decline (Dantanus, 163-4), and additional comments on this relationship have been a point of reference for many subsequent treatments of *Aristocrats*.⁵⁶ Among the monographs, McGrath most effectively compares the two in his brief contrast of the story's deployment of consoling illusion to the play's less sustaining reliance on ossified myth (McGrath, 156); yet, the most extensive and insightful comparisons have been undertaken in articles by John Cronin ("Donging," 9-12) and Jacques Tranier ("*Foundry House*," 97-112). Additionally, critical concern has focused on the male characters who seek to manage the family and its history. Casimir, the manor's sole son, has elicited the most diverse criticism, though the least agreement.⁵⁷ Following the sympathetic view taken by Dantanus (165-6), Andrews refers to him as "a veritable impresario of fictions" (Andrews, 152), whose fantasies and games bespeak "not a sterile escapism, but the means of self-discovery" for himself as well as others (Andrews, 154). Conversely, McGrath argues that Casimir's mythmaking represents his crumbling bulwark against the social and economic realities that he has

not the psychological maturity to face (McGrath, 149–52). Corbett similarly considers his “false memory syndrome” a desperate attempt to preserve the house’s crumbling aristocratic ethos (Corbett, 76–8).

The other male figures receive considerable attention in the criticism as well; indeed, Eamon, who married the family’s middle daughter after having been raised by one of the hall’s maids, has been the object of as much analysis as Casimir. Identified by Dantanus as “the catalyst of *Aristocrats*” (Dantanus, 169) and lauded by Andrews for possessing “the most complex of all the versions of ‘aristocracy’ in the play” (Andrews, 151), Eamon has been praised as simultaneously a potent mythmaker and breaker in his own right and a character whose ultimate disposition is difficult to assess.⁵⁸ Conversely, Tom Hoffnung has been represented as a flawed and often gullible incarnation of both Professor Dodds from *The Freedom of the City* (Andrews, 150) or Sir of *Living Quarters* (Corbett, 76); while Dantanus, O’Brien, Andrews, and McGrath all endorse Eamon’s judgment that “certain truths . . . are beyond Tom’s kind of scrutiny” (*SP*, 309–10), only Corbett recognizes that his scholarly persistence is not entirely misguided.⁵⁹ Even Father, the enfeebled district justice, receives passing comment: Andrews (149) and McGrath (147) remark on the parallelism of the dual decline of both house and patriarch, while Pine suggests that in *Living Quarters* and *Aristocrats* “Friel is almost too concerned with pursuing the relationship of father and son” (Pine, 155).

Despite the participation of *Aristocrats* in Friel’s preoccupation with male society and nationalism’s patriarchal genealogy, it also significantly redirects the playwright into another less interrogated exploration of women and the state.⁶⁰ *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* contains the specter of this other narrative that will remain ephemeral in Friel’s drama for more than ten years before it first asserts itself fully in *Aristocrats*. Amid her lachrymose reminiscences, Gar’s aunt Lizzy defends her solicitations to her nephew by reminding her husband that Gar is “the only child of five girls of us” (*SP*, 65). The agonist dilemma facing the son and enunciated by the overwhelming presence of the father dominates such plays as *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*, *The Gentle Island*, *Living Quarters*, and *Translations*; however, Lizzy’s outburst momentarily reveals another propensity that will structure

such plays as *Aristocrats* (1979), *Three Sisters* (1981), and *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990): the insular female household that by necessity must struggle for its legitimacy, and often its very survival, in an overwhelmingly patriarchal society. Of course, the remarkable marginalization of women in the plays of the early 1970s is definitively interrupted by *Living Quarters* with the narrative importance given to Butler's three daughters and young wife. Nonetheless, as the play's subtitle reminds us, the women are subordinated to the repetition of the myth's male agon, and at times the sisters' function is analogous to a chorus. Departing from this structuration along a male dynamic, in his working notes for *Aristocrats*, Friel originally and repeatedly conceives of the drama as concerning three sisters in which "the one constant is Judith" (*EDI*, 65). These notes, albeit cryptic and infrequent, barely mention the possibility of adding a brother, and Casimir seems to enter the play merely as an echo of the oedipality of Friel's previous narratives (*EDI*, 64–6). Thus, though both plays stage the impact of a patriarch's death upon a hectored son and three daughters, only the second has exorcized Friel's primary interest in the son's dilemma, allowing a focus on the sisters' plight to emerge.

If we trace this development through its most sustained exposition in *Dancing at Lughnasa*, several elements become more pronounced and ultimately define Friel's sororal narratives. These plays dramatize the plight of daughters who must increasingly face a hostile society without a vigorous patriarch to maintain and shield them. Since the Butler sisters inhabit a drama that marks the transition from the oedipal to the sororal, they are interlopers in a modern rendition of adultery and symbolic patricide; thus, Helen, Miriam, and Tina must contend with the same vigorous father who has long intimidated their brother. Conversely, the incapacitated father in *Aristocrats* initiates the recession of the father from the family's drama, and though Casimir skulks about the house intimidated by the enfeebled and bedridden judge, his sisters conduct their lives as if Judge O'Donnell had already died. In these plays of sorority, the sisters inhabit a world devoid of the succor provided by patriarchy, and *Three Sisters* even conveys a nostalgia for the social prestige and security with which their vigorous father once endowed the family. The

absence of the father's ordering male presence is exacerbated by the psychological delicacy which renders their sole brother incapable of assuming the paternal mantle. The evolution from Ben Butler through Casimir O'Donnell and Andrey Prozorov to Father Jack Mundy forms a progression of increasingly fragile and incompetent figures who, rather than furthering dynastic interests and protecting their sisters, must be protected by sisters made pragmatic by their families' paternal crisis.

Finally, while Gar's aunt Lizzy laments that he is the sisters' only son, for the later sorority groups even that shared child becomes a socially shameful burden. Although Masha considers her children a burden to her personal aspirations, Friel refrains from altering Chekhov's design to insert an illegitimate child in his translation; however, in both *Aristocrats* and *Dancing at Lughnasa* this sole nephew's illegitimacy marks the irrevocable disruption of the patriarchy and ostracism of the family. Indeed, if the father's death suspends the family's paternity, casting it into a social limbo from which the son is too feeble to redeem it, the sole grandson's illegitimacy combines with the other sisters' sterility to perpetuate this patriarchal crisis into the indeterminate future. In short, Friel creates an intermittent series of dramas that explores the sororal family in which the absence of oedipality marks a crisis in social order and generational translation, rather than positing a solution to the debilitating conflict between fathers and sons.

Aristocrats concludes a period during which Friel was manifestly preoccupied with the patrilinear and initiates his emerging interest in the female encounter with the patriarchal void. Thus, I will propose a reading of *Aristocrats* that explores the portrayal of women in the masculist narrative of nationalism. While such critics as Elizabeth Cullingford and Angela Bourke have valuably interrogated the objectification of women within the masculist structures of Irish nationalism and postcolonialism, I will argue that writers of the Subaltern Studies Collective such as Partha Chatterjee and Rosemary Sayigh offer an equally useful strategy for discussing women's erasure from the nation's narrative. In *The Nation and its Fragments*, Chatterjee argues that the relegation of women to the home makes the recovery

of their political participation within nationalist movements a history that is pursued "less in the external domain of political conflict and more in the 'inner' space of the middle-class home" (Chatterjee, *Fragments*, 137). Whereas Chatterjee's focus is on upper-middle-class society in Victorian India, Sayigh demonstrates that Chatterjee's general paradigm can be transposed to even such nationalist milieus as that of contemporary Palestine. Ultimately, her recognition that the woman subject within nationalism is "doubly constrained, both by the barriers that obstruct her entry into political action, and by the obligation of eventual return to the home" resonates with the social barriers faced by Friel's women, and especially Judith in *Aristocrats* (Sayigh, "Gendering," 236). Although Chatterjee and Sayigh deploy their reading strategies on narratives authored by women, I will demonstrate that such a tactic also recovers Friel's depiction of women within nationalism.

To an extent greater than even *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Aristocrats* portrays the challenges faced by women who wish to participate in nation-building. Nowhere does the seclusion of women from nationalism's genealogical process manifest itself more than in the series of male actors in the episodic version of Irish history celebrated by Casimir. The O'Donnell chronicle is solely a patriarchal one in David Lloyd's use of the term, dominated by tales of the influence and accomplishments attributed to his father, paternal grandfather, and even paternal great-grandfather; in complementary fashion, the names of such prominent female aristocrats as Lady Morgan or Eva Gore-Booth are absent from the grand procession of history represented by such Catholic men as Daniel O'Connell or such Protestant ones as W. B. Yeats (*SP*, 263–7). Women are included in this masculist history but rarely, and only when embedded within the male narrative as brides (*SP*, 274), patrons to men (*SP*, 265), or objects of male desire (*SP*, 295).⁶¹ Not surprisingly, the siblings' mother suffers from the ignoble erasure from this history of the family and state intertwined, not solely because of her low origins (*SP*, 295) and sordid death (*SP*, 309), but because as a woman she too is relegated to the same oblivion that expunges all O'Donnell women from the family's history.

If Victorian and Edwardian Ireland marginalized the O'Donnell women on the receding horizon of history, de Valera's Ireland enforces

a permanent social obsolescence upon them. The sisters were raised to conform to the stereotypes of an objectification in which women were trained to assume the role of ornamental wife. Thus, unlike their brother who "began law in the family tradition," Judith, Alice, and Claire entered "a convent in Carcassone – a finishing school" to learn the only trade open to them: becoming "young ladies" (*SP*, 271). However, in a Republican Ireland that valorizes peasant and agrarian archetypes, aristocratic ladies are antithetical to the state and a burden to the family. Alice complains that "none of us was trained to do anything" (*SP*, 298), though the truth revealed by the play is that despite their skills women are fit only for child bearing or rearing. Twice Eamon pointedly remarks on Alice's failure to produce children (*SP*, 279, 295), which leaves her in the home idle throughout the day, while Eamon plays father to a neighbor's daughter every evening (*SP*, 319); similarly, Claire's daily monotony is relieved only by her ability to provide piano instruction to the town's children (*SP*, 269) or those of her future husband (*SP*, 280). For her part, Judith functions as a surrogate mother throughout the drama: not only is her mundane routine organized around caring for her father's infantile needs, but elsewhere she cradles a crying Casimir "as if he were a baby" (*SP*, 283) and welcomes her father's death only with the expectation that she will transfer her maternal duties onto her son (*SP*, 318). Finally, if by becoming a nun in the mid 1950s, their sister Anna entered one of the few professions open to women in de Valera's Ireland, her choice allows her to efface her femininity and aspire to an honorary masculinity by adopting "John Henry" as her religious name (*SP*, 263). Significantly, however, in our fleeting exposure to her, she is depicted as a child on a basic, almost essentialist, level: not only does she speak in "a child's voice" (*SP*, 303), but her violin playing too is that "of a child" (*SP*, 304). In other words, her escape from the home allows her neither to mature nor escape the play's polyvalent association of women to children.

Nationalism's historical aphasia, its strategic "syntax of forgetting" of past allies and fellow subalterns has been the subject of analyses by both David Lloyd (*Ireland*, 24–6) and Homi Bhabha (Bhabha, *Location*, 160–1) in ways that are readily applicable to

Friel's depiction of women in *Aristocrats*. However, Partha Chatterjee's diagnosis of "betrayal" as inherent in any "story of nationalist emancipation" provides a more productive wedge for reading Friel's play (Chatterjee, *Fragments*, 154). In his analysis of women's *smṛtikathā*, domestic memoirs that conceal nationalist narratives, Chatterjee considers women's struggle for legitimate voice on the interstice between the two masculist hegemonic discourses of colonizer and colonized and the disillusionment that results from the realization that patriarchal nationalism will necessarily betray the emancipatory hopes that motivate women to endorse it. Whether within the home or bourgeois intellectual society, the nation's "new women" suffer a "subordination under the new forms of patriarchy" that are often more oppressive in its valorization of repressive stereotypes of traditional gender models (Chatterjee, *Fragments*, 148). Although Alice endures her husband's physical and verbal abuse while Claire prepares to marry an aged widower with children, both sisters' situations resonate with the traditional subjugation of women and social inhibitions associated with Irish "familism" characteristic of the nineteenth century (Cairns and Richards, *Writing Ireland*, 59–61). Conversely, though Father twice reminds Judith of her "great betrayal" (*SP*, 257, 291), she is the figure whose aspirations for a role in a future Ireland have been most betrayed. To that extent, her participation in the Battle of the Bogside, rather than the Bloody Sunday march, is significant (*SP*, 272), for at no other time in the Troubles did the nationalist aspiration for a united Ireland seem more imminent.⁶² Indeed, her embrace of street politics and sexual liberation portray her more as the iconoclastic Maud Gonne than the singularly political Bernadette Devlin. However, by portraying Judith as doubly subordinated, privately to her father and publicly to the Cosgrave regime, both of which would have been hostile to her brand of revolutionary feminism, Friel conveys how oppressed women remain in the Ireland of the play's "mid-1970s."

In closing, it is significant to note that after two decades of a dramatic fascination with Ireland's patriarchy – embodied in the fraught relationship between children and the father who is increasingly associated with state authority – Friel irresolutely vacillates between two

extremes in this final, double articulation. Since both dramas were composed simultaneously, with *Faith Healer* completed only months before *Aristocrats*, one cannot be viewed as the other's correction or rebuttal. Rather, together they embody Friel's unresolved vacillation between optimism that the contemporary generation will productively, albeit imperfectly, contend with their national inheritance and despair that cultural sterility threatens to incapacitate their attempt. In this respect, the juxtapositioning of *Faith Healer* to *Aristocrats* could not be more elucidating, allowing us to recognize the dramas as Friel's Janus-headed enunciation of a single ideological issue: the contemporary generation's complex agon with the patriarchal ethos of rectitude and obligation. These two plays establish an undecided polarity of despair and guarded optimism over Ireland's engagement with both its ideological past and the paternalism inherent in nationalism. On the one hand, *Faith Healer* stages the inability of the contemporary generation to form a composite Irishness and productively liberate itself from the past. On the other hand, Judge O'Donnell's death in *Aristocrats* liberates his children from the inhibitions forced upon each member of the family, promising the reunion of Judith and her child and the lifting of the burden of the past, embodied in the decaying manor, from all four siblings. Indeed, this patriarch's death invites even the rehabilitation of the past's subordinated voices through Uncle George's reincorporation into the social world and the children's tender rehabilitation of their dead mother through song (*SP*, 325–6).

4 Plays 1980–1993: The North

“The Northern thing”

Despite his move to the Republic in 1967, Friel himself betrays his increasing estrangement from Republican nationalism throughout the 1970s; indeed, by the early 1980s, he will most frequently employ the term “Northern” rather than “Irish” or “nationalist” to define his ideological association. Richard Kirkland has traced the emergence of such “a distinct Northern aesthetic” to Philip Hobsbaum’s famed Belfast poetry Group of the 1960s (Kirkland, *Literature*, 77–82). For Kirkland, the development of a Northern sensibility is manifested in the poetry of a broad contingent of young poets who sought “a writing community distinct from London and Dublin; a community not primarily defined by sectarian division” (Kirkland, *Literature*, 59). Kirkland argues that The Group both benefited from and influenced the efforts of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and James Simmon’s pioneering journal *The Honest Ulsterman* to, in Michael Longley’s words, “foster our writers” who will “speak for us in the gate or give us our name and place in history” (qtd. Kirkland, *Literature*, 62). Admitting that “events through this period still remain vague” Kirkland (*Literature*, 80) devotes his energies to reconstructing this community among poets, ignoring any possible artistic cross-fertilization between poets and novelists or dramatists; thus, Friel’s complementary efforts to envision a Northern subaltern escapes the purview of his study. Nonetheless, Friel no doubt was aware of The Group and its cultural strategy since at least the early 1970s when he and The Group’s Seamus Heaney exchanged ideas on the appropriation of Norse imagery into their writing, culminating in

Heaney's poetry collection *North* and Friel's play *Volunteers*, both of 1975 (*BFC*, 226).¹

Friel first speaks specifically of "The North" as a distinct entity in his 1981 interview with Elgy Gillespie (*EDI*, 98); however, detailing the evolution of Friel's ideological awakening to "the Northern thing" is all but impossible, owing to his manifest decision between 1974 and 1979 to sharply curtail interviews and essay composition. Indeed, one suspects that the poor reviews for such plays as *Volunteers* and *Living Quarters* combined with the controversies over the earlier plays *The Mundy Scheme* and *The Freedom of the City* to increase Friel's natural reluctance for public disclosure.² Notwithstanding his reticence, Friel suggests a departure from Kirkland's paradigm most through his manifest geographic expansion of the North beyond the six counties of provincial Northern Ireland and his recentering of it away from Belfast and upon Derry (*BFC*, 159, 192-3).³ In his 1985 article "Field Day Five Years On," John Gray notes this estrangement from the provincial capital by reporting that the Field Day directors felt that their work "bothers a lot of people, particularly in Belfast"; likewise, he adds that for Friel Derry was the movement's "psychic city" (Gray, "Field Day," 6).

When implicitly including both *Translations* and his forthcoming *The Communication Cord* as "Northern" plays (*BFC*, 155), Friel subsumes the Republic's County Donegal within his definition of The North, as well as Field Day's attempt to construct "an artistic fifth province" (*BFC*, 165). Rather than envisioning The North as a self-contained region largely distinct from the Republic of Ireland (Kirkland, *Literature*, 58-9), in his 1982 interview with Fintan O'Toole Friel most clearly folds his conception of The North into an otherwise incomplete Irish identity.⁴ Indeed, Friel develops a critique of conventional nationalism into his career's most forcible prescription that Irishness must accommodate Northern difference; speaking of the Republic, he says:

In some way it could be adjusted and I think it could be made very exciting, I think. But I think it requires the Northern thing to complete it. I'm talking about the whole Northern thing

– presumably both Catholic nationalists and Protestant unionists (*BFC*, 174). Yet, his intention in this interview is not to challenge

the pertinence of a Dublin-oriented nationalist ideology, but to assert the necessity of supplementing it with Northern identity. Here, as in his slightly earlier interview with Ray Comiskey, Friel seeks to suture a Northern identity to that of an otherwise incomplete Republican nationalism to create a sense of a greater Irishness, because the Republic “requires the Northern thing to complete it.”

I have argued that from the inception of his career as essayist and playwright, Friel’s relationship to the Republic’s nationalist ideology is characterized by a wary ambivalence. His attempts to articulate the North as a cultural bridge between the two, for him, untenable political entities of Northern Ireland and the Republic endow him with the newfound ability to articulate this double alienation that isolates him as “an exile in your home” even though “both places are your home” (*BFC*, 169). This adversarial engagement with the Republic develops into a recognizably conscious subalternity during the 1980s. Gramsci defines “subaltern social groups” to include any collective sharing of “mentality, ideology, and aims” (Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 52); whereas his initial articulation seeks to privilege their formation “in the sphere of economic production,” subsequent work by such Subaltern Collective theorists as Ranajit Guha, Partha Chatterjee, and David Arnold have focused on the social characteristics of groups working within the dominant culture that seek “to influence the programmes of [the state] in order to press claims of their own,” to redistribute power within the existing state rather than to overthrow it (Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 52).⁵ However, even when the subaltern seeks accommodation, its efforts to influence policy, to force the incorporation of its agenda, threaten the state and are represented in hegemonic discourse as “an atavistic and disruptive principle counter to the rationality of legal constitution” (Lloyd, *Anomalous States*, 125).⁶ Furthermore, as Gayatri Spivak notes, the subaltern signals the crisis posed by any political change, the threat of “turning things ‘upside down’” in the state (Spivak, *Other Worlds*, 197). My discussion of Friel’s political plays dating from 1969 to 1975 emphasize the playwright’s emerging recognition of the palpable crisis in both Northern Ireland and the Republic; indeed, in a 1984 interview he observes that the entire “island is at the point of some kind of

cataclysm" (*BFC*, 193). Such plays as *The Mundy Scheme*, *The Freedom of the City*, and *Living Quarters* signal Friel's cognitive wakening that will later endow his Northern identity with subaltern status.

In other words, the increasing reliance on intimidatory and repressive policies in both the Republic and the province from the mid 1960s through the 1970s transform the earlier Friel's alienation, as discussed in relation to his *Irish Press* columns, into subalternity. Many of his public statements from the early 1980s articulate his desire to reform both Irish states; additionally, he characterizes all of the Field Day directors as sharing this strategy, as

a Northern accented group . . . with a strong political element (small p) and that would concern itself with some sense of disaffection most of us would feel at the state of two nations . . . I would say that all six of us are not at home in Northern Ireland and indeed all six would probably not be at home in the 26 counties.
(*BFC*, 193)

In his repudiation of both Republic and province, Friel formulates the subaltern's adversarial engagement with nationalist ideology, even in its accommodationalist mode, which allows him to diagnose "this historic failure of the nation to come to its own" (Guha, "Historiography," 7). Friel's plays portray a supplemental Irishness that betrays the inability of a Dublin-based nationalism to speak for the people throughout Ireland, not merely those in the North; thus, Friel aspires to what Ranajit Guha would call a "politics of the people" (Guha, "Historiography," 4), an intentionally horizontal cultural practice, that is signaled in Friel's statement by his reliance upon "politics" with a "small p." Indeed, throughout the period that Friel promotes Northernness as an alternative identity, he is quick to limit it "to a cultural state, not a political one" (*BFC*, 175). Similarly, Seamus Deane expresses the directors' shared rejection of, but contamination by, politics by recognizing that "politics is a danger to us but then we're maybe a danger to politics as well," though ultimately "We are politicians in a sense by being artists" (*BFC*, 190).

To that extent, Friel's Northern subalternity is distinct from a proto-nationalism intent upon the usurpation of the state and its own

subsequent elevation to the status of official ideology, all of which should make us suspicious of McGrath's easy elision of Friel's ideology to a simplistic "new nationalism" identified with John Hume's politics (McGrath, 217, 284).⁷ In her analysis of the political debate within the Field Day collective, Marilynn Richtarik identifies an ideological strain between the pamphlet-publishing critics, who endorsed a more conventional form of nationalism, and such artists as Friel and Heaney, "fifth provincials" (Richtarik, *Acting*, 241), who "tried to cultivate a sense of local attachment that might override the touchy issue of national allegiance" (Richtarik, *Acting*, 253). Martine Pelletier and Perro de Jong have further argued that Friel's decision to premiere *Dancing at Lughnasa* at the Abbey Theatre rather than through Field Day "hints at Friel's desire to take some distance from his brain-child" specifically because, after 1985, such members as Seamus Deane had allied the movement too closely with Republicanism (Pelletier and Jong, "Whispering," 141).⁸ Whereas in 1980 *Translations* initiated a reevaluation of traditional Irish nationalism, by the production of *Making History* in 1988 Pelletier and de Jong diagnose Friel's increasing desire to prevent Field Day from becoming associated primarily with the nationalists' half of the Northern debate over Irish identity (Pelletier and Jong, "Whispering," 138–41). Indeed, by promoting Kearney's conceptual and deterritorialized "Fifth Province," which Friel calls a "province of the mind" and "a place for dissenters, traitors to the prevailing mythologies in the other four provinces," he expresses sympathy more with Kearney's "postnationalist" proposals for solving the Northern crisis than with Hume's more conventional political program (Gray, "Field Day," 7).⁹

The Communication Cord

The Communication Cord (1982) is Friel's sole comedy in the Plautian tradition of older characters deployed to block romance, interchangeable lovers, and trickster figures in improbable disguises. Tim Gallagher has arranged to borrow the rustic cabin near Ballybeg that has been in Jack McNeilis' family for generations. He hopes to use it to impress his girlfriend's father, Senator Donovan, to further both his

romance and his career, but he must accomplish his stratagem and hurry the Donovans on their way before a French secretary arrives for a romantic weekend with Jack. Unfortunately, their conspiracy is discovered by Tim's former girlfriend, Claire Harkin, who also had intended to borrow the cabin, and she resolves to disrupt their planned deception. To counter Claire's charade as a monolingual Frenchwoman, Jack decides to intervene, masquerading as a wealthy German with unreliable English; in due course the senator becomes convinced that Tim is mentally unstable and escapes with Jack's French secretary, Susan Donovan seeks solace in Jack's arms, Claire recaptures Tim's affections, and the cabin literally collapses around the reunited lovers.

Even before Friel expressed his frequently cited desire that *The Communication Cord* "be seen in tandem with *Translations*" (*BFC*, 175), both Tom Paulin and Seamus Deane used their contributions to the play's program to emphasize the farce's subordination to the earlier drama. Accordingly, the critical examinations of *The Communication Cord* have firmly and unwaveringly situated the comedy within interpretive contexts dictated by the earlier tragedy; indeed, it has variously been described as "the mirror image of *Translations*" (Pine, 247), its "rewriting" (Andrews, 192), and its "farical antidote" (McGrath, 198). With their intention to correlate the comedy's characters to those in the earlier tragedy, Kearney and, fifteen years later, Andrews, most rigorously read the play as a reworking of *Translations* by positing pervasive correspondences; however, most critics have pursued the plays' linguistic and semiological similarities.¹⁰ As early as 1983, Kearney declares *The Communication Cord* the last in Friel's "trilogy of language plays," proposing that it reverses the cultural-linguistic dynamics of *Translations* by exploring the possibility for language to transcend its inherent limitations to intimate a "more personal and profound sharing of one's ontological experience" (Kearney, "Language Play," 48). Through the increasingly particularistic analyses of Pine, Andrews, and Corbett, the determination to dissect Friel's deployment of language through naming, dialect, dialogue, and the disruption of semantic signification represents the primary critical preoccupation of the 1990s.¹¹ In fact, Pine has even offered Erving Goffman's *Forms of Talk*, which explores dialogic

analysis and “the dance in talk,” as the linguistic mastertext informing the comedy (Pine, 251). Finally, even the staging of the action in a restored nineteenth-century cottage attracts critical attention because of its perceived parodic deflation of the earlier play’s cultural and historical setting.¹² Ultimately, this drive to read *The Communication Cord* through *Translations* is briefly supplemented only by McGrath, who considers the main characters’ dispositions towards “traditional unrenovated nationalism” (McGrath, 201).¹³

I intend to initiate this chapter with a discussion of *The Communication Cord* rather than the earlier *Translations* for various reasons, and not merely to liberate the farce from the shadow of its predecessor. While I do not wish to take issue with these historically productive strategies, I wish to slightly refocus the interpretive specularity with which we view the play to reveal other possibilities. My intention is to expose the play’s unique status; though Deane has suggested that *The Communication Cord* should be considered a work that engages Irish history no less than *Translations*, it is nonetheless the only play for the period from 1980 through 1992 set in contemporary Ireland (Deane, “In Search,” 9). Indeed, aside from *The Enemy Within* at the beginning of his career (1963) and *The Home Place* at its end (2005), all of Friel’s history plays are composed during this period. Thus, by considering *The Communication Cord* before its more famous antecedent, my subsequent analysis of *Translations* (1980) with *Making History* (1988), *The London Vertigo* (1990), and *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990) allows for the chapter’s primary analytical work to proceed uninterrupted: the ideological strategy of Friel’s dramatic historicizations.¹⁴

Finally, and most significantly, the composition of this decade’s sole portrayal of contemporary Ireland punctuates the period during which Friel expresses his unequivocal advocacy for Northern identity and its importance to political and cultural reconciliation in contemporary Ireland (1981–84). However, this endorsement is short lived: by 1986, in interviews with Michael Sheridan and Laurence Finnegan, Friel signals his marked retreat from both Northern identity and any espousal of the type of ideologized art associated with Field Day.¹⁵ Whereas in his brief conversation with Sheridan he worries

that "fealty to the tribe" tempts the artist to "betray your inner spirit structure that must always refuse a worldly or public subscription" (*BFC*, 195, 196), throughout his conversation with Finnegan he repeatedly states his stark disillusionment with any alliance between nation and art. On two occasions he emphatically repulses his interviewer's attempts to elicit his agreement that art embodies a dialogue between the artist and "his own people – with Ireland" (*EDI*, 125), or that he "[helps] a people define who they are" (*EDI*, 126); in both instances, Friel asserts the surprisingly solipsistic proposition that the artist is engaged solely in a "discourse . . . primarily with yourself: it is always with yourself" (*EDI*, 125), in which "He has only got to find who he is and what *he* is" (*EDI*, 127, original italics). More specifically, Friel rejects Finnegan's assertion that literature, painting, or music can contribute to an "authentic" Irish culture, retorting that cultural heritage has "relevance . . . to yourself but not to your Irishness – just to yourself" (*EDI*, 132). Finally, whereas Northern identity had previously figured so prominently in his ideological positionings, Friel disavows it early in this interview. As background to another question, Finnegan mentions that Eugene McCabe reported being chastised by Friel for not being "involved in the Northern thing" (*EDI*, 123); however, Friel redirects the question to claim that "I certainly wouldn't say it to anyone now," because Northerners lack the communal consensus to reconcile the public and private selves (*EDI*, 124). Thus, if we are to assess Friel's otherwise obscure and transient conception of Northern identity, its contours are to be evinced from *The Communication Cord*.

Once the play's interpretive moorings to *Translations* are suspended, *The Communication Cord* emerges as Friel's comic romance between Northerners and Southerners, exploring traits that pervasively delineate a subaltern difference from Republican constructions of Irishness. Reflecting the playwright's own life on both sides of the border, Jack McNeilis and Claire Harkin unequivocally embody Friel's Northern heartland of County Tyrone, where the author was born, and County Donegal, where he lives. Claire was "born and bred in Omagh," where Friel himself was raised until the age of ten (*CC*, 71). Ballybeg is Jack's "ancestral seat," and even though his family has moved to the

South, their frequent holidays there have preserved their ties to the region and their Donegal relatives (*CC*, 15, 21, 74), all of which mirrors Friel's own experience summering with his maternal relatives in Glenties.¹⁶ By contrast, though Friel clearly designates the origins of this Northern pair, Tim Gallagher and Susan Donovan represent the South at its most generic and indistinct; for example, we know only that "there [are] no Gallaghers in Ballybeg" (*CC*, 31) and that Susan's father finds the Donegal coast a restorative alternative to "the city" (*CC*, 45). Whereas the play resists any simplistic analysis that reduces it to the opposition of urban to rural, Tim and Susan are representative creatures of "the city" (*CC*, 13) – presumably Dublin, with its lecturers, politicians, and diplomatic staff – unfamiliar both with the North in particular and Ireland's countryside in general. By the play's conclusion this naive pair find themselves the unwitting prey of the two Northerners' romantic maneuvers: Claire has captured Tim's affections, while Jack has exploited Tim's disastrous charade to win Susan and the "wealth that [he] once lusted after" (*CC*, 21). Although Susan is the daughter of a Northerner, her father admits that he has not seen their family home in County Down for over fifty years (*CC*, 34); thus, she would not have developed the same personal knowledge of the North as Jack enjoyed in County Donegal, and she would have been raised solely as a Southern nationalist.

While Tim and Susan present a superficial portrait of Southerners as naively gullible in comparison to their Northern counterparts, Friel establishes diverse and substantial similarities between Jack and Claire. While Tim has failed to complete his dissertation and Susan remains dependent upon her father, the Northerners are characterized by comparatively greater professional success: Jack has embarked upon a career as lawyer, while Claire enjoys a secure position in a university English department. More significantly, amid the collapse of Susan and Tim's scheme to dupe her father to further their romance, Jack and Claire each spontaneously manipulates events to secure their unrelated, emerging romantic opportunities. However, their shared readiness to adopt disguise suggests that their predisposition for deception is an innate characteristic rather than an opportunistic coincidence. While Claire exploits the French identification that Tim

attributes to her in desperation (*CC*, 35), Jack insists upon assuming the German identity that allows him to participate in the ruse (*CC*, 24–5); in both cases, they adopt these foreign identities to exert control over the development of the hoax and the final romantic pairings. Their shared ability to exploit disguise complements their capacity to successfully adapt to both Northern and Southern cultures. Indeed, if the fictional Brian of the *Irish Press* articles readily betrays his inability to pass as a citizen in either Northern Ireland or the Republic despite his varied attempts to “be an insider” (21 July 1962), Jack and Claire convert such alienation into a strength by adopting disguises to win the Southerner’s affection.

By comparison, Senator Donovan is a considerably more complicated and equivocal figure: born in County Down, in a rustic cottage not unlike the one recreated on stage, he embodies both ambition fulfilled and derisive vulnerability (*CC*, 32). Indeed, the senator’s overtly Catholic parents, who testified to their ideological fervor by naming him “Patrick Mary Pious,” may have been among the disillusioned nationalists who fled such border regions as South Down after the failure of the Boundary Commission to transfer majority Catholic territory to the fledgeling Irish state (*CC*, 80).¹⁷ His Plautian designation as the obsessively possessive father, or *senex iratus*, who competes with younger men for the affection of young women, ensures his comic comeuppance (Frye, *Anatomy*, 180–1); nonetheless, the lack of critical consensus regarding his significance reflects Friel’s creation of a character that overcomes the genre’s dictated two-dimensionality for such blocking figures.¹⁸ Nonetheless, to a greater degree than either Jack or Claire, Donovan represents a hyper-competent Northerner who has overcome poverty to excel in two professions and rise to the pinnacle of Irish influence. While such critics as Dantanus fault the character for his hypocritical posturings, Donovan’s political façade, alternating between self-deprecation and sentimental traditionalism, equally manifests a Northerner’s penchant for opportunistic posturing (Dantanus, 204).

Despite the romantic pairings of young lovers that portray Northerners winning the love of Southerners, which in a superficial exposition of this paradigm would promise the salutary union of the South and Northern Ireland, the pervasive similarities linking Jack to

this elder statesman betray Friel's unconscious skepticism towards the cultural union requisite for his Northern ideology. Jack seems intent upon replicating Donovan's life; while he initiates the action having arranged a romantic weekend with Donovan's mistress, by the play's conclusion the two men have definitively swapped companions: Donovan exits with Evette, leaving his daughter with the young lawyer. Moreover, Jack concretizes his semblance to Donovan by exchanging places with him as well: by enchaining himself with the cattle shackle with the same inexplicable deliberation that characterized the senator's earlier foolishness (*CC*, 91). Whereas Jack's statements assure the audience that his eventual declaration of love for Susan is merely another opportunistic maneuver (*CC*, 21, 25, 29, 72-3), his additional resonance with Donovan serves to further suggest that this union is nevertheless compelled by his psychological drive both to usurp and emulate this figure, to become a Northerner who masters the South.

Regardless of the disposition of these secondary pairings, the play's edifying reading depends upon the reunion of Claire and Tim, and their romance's ultimate plausibility. Yet, despite their sustained kiss that apocalyptically ends the comedy, Friel imbues this couple with romantic undecidability, allowing the audience to suspect that even this pair represents merely a union of opportunistic convenience. For his part, Tim persists in his attempts at romantic reconciliation with Susan well after she has unequivocally shifted her favors to Jack and only moments before he tentatively signals his intention to transfer his libidinal desires to Claire by "[catching] her hand" (*CC*, 90). While earlier in the play Tim admits only that he "took her out a few times" (*CC*, 14), he provides little indication throughout the play that any affection has endured their separation of nearly eight years (*CC*, 91). Indeed, Tim claims the survival of his long-buried affection only once; he seeks to convince her of "the very high regard I've had for you for a long, long time," when he attempts to persuade Claire to facilitate his romance with Susan (*CC*, 42). Conversely, at no point in the play does Claire admit loving Tim, nor does Friel employ her older confidant Nora Dan as romantic go-between to confess it for her. Rather, when she realizes that she has intruded upon Tim's planned "love nest," she elliptically announces that "I'm going to enjoy this"; suggesting that her desire to disrupt this romance is

strategic or mimetic: it stems from other possible motivations, such as revenge, rivalry, or animosity over being rudely expelled from the cottage to further another's romantic stratagems (*CC*, 30). Similarly, even after she has secured Tim's affection, she parodies the language of love instead of participating in it. After he has transferred his affections to her, Tim asks Claire whether she is glad that he intends to spend the weekend with her, but instead of responding with an unequivocal profession of love, she parodies his earlier use of evasive syntax to mislead Susan when she asked a similar question: "Yes. A very large quantity of glad" (*CC*, 39, 91).

Superficially, *The Communication Cord* promises to demonstrate how "the Northern thing [will] complete" Irishness; however, its staging of romance between representatives of these two Irish identities fails to envision an enduring and genuine union (*BFC*, 174). Overall, through Jack, Claire, and Donovan, Friel portrays Northerners as protean and successful figures of considerable talent whose genuine characters and loyalties remain obscured behind their opportunistic positionings. If the farce humiliates the senator by exposing the liaison that he had successfully concealed from even his daughter, he ends the play freed from his chains and in the company of his young French mistress. Jack and Claire seem to differ not in kind, but only in their success in concealing their ultimate intentions. Our inability to confidently assess their romantic constitutions reminds us that their guarded calculation fundamentally differs from Susan's and Tim's romantic naiveté, for both Southerners place unguarded faith in the very Northern lovers who had disappointed them in the past. Ultimately, though Friel presents Northerners as capable of entering the Republic's professional classes and seducing their citizens, the play experiences considerably greater difficulty portraying a plausible union of North and South.

Translations

Translations (1980) stages the competition between two men for the love of a woman in the far west of Ireland in 1833; however, because one of these men is English and the other Irish, the play is as much about Ireland's colonial condition as it is about simple romantic

rivalry. The rivalry between Manus, who serves as his father's assistant in Baile Beag's hedge school, and Yolland, whose assignment is to establish English equivalents for Irish toponyms, provides the play with its narrative tension. The drama's ideological tension stems from the Ordnance Survey contingent that arrives at the beginning of the action and the national school that the English will shortly open in the town. While Manus, for one, suspects that the two portend the slow erasure of Gaelic culture by institutionalizing English ideological apparatuses, his father considers the English threat marginal and even aspires for a position as master in the national school. As the survey team slowly records and christens the countryside, Yolland solidifies his friendship with Owen, Manus's brother who serves as his translator, and becomes enthralled with the area, its people, and especially Maire Chatach. However, he mysteriously disappears after winning Maire's love, and the play closes with the English army threatening to raze the town if his whereabouts and condition are not revealed.

This book's intention has been to introduce each play's examination with a symptomatic synopsis of the interpretive trends concerning Friel's career. However, *Translations* has elicited a more extensive criticism than any play in Friel's career; not only is this hedge-school drama viewed as a watershed in his career, but it has been recognized as the most significant Irish play of the second half of the twentieth century. Indeed, the play's importance is reflected in the frequently impassioned critical debates that quickly emerged regarding the play's manipulation of history, cultural stereotypes, language, and its own sources. Moreover, even though it had its premiere more than twenty years ago and has in some ways been eclipsed by the success of *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990), the critical interest in *Translations* continues to gain momentum, eliciting increasingly subtle and diverse readings.

Certainly the most productive critical strategy has focused on the self-conscious representation of language as both the play's polyvalent theme and its metatextual structure. The earliest analyses by such critics as Kearney, Deane, and Dantanus interpret the staged encounter of Irish speakers with the English language within the

context, as Deane describes it in his introduction to Friel's *Selected Plays*, of "a crisis both of language and civilization" that, in its broadest applications, elucidates "the tragedy of English imperialism as well as of Irish nationalism" (*SP*, 21–2).¹⁹ While this trope in which the collision of two languages and their associated cultures continues to inform such recent readings as those of Grene and Corbett, a strategy deploying more formal linguistic theory has recently emerged to subject the play's discourse, verbal exchanges, acts of naming, and language itself to a rigorous analysis that is less dependent on issues of specific cultural conflict. Both interpretive strands recognize the importance of George Steiner's work to the play's planning and composition, while Robert Smith, F. C. McGrath, and Richard Pine most thoroughly seek to explore Friel's appropriation of Steiner's *After Babel*.²⁰ As sustained as this critical strategy has proven to be, both Anthony Roche and Lionel Pilkington have offered refreshingly innovative analyses of language and *Translations*; while Roche discusses Friel's staging of limited linguistic intelligibility within the context of Shakespearean precedents to be found in *Henry IV, Part 1* (Roche, *Contemporary Irish Drama*, 246–54), Pilkington persuasively argues that the play seeks to incorporate the English language's structure into the depiction of Irish language to undermine the "Provisional Sinn Féin campaign that stressed the separatist potential of the Irish language" throughout the late 1970s (Pilkington, *Theatre*, 219).²¹

This critical interest in language can be seen to drive the focus of the characterological criticism as well, for the field has sustained a keen interest in the two figures for whom bilinguality emerges as a politicized and contested cultural terrain during the course of the play: Owen, the British translator, and his father, the hedge-schoolmaster Hugh. Perhaps because Owen was played by Field Day's cofounder Stephen Rea, the initial discussions of the play, commencing with Heaney's review in the *Times Literary Supplement*, emphasize the importance of this character; even as late as 1995 Kiberd refers to Owen as "by far the most complex character onstage" (Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 619). In an early reflection on *Translations*, Deane discusses the character as an avatar of "the new Ireland" who comes to value the old world that "he has helped to bury" (Deane, *Celtic*

Revivals, 170); similarly, Dantanus also explores this perception of the character as naively straddling the liminal space between two languages and cultures, returning to Baile Beag to learn the value of the indigenous only once his actions precipitously facilitate its transformation (Dantanus, 190–1, 197). Subsequent interpretations tend to emphasize this reading of Owen as the skillful social negotiator who unwittingly becomes “most fully the victim” of cultural forces beyond his control or his ken (Brown, “Transition,” 195).²²

Conversely, in his analysis of the play’s inaugural production, Christopher Morash argues that the casting of Ray McAnally as Owen’s father combines with the character’s striking costume to “[weight] the play towards Hugh” (Morash, *History*, 237). Although the hedge-school master’s significance to the play’s themes was recognized in the earliest analyses, his figure was initially discussed with brevity and superficiality; for example, while Dantanus twice refers to his pomposity (Dantanus, 187, 189), O’Brien comments that his language is merely “histrionic” (O’Brien, 107).²³ However, Lucia Salaris and Declan Kiberd initiate a reevaluation in the early 1990s which continues to inspire the most robust debates regarding the play: Salaris argues that Hugh skillfully transcends the cultural limitations of both his sons (Salaris, “Masks of Language,” 103–6), while Kiberd considers him the sly pragmatist who forces the radical reappraisal of our assumptions about the play’s cultural strategy (Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 622). By maintaining a critical awareness of Hugh’s complexity and inherent contradictions, Elmer Andrews’ patient examination of the character’s ideological evolution preempts many of the more recent discussions of the schoolmaster’s ideological positionings (Andrews, 175–80).²⁴

If Hugh has emerged as a pivotal figure whose ideological deployment has attracted less, rather than more, interpretive consensus, in that respect he is an appropriate emblem for a play whose cultural strategy more than any other work by Friel sharply divides traditional nationalists and revisionists. While Marilyn Richtig has traced the origins of this debate to the mid 1980s (Richtig, *Acting*, 241–9), during the 1990s the distance between the two interpretive camps has increased rather than diminished. Whereas

Josephine Lee and Tony Corbett offer readings that treat Baile Beag prior to the arrival of English as “a linguistic Eden” (Lee, “Linguistic Imperialism,” 172), David Cairns’ and Shaun Richards’ argument that “the play contains an auto-critique of such backward looks” has influenced such later reevaluations of the play’s ideological trajectory as those by Kiberd and Pilkington (Cairns and Richards, *Writing Ireland*, 147).²⁵ Ultimately these works share a common conceit that the most heuristic assessment of the play is performed within a diachronic perspective, that the struggle between these two languages and their associated cultures acquire interpretive resonance only through the perspective of the subsequent history of the colonial expansion of English hegemony or the complementary rise of an Irish counter-hegemony. In other words, the most ideologically informed readings inherently compare Friel’s imagined Baile Beag of 1833 to the presumed Ireland of another date: that of an earlier pure Gaelic culture, that of the Victorian erosion of a distinctively Irish language and culture, that of their resurgence during the Gaelic Revival and subsequent Irish state, or that of the more contemporary attempt to liberate Irishness from nationalist manipulation. In contrast, my analysis will conduct a synchronic examination of the Irish culture as Friel portrays it in 1833. Specifically, I intend to assess the survival of Gaelic culture within the dramatic community and the extent to which Hugh’s hedge school disseminates it. In short, before we can declare this play either a panegyric to the passing of Gaelic culture or a pragmatic exposition on the evolution of Irish identity, we need to examine what attributes constitute Gaelic culture in Friel’s play.

A representative moment occurs early in *Translations*, when Jimmy Jack compares Athene to Grania, saying to Manus, “isn’t our own Grania a class of a goddess” (*SP*, 386). The point of his analogy is never clarified because Manus interrupts him with the question “Who?”; after responding “Grania – Grania – Diarmuid’s Grania,” Jimmy Jack veers away from his original comparison to celebrate what for him is Athene’s abundant sensuality. This brief exchange does more than introduce Jimmy Jack’s romantic obsession with the Greek goddess, which will acquire crucial resonance at the end of the play, it briefly sketches out the contours of Gaelic culture in Friel’s

pre-Famine Gaeltacht. We are never quite sure whether Manus is acquainted with the Fenian tales of Grania, because even after Jimmy's attempted clarification, Manus utters only the oblique "Ah," which can imply anything from "Oh yes, of course" to "I have no idea what you're talking about, but please carry on." However, Manus is far from a reticent character, and his other monosyllabic responses typically come when he is attempting to avoid topics and move the conversation along. For example, when Marie asks him whether he has applied for the position of schoolmaster, his succinct "No" masks his reluctance to admit to her his refusal to compete against his father for the position (*SP*, 394). Similarly, he refuses to converse with Yolland with a blunt "So" after the loquacious, and slightly inebriated, Englishman attempts to strike up a conversation (*SP*, 411). Thus, in this first instance with Jimmy Jack, Manus may wish to dispense with what is, for him, Jimmy Jack's obscure reference to progress from this comparison to the more familiar topic of Athene.

Manus may be ignorant of the tales of Ireland's Grania, but even if he isn't, Friel represents a vestigial Gaelic culture which has effectively died well before the English invasion we witness in the drama. After this abortive allusion to Grania, there is only one other reference to Irish mythology in the entire work, when Yolland marvels over Hugh and Jimmy Jack "swapping stories about Apollo and Cuchulainn and Paris and Ferdia" (*SP*, 416). By contrast, these two passing references to ancient Irish culture are overwhelmed by the flood of allusions to classical literature. In the Irish culture that Friel describes, the massive corpus of Old Irish mythology and epics has been thoroughly supplanted by the importation of a foreign tradition in Latin and Greek. Whereas Hugh's classes also include lessons in geography and mathematics, the cultural references solely reflect classical literature and languages. While, of course, the hedge school's pragmatic mandate may preclude the elevation of myth to the status of pedagogic discipline, its pervasive absence from even casual conversation demonstrates that Irish culture has already lost its distinctive Gaelic heritage. Jimmy Jack represents the goal of this education, for after a lifetime of devoted study, he comfortably rereads Homer, has memorized Horace, and offers farming advice based upon Virgil

(*SP*, 392). Moreover, Friel demonstrates that Latin and Greek are learned to the exclusion of Irish, for Hugh mingles his discourses to his students with such phrases as “caerimonia nominationis,” “Adsum” (*SP*, 397), and “studia” (*SP*, 398).²⁶ Even when he quizzes his younger students on etymology, he does so not to refine their knowledge of Irish grammar, but of Latin:

HUGH: Indeed – English, I suggested, couldn’t really express us.
And to his credit he acquiesced to my logic.

Acquiesced – Maire? . . . Too slow. Bridget?

BRIDGET: *Acquiesco*.

HUGH: *Procede*.

BRIDGET: *Acquiesco, acquiescere, acquievi, acquietum*.

(*SP*, 399)

Clearly, the play presents the seemingly undiluted inculcation of this younger generation in the superiority of classical culture to either English or Irish.

Likewise, the two citations of Irish lore involving Hugh and Jimmy Jack do not suggest that this older, more erudite generation possesses a knowledge of Irish culture otherwise absent from the staged action. We hear that these two mature scholars tell “stories about Apollo and Cuchulainn and Paris and Ferdia” secondhand from Yolland; however, the source of this observation imbues the reported scene with a great deal of uncertainty, precisely because Jimmy Jack speaks no English and Yolland no Irish (*SP*, 388). Thus, Yolland could not have eavesdropped upon them, and one must assume that Hugh described for him the content of such a conversation. But, of course, this transmission threatens the veracity of the observation. Yolland’s respect for Hugh and his romanticized view of Irish culture in general may have metamorphosed Hugh’s original, and perhaps somewhat different, statement, or, of course, Hugh may have intentionally aggrandized his conversation with Jimmy Jack to augment his own scholarly reputation. Ultimately, while we may assume that Yolland hears of these Irish figures from the Irish themselves, this mere nominal appearance does not argue for a robust survival of the Irish heroic tradition. Moreover, even the brief allusion that Jimmy Jack makes to

Grania implies a superficial familiarity with Irish folklore, rather than a thorough knowledge (*SP*, 386). Jimmy Jack compares Grania to Athene, saying “isn’t our own Grania a class of a goddess,” but such a statement reveals his fundamental misconception concerning the Fenian cycle of literature. Such stories as “The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Grainne” or “The Hiding of the Hill of Howth” portray Grania as a tragic, and mortal, heroine in the medieval romance tradition, fleeing with her lover from the wrath of her powerful husband Finn Mac Cumail. ²⁷ In short, Jimmy Jack’s brief allusion expresses a misconception regarding the broadest category of knowledge of this literary tradition: whether a figure is human or divine. This mistake, though, is characteristic of Jimmy Jack, for he is flawed by his general inability to comprehend such basic oppositions as human and divine, living and fictional.

Ultimately, Hugh presents the most compelling example of the voluntary abandonment of Irish culture for classical. At the play’s conclusion, Hugh recalls the revolution of 1798 when he and Jimmy Jack marched out in search of battle. But, as they hiked their 23 miles, they did not bolster their spirits with stories of mythic Irish warriors or past rebels against the English, nor did they sing one of the many folk ballads glorifying such Irish military leaders as Patrick Sarsfield or Hugh O’Neill. Rather, they headed out with “the *Aeneid* in their pockets,” modeling themselves after Greek heroes “homesick for Athens, just like Ulysses” (*SP*, 445). A scene of greater significance occurs earlier, when Hugh recites and translates into English a verse he has written “after the style of Ovid” (*SP*, 417). In their subsequent discussion, Yolland expresses his admiration for the “rich and ornate” corpus of “Gaelic” literature, of which for him Hugh is a representative poet (*SP*, 418). We realize that Yolland has mistaken Latin for Irish (as he will again with Maire in the next scene), when Hugh responds that he is a poet “only in Latin, I’m afraid.” Although Yolland does not remark upon this humble admission, the audience should realize that Hugh has developed an interest in an academic and artificial poetic tradition to the exclusion of the surviving Irish one. Indeed, not only does Hugh confess his ignorance of Wordsworth’s poetic career in distant England, more tellingly he betrays no sympathy with the

popular revival of Gaelic poetry within Ireland exemplified by Charlotte Brooke's *Reliques of Irish Poetry* (1789), Edward Bunting's *General Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland* (1796), and Thomas Moore's *Irish Melodies* (1808).²⁸

In all of these examples Friel portrays the disappearance of an oral Gaelic culture as well as the more esoteric, medieval literature of Ireland. Whereas the literary tales concerning such Ulster cycle heroes as Cuchulainn and Ferdia were lost sometime during the upheavals of the twelfth century (Deane, *Field Day*, 1), both contemporary ballads and Fenian folklore remained part of Irish oral, popular culture through the decline of the language during the nineteenth century (MacKillop, *Fionn*, 70–104). In short, Friel portrays an undisturbed Irish culture that has abandoned its connection to both its popular, as well as its literary, Gaelic tradition not through foreign compulsion, but through native indifference, or, as Kiberd declared in 1995, "To put the matter starkly, Irish declined only when the Irish people allowed it to decline" (Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 616). When Hugh claims that "our own culture and the classical tongues [make] a happier conjugation," the audience is naively misled if they believe that the two coexist as equals (*SP*, 399). Rather, Friel's Irish have long ago discarded their undervalued Irish culture and use their language merely as a vehicle to learn the more prestigious ancient literatures in Latin and Greek. In short, by the time the English arrive to supplant the hedge school with their colonial education system, there is little difference between the two. The English intend to replace an Irish system that teaches the rudiments of geography and mathematics, while emphasizing the study of Classical literature, with an English system that teaches the rudiments of geography and mathematics, while emphasizing the study of Classical literature. Thus, Hugh comes to accept the necessity to teach in English because he realizes that only the language of instruction will change. Indeed, he states his belief that he will be able to run the national school as "[he has] run this hedge-school for the past thirty-five years" (*SP*, 400).

Within this context of an Irish disregard for their own traditional culture, Friel's construction of the enthused hibernophile Yolland deserves examination.²⁹ His presumed and almost certain

death is more than a personal tragedy for Maire, it removes from the English contingent conducting the Ordnance Survey the only individual sympathetic to the Irish and the integrity of their toponyms; indeed, his tragedy promises to further alienate the British and discourage such transcultural collaboration, making the future name-changing procedures less consensual and consequently less Irish in character. Thus, through *Translations* Friel anticipates the survey continuing its work amid a milieu of Irish indifference to their indigenous heritage and renewed English animosity – a combination that ensures a disregard for whatever Irish integrity Yolland sought to preserve. In short, the drama depicts the survey team at a methodological juncture as well as a political one, and the ramifications of Yolland's tragedy will permeate the language of Irish geography, and thus conceptions of Irishness itself, for generations to come. Friel tacitly encourages such an assumption in his public reply to the historian J. H. Andrews, whose study of the Ordnance Survey served as his historical guide while writing *Translations*, when he confesses to three "tiny bruises inflicted on history in the play," among which is the portrayal of Yolland in events of 1833; whereas, Friel admits, "Yolland did not join the survey department until 1838" (*EDI*, 118). By including this character's temporal dislocation with two other slight revisions, Friel assures his audience that merely dates, and not content, have been tampered with. The assumption that the translation of a historical Yolland into Friel's fiction represents a relatively straightforward process is further encouraged by the playwright's earlier confession to the complex and conflicted processes that were encountered in the fashioning of the characters Owen and Lancey from their historical antecedents John O'Donovan and T. F. Colby (*EDI*, 118). In short, Friel assures us that he has revealed every substantial change.

However, if we accept this assurance, we fall victim to a historical revisionism of much more profound and resonant significance than Friel's much criticized portrayal of soldiers wielding bayonets (*EDI*, 118). Just as Friel conceals his complex reinterpretation of the survey's director Colonel T. F. Colby behind the drama's "Lancey," the name of an insignificant historical participant in the survey (Andrews,

Paper Landscape, 151–2), so too the “Yolland” of *Translations* is unrelated to his namesake, William Yolland, a mathematician described in Andrews’ book as a tactless functionaire, who was briefly posted in Ireland in 1853 as part of “a downward turn in [his] career” (Andrews, *Paper Landscape*, 212). Having served in the London office from 1838 through 1853, Yolland quit the survey a year after his transfer to Enniskillen when his application for return to England was refused (Andrews, *Paper Landscape*, 246); in other words, he betrays no signs of sharing the dramatic Yolland’s passion for Ireland. Rather, Friel adopts “Yolland” to conceal his dramatic appropriation of Lieutenant Thomas Aiskew Larcom, a prominent figure who “came to influence the whole business” associated with the survey and whose authority throughout much of the 1830s and 1840s rivaled that of Colby himself, the master-general of Ireland’s Ordnance Survey (Andrews, *Paper Landscape*, 183). Throughout the survey’s initial decades, the competition between Colby and Larcom to establish the project’s procedures and goals defined the period; in fact, even the title of a chapter in Andrews’ book bears witness to the centrality of their struggle: “Colby and Larcom: the Final Phase, 1843–1847.”

Whereas Colby demonstrates “the average Englishman’s prejudice against the Irish” (Andrews, *Paper Landscape*, 21), Larcom emerges as Colby’s foil: a well-known admirer of Irish culture, for nearly twenty years he advocated greater Irish influence in the Survey (Andrews, *Paper Landscape*, 186). From his office in Mountjoy, Larcom reviewed each recommended toponym from every Survey team and decided the name each site would have on the final Ordnance map. To Anglicize names with greater “deference to the Irishness of Irish place-names,” Larcom studied the Irish language under the tutelage of John O’Donovan, the model for Friel’s Owen (Andrews, *Paper Landscape*, 122). Moreover, he appointed a series of “toponymic field workers” to perform local research, which included both the consultation of local documents and a record of “the names pronounced and interpreted by Irish-speaking residents” (Andrews, *Paper Landscape*, 123). In short, much of the second act’s first scene – from the consultation of local records to Yolland’s insistence that Owen pronounce the Irish names, from his determination to learn Irish to his

intention to render “Each name a perfect equation with its roots” (SP, 422) – betrays Larcom’s defining influence on the dramatic Yolland’s character. Thus, despite Friel’s reluctance to admit this in his explanation of the play’s historical basis, the dramatic characters Lancey and Yolland represent more than merely the Victorian temperamental polarity regarding the Irish, they emblemize the historical personalities – polar in their own right – of the Survey’s two most important English figures, Colby and Larcom.

Making History, The London Vertigo, and Translations

In one of the earliest discussions of *Dancing at Lughnasa*, Fintan O’Toole argued for a manifest ahistoricity destabilizing Friel’s versions of the past conceptualized in the two plays *Making History* (1988) and *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990); whether regarded as historical drama or memory play, O’Toole asserts that Friel’s dramas “mock history” by discarding the notion of a linear historicity in favor of an endless cycle of recurring tropes, the “unchanging places, people and dilemmas” of a past that repeats itself because it remains unresolved (O’Toole, “Marking Time,” 203). He further argues that the alternation from *Making History* to *Dancing at Lughnasa*, which involves the shift from public history to a private reminiscence, betrays Friel’s disenchantment with an Ireland in which “not only is there no functioning politics, there is no polity” on either side of the border (O’Toole, “Marking Time,” 207). Not only does O’Toole’s taxonomy discern Friel’s overtly intentional strategies, but his argument anticipates the subsequent criticism as well; since the plays’ debuts, the former has been explicated as a critique of the myth of monologic or nationalist history, while the latter has been analyzed with increasing subtlety as an exploration of individual memory.³⁰ However, this dichotomy unduly fragments Friel’s concerns with the past by positing a polarity where a more subtle continuum exists. While O’Toole recognizes Friel’s previous attempts to address the past throughout his career, he fails nonetheless to discern the 1980s as a period during which the author was manifestly preoccupied with history and historiography. Rather than viewing the mid 1980s as an unproductive “gap” with only one original play from 1983 through 1989 (Pine, 234), a fuller

assessment of Friel's career emerges through the recognition that during this time he also edited Charles McGlinchey's memoirs, *The Last of the Name* (1986), and published a shortened version of Charles Macklin's *The True-Born Irishman* (1793), under the title of *The London Vertigo* (1990). These minor works reveal Friel's obsession with the Irish past; not only was he writing original plays that fictionalize history, but for the only time in his career he was also editing other historical Irish narratives.

That O'Toole ignores these minor works and criticizes Friel's transition from history to memory as a weakness is indicative of his bias for elite history. Even a casual review of his argument reveals his repeated pairing of "history and politics" that betrays his overriding assumption that, in Ranajit Guha's words, "the life of the state is all there is to history" (Guha, "Small Voice," 1). Conversely, Friel repeatedly endeavors not to memorialize "the native elite," but that "unhistorical historiography" composed of "the labouring population and the intermediate strata in town and country" comprising "the politics of the people" (Guha, "Historiography," 2-4). Indeed, in his introduction to his edition of McGlinchey's account of life on the Inishowen Peninsula, Friel admires the "almost Olympian" manner in which McGlinchey ignores the traditional elements of statist history:³¹

The historian or sociologist can arbitrarily choose almost any period in the history of a society . . . If the chosen period were McGlinchey's life – 1861–1954 – attention would rightly focus on issues like Home Rule and the land wars, the rise and fall of Parnell, the Rising in 1916, two world wars, the atomic bomb. McGlinchey does not mention even one of these events . . . They do not merit his notice.

(McGlinchey, *Name*, 1)

Friel reverently juxtaposes this chronicle of a man who had "very little schooling" to the work produced by the institutionalized "historian or sociologist" because only through it is he able to recover a portrait of his own North; McGlinchey's Meentiagh Glen is a rural community absent from the studies concerned with national events, which are far removed from this "remote and mountainy place" (McGlinchey,

Name, 2), too small to be included even in the *Atlas of Ireland* published by the Royal Irish Academy. As an ideological statement, this introduction seems at odds with his focus on the competition between rival dynasties staged in *Making History*; nonetheless, the influence of *The Last of the Name* on Friel's dramaturgy emerges considerably after the book's publication in 1986; *Dancing at Lughnasa* regards the passing of the region's "old Christianity that still cohabited with an older paganism" (McGlinchey, *Name*, 2), while the celebrants in *Wonderful Tennessee* (1992) preserve the traces of the *turas* rituals performed by McGlinchey and his parents (McGlinchey, *Name*, 64).³²

In his discussion of Neil Jordan's *The Crying Game*, David Lloyd reminds us that Aristotle defines history and poetry through an ideological complementarity characterized by reflection and refraction (Lloyd, *Ireland*, 63); Friel too recognizes the mirroring between the two forms of narration, but when he is not seeking to blur their distinctions, he is positing the superiority of fictional verisimilitude. Whereas Friel's more respectful manipulation of formal history in *Translations* elicited harsh criticism during the early 1980s from such historians as J.H. Andrews and Sean Connolly, he responds in the later 1980s with the more subversive subordination of history to fiction. In his introduction to McGlinchey's memoir, Friel dismisses academic history as a sleight of hand performed by a statism obsessed with the metropole; he criticizes it for "arbitrarily" choosing events and portraying them in an "uncomplicated" manner (McGlinchey, *Name*, 1, 2), ultimately reflecting his assumption that formal historiography employs "abstract and oversimplifying modes" (Guha, "Small Voice," 3). Similarly, after implying his suspicion of the existence of "historical 'fact'" in general, his brief preface to *Making Histories* further demotes history to the status of inadequate fiction, "a kind of literary artifact" (*EDI*, 135).

However, this later disillusionment should not obscure Friel's previous attempts to reconcile their allied specularities. *Aristocrats* along with *Translations* embodies distinct, though ultimately compatible, attempts to portray "the people" as cognizant of and engaged with the elite actors of traditional bourgeois history. The ghostly presence of Cardinal Newman, Daniel O'Connell, Tom Moore, with

their own illustrious ancestors, demonstrates Friel's attempt to dramatize a permeation of the private by the public, creating a family chronicle whose narrative is realized only through its continuous intersection with nationalist actors whose past visits to Ballybeg serve to suture this "small voice of history" to national historiography. Similarly, Friel's *Translations* acquires its cultural significance among audiences specifically for its ability to stage the broad sweep of history, characterized before the Famine by abstract imperial, institutional, and bureaucratic policies, within the context of domestic events. Friel seeks a cohabitation between public history and private fiction, but the debate over the abuse of historical fact in *Translations* forces him to question the relationship between discursive modes. If *Making History* signals a challenge to conventional academic historiography as monologic narrative through his disregard for the chronological facts that govern both traditional and revisionist accounts of O'Neill's life, it nonetheless manifests Friel's intention to interweave O'Neill's domestic story and Ireland's nationalist history. To that extent, *Making History* represents an ambitious attempt to refract elite historiography through the prism of "the small voice" of private experience.

Friel's modernization of Macklin's *The True-Born Irishman* (1990) has largely escaped critical examination, yet it forms a topical bridge between these disparate treatments of the political elite in *Making History* and the subaltern in *Dancing at Lughnasa*.³³ Friel admits to an affinity for Macklin because the earlier playwright was born on Inishowen, near Friel's home; however, the gross details of their lives bear little resemblance – unlike Macklin, Friel had not converted to Protestantism, affected an English accent, or pursued his theatrical career in London (*LV*, 1). Yet, Friel was attracted to the earlier play's resonance with *Translations* through its articulation of the threat to native culture posed by the "new language . . . A new kind of London English" that Nancy O'Doherty has adopted (*LV*, 19). However, of greater significance to our reading of the play is Friel's suppression of the political statements by Macklin's hero, Murrogh O'Dogherty, who articulates the subaltern resistance to the hegemonic intrusions posed by both Irish and English nationalism.³⁴

Whereas Friel retains O'Dogherty's antipathy to the pretense of English "courtiers" and "upstarts," Macklin's character is bitterly disillusioned with Irish "patriots" as well (Macklin, *True-Born Irishman*, 10–11). Similarly, instead of portraying O'Dogherty as ideologically and affectionately allied to his brother-in-law Tom Hamilton, as they are in Macklin's text (Macklin, *True-Born Irishman*, 9–11), Friel portrays them as mutually suspicious of each other's intentions and disparaging of each other's capabilities (*LV*, 20–2). By severing the concord of status, ideology, and family – and eliminating six characters who embody Dublin's idle rich – Friel shifts the spectrum of the play from the public to the private, from the political to the domestic.³⁵ In other words, just as O'Dogherty occupies the social strata midway between the Ballybeg cottages and O'Neill's estate, he similarly embodies a bourgeois subaltern ideologically mediating the social milieus of the two original plays whose writing coincide with it. Suggesting Guha's subaltern of "the intermediate strata of the town and country," O'Dogherty demonstrates an ability to delineate and critique the ideological forces of both nationalism and imperialism that seek to co-opt him (Guha, "Historiography," 4). Thus, if read as a corrective to *Making History*, *London Vertigo* untangles the earlier play's political and domestic registers, initiating a retreat from the former and an emphasis on the latter that will become more pronounced in the ideological positionings of *Dancing at Lughnasa*.

I have sought to trace a modulation in Friel's work from the political to the domestic, more accurately from a domestic permeated by political discourses to one which increasingly pushes them to the narrative's margins. I would like to initiate a reading strategy for these history plays' ideological concerns by returning to my earlier treatment of *Translations* and the problem posed by Friel's metamorphosis of the historical Larcom into the fictional George Yolland. Neither Yolland's historical namesake William Yolland nor his model Thomas Larcom died young or tragically – the former spent thirty years investigating railway accidents after he left the Survey in 1854 (Andrews, *Paper Landscape*, 246), the latter served the British government until 1868 as the first permanently appointed undersecretary of Ireland

(Andrews, *Paper Landscape*, 208). For eighteen years as the officer in charge of Mountjoy and another twenty in Phoenix Park, Larcom influenced not only Ireland's governance but, if the play's thematic conceits are to be believed, a significant aspect of its future conception of Irishness itself through his control of the Survey's toponymic process. Throughout his career with the Survey, he struggled with Colby to secure increasingly more Irish autonomy from England's direction, and the historian J. H. Andrews identifies him as the first "Mountjoy superintendent to identify himself with Irish interests" (Andrews, *Paper Landscape*, 287). To borrow Owen's words for Yolland, Larcom proved himself "a committed Hibernophile" whose cultural influence extended well beyond the dramatic Yolland's modest aspirations (*SP*, 407); yet, while remaining loyal to England, he vigorously promoted Irish political interests within the imperial framework.

Conversely, the stage Yolland dies young and early in his service with the Ordnance Survey, and Friel's dramatic imperative to remove this English hibernophile from history suggests much concerning the play's ideological strategy. In short, Friel's play cannot accommodate a benevolent Englishman modeled after Larcom, especially one who sought to understand and advocate Irish interests from a position of considerable political influence over a long career. *Translations* erases him long before his sympathy for Irish culture benefits the Survey or broader Irish policy – or the audience for that matter. Rather than portraying an Englishman as "responsible for some far-reaching reforms in the treatment of place-names," which deferred to Irish meanings and derivations, *Translations* ends with a distorted view of the Survey's future and an equally disfigured emblem of English policy towards Ireland – with no advocate for Irish interests the Colby/Lancey character initiates an anti-Irish program (Andrews, *Paper Landscape*, 119).

The devolution of Larcom into his ineffectual reflection Yolland points to a primary preoccupation of these history plays – the challenge to Irish society posed by benevolent Englishness. To paraphrase Manus, the Irish had learned how to engage with "the Lanceys," the usurping and exterminating English, but the Yollands represent a "puzzle," if not an ideological threat to Irish nationalism's

self-reliance (*SP*, 412). In contemporary terms, during the years following Bloody Sunday when political intransigence and paramilitary violence often characterized both the Loyalist and Republican communities, Friel's plays grudgingly reflect that such attempts at sectarian reconciliation as the Sunningdale Agreement of 1973-74 and the New Ireland Forum of 1983-84 were largely English initiatives, albeit ones supported by nationalists and rejected by unionists.³⁶ In other words, during the 1970s and 1980s, English policy in Northern Ireland fluctuated between a Colby/Lancey's "vigorous military presence" against republicans and a Larcom/Yolland's more accommodationalist methods based upon negotiation (Bardon, *Ulster*, 730); yet, Friel's plays of this period refuse to legitimate a benign English role within Irish society. In this respect Mabel Bagenal of *Making History* represents a more ambitious and topical rewriting of Yolland, though hardly a more successful one. Not only does she marry into Gaelic Irish society and convert to Catholicism, but she articulates her rupture from her English identifications through her resolute defense against her sister's accusations of Irish heterodoxy, sexual deviance, and opportunistic politics (*MH*, 24-5). Through the play's retrospective presentation, she emerges as Ireland's most prescient ally in her wary respect for English military power and counsel against rebellion (*MH*, 38-9). Indeed, Friel suggests that Ireland would have retained a large degree of its cultural autonomy and the O'Neill dynasty its political influence if Hugh had followed his English wife rather than his Irish friends.

Whereas such critics as Jochen Achilles may rightly praise Mabel and Hugh as the drama's most mature characters because of their "multiculturalism," we would construct an overly optimistic reading of the play as a whole if we were to thus assume that "Friel promotes an ethic of integration, based on an intercultural paradigm" (Achilles, "Homesick," 442). Whereas Achilles bases his conclusion, in part, on Pine's assertion that the play advocates a "both/and" paradigm for Irish identity rather than one that forces an "either/or" choice (Pine, 242), Pine recognizes that *Making History* retains the suspicion of exogamy that problematizes *Translations* as well (Pine, 240). However, both writers fail to recognize an Irish resistance to such

cultural hybridity and, thus, the inherent improbability of Achilles' interpretation. Declan Kiberd's essay, "Strangers in their own country: multiculturalism in Ireland," seeks to historicize and explicate a "fear of hybridity" that has recently plagued some Irish communities; in their relationship to the English, this trait is often characterized by an attraction to individuals, even though "the Irish were supposed to dislike [them] 'in theory'" (Kiberd, *Irish Writer*, 307). As in Friel's drama, this paradoxical Irish psychodynamic is accentuated by frequent examples of English citizens who "chose Irishness" for their nationality (Kiberd, *Irish Writer*, 304).

Ultimately, it is only through the most partial reading of *Making History* that either character's legacy may be salvaged and, thus, multiculturalism advocated; the play concludes with Mabel dead for twenty years and replaced by Hugh's current wife Catriona – in failing health and close to death and himself, Hugh is a pathetic diminution of his earlier nobility. On the most literal level, Friel emphasizes that Mabel and Hugh have failed in their attempt to create a multicultural Ireland; with the death of Mabel and her sole child in childbirth, her union with Hugh has proven literally sterile, while Hugh's leadership – which sought to balance the Irish, English, and continental influences (*MH*, 40) – is rendered equally barren by his defeat and exile. In short, rather than fostering a multicultural Ireland, the failure of social integration and cultural accommodation staged in the Elizabethan Ireland of *Making History* prepares Friel's audience for the Anglophobia of his farce *London Vertigo*, set in 1761, and the disadvantageous mixture of disregard and ignorance of English culture characteristic of 1833 Ireland in *Translations*.

Conversely, if *London Vertigo* revisits the historical narrative of *Making History*, appropriately it repeats its history of cultural miscegenation not as tragedy but as farce. Friel's Murrough O'Doherty unexpectedly discovers that his wife has returned from London newly Anglicized and intent upon the cultural colonization of their home as well. While Friel is careful not to distort, or Gaelicize, the otherwise Anglicized Dublin society of the early Georgian period to accommodate his narrative aims, O'Doherty's refusal to embrace the period's version of multiculturalism is the play's crux. Indeed, while he

thwarted the amorous advances of Count Mushroom before they even had been conveyed to his wife, he proceeds to orchestrate the humiliation of his wife's English admirer specifically to restore the Irish character of both house and wife. Thus, when Nancy O'Doherty is forced to salvage her marriage and public reputation through her submission, her husband requires her return to Irish pronunciation and cuisine, discarding her pretensions for Anglicized name and title (*LV*, 36). Certainly the cultural stakes are considerably less distinct in this later play, and the audience witnesses the extent to which recognizably Gaelic traits have been eroded in the two centuries since O'Neill's defeat at Kinsale; nonetheless, as in *Translations* and *Making History*, Friel either concedes his inability to imagine or plainly rejects the feasibility of the marriage of Englishness to Irishness in the past.

Dancing at Lughnasa

Dancing at Lughnasa concludes this series of dramatic history plays, and this terminal position itself suggests that in it Friel resolves to his satisfaction both his ideological and methodological problems with the past. The previous history plays define Irish characters through their relationships to the elite history of statist events and the nationalist responses they elicit. While this is manifestly apparent for O'Neill in *Making History*, O'Doherty in *The London Vertigo* also contends with both the domestic and political threats posed by Englishness. Even the events of *Translations*, which transpire in Ireland's innocuous hinterland, are rationalized by the transhistorical personages and policies of statist historiography that render it an anecdote suitable for illustrating the type of academic grand narrative that Friel juxtaposes to McGlinchey's memoir. By contrast, *Dancing at Lughnasa* relies upon Máire MacNeill's anthropological study of Irish folk culture *The Festival of Lughnasa*, McGlinchey's memoir, and his own family's lore to attempt the "unhistorical historiography" of the people prior even to their reduction into subaltern identifications. However, it must be noted that though the drama's setting has been liberated from contingent History, in this portrayal of the subaltern and its relationship to the nation's culture Friel creates the most

judgmental and repressive social milieu of his career. Throughout the play the sisters repeatedly express their anxiety over the community's strict religious or sexual morality, while the local priest confirms the adult Michael's suspicion that his family was ostracized for its transgressions.³⁷

The narrative is staged as Michael Evans' extended memory of the summer of 1936, when his childhood and family were irrevocably changed by a series of arrivals and departures; first, his uncle returns home to die after two decades as a missionary in East Africa; then his father twice visits to continue his impassioned, though as it turns out insincere, courtship of Michael's mother, Christina; and finally, the summer ends with the flight of two of his five aunts from their home in a desperate attempt to stave off economic hardship from the family. While the rekindled romance between Gerry and Chris dominates the action, the play subtly reveals that the sisters struggle against the growing realization that they are no longer considered marriageable because of their age, the ignominy of Michael's illegitimacy, and the perception that the Mundy family has been ostracized by the Ballybeg community. Since most of this information is announced early in the play, the events are imbued with a melancholic fatalism as the audience witnesses the sisters struggle to preserve their dignity amid mounting economic gloom and personal disappointment.

Whereas the other history plays portray domestic history entwined with the political, in this work Friel endeavors to expunge both the direct and indirect indications of elite history from the narrative; gone are the actors of statist hegemony, the great wars and the Irish wars that disrupted daily life, and gone as well are the politicians and ideologues whose presence in Dublin or London influence local events. And to the extent that Irish political discourse in the Free State was symbiotically dependent upon its agon with its English counterparts, so too is the ideology of Irishness marginalized. Consequently, though the events of *Dancing at Lughnasa* transpire within living memory, it is a sanitized past from which the narrative of academic history has been erased. Of course the Spanish Civil War intrudes upon the characters' lives, but this serves only to demonstrate the extent to which Friel has avoided the events that directly pertain to English

and Irish history. Only after the dramatized events have been historically dislocated, erased from elite history's event horizon, can Friel envision even modest cultural cohabitation.

Gerry Evans' Englishness must be divorced from its ideological contexts, from even attenuated associations to culture and nation, to be accommodated by the play; in other words, even banal Englishness is too ideologically charged to be absorbed by Irishness. Nowhere is this more strongly suggested than in the resonance between Yolland and Gerry, two impractical idealists who become accidental soldiers. Both represent the benign desire of the English to pass within Irish society; whereas Yolland states his intention to settle in Baile Beag (*SP*, 414), Gerry declares that he considers Ireland his home, after his embarrassment prevents him from claiming Ballybeg itself (*DL*, 31). However, if Friel is able to square the cultural circles essential for the accommodation of Englishness by Irishness, he accomplishes this through a dialectic of displacement that dilutes Gerry's Englishness. Within the semiology of the stage production, Gerry's distinct "English accent" assures that the audience will consider him a representative of Englishness (*DL*, 26); however, the play twice identifies him as Welsh (*DL*, 31, 61).³⁸ Whereas Friel's previous interlopers had come from England's heartland – Yolland from Little Walsingham, Mabel from Staffordshire – Wales represents an Englishness leavened with a Celtic substrata. Nevertheless, long before the play reveals his Welsh origins, his English accent firmly associates him with the history plays' other settlers who seek entrance into Irish society. Significantly, Gerry is able to settle in Ireland only by remaining itinerant, by wandering as a traveling salesman or temporarily living in cities such as Dublin. Similarly, his brief and irregular visits to his putative family in Ballybeg dilute whatever cultural impact his Englishness may have upon the Mundy household.

However, it is ultimately Chris Mundy's ability to balance the interests of Irishness with the attractions of Englishness that allow for the successful accommodation of Gerry's benign otherness. As Irish characters who have fallen victim to a romanticized ideal of the English, both Hugh O'Neill and Maire Chatach sacrifice vital aspects of their Irish identity. Not only is Hugh's self-identification with the

English aristocracy reflected in his “an upper-class English accent” and employment of an English secretary (*MH*, 1), but his reverie of a youth spent in the company of Sir Henry Sidney of Shropshire conveys the intensity with which Hugh is motivated by the colonial subject’s psychotic drive to win the acceptance of the colonizer and gain an honorary citizenship within imperial society (*MH*, 34–5). Although Maire’s psycho-dynamics fail to betray a similarly intense childhood cathexis, she articulates a free-floating readiness to abandon Ireland if not her Irishness, which is no doubt motivated by Baile Beag’s strained economic and social conditions; she variously states her desire to learn English (*SP*, 399–400), emigrate to America (*SP*, 394), and settle with Yolland in England (*SP*, 430). By contrast, Gerry’s associations to Wales or a greater Englishness never enter into the Mundy sisters’ calculations, and Chris betrays none of the envy of, or fascination with, the English that typifies Hugh or Maire. Yet, as an unmarried woman with an illegitimate child in a dogmatically Catholic society, Chris would be forgiven the desire to flee rural Ireland; nonetheless, she refuses Gerry’s marriage proposal and the accompanying invitation to “come away” with him (*DL*, 33). Thus, her very indifference to the perceived attractions of the imperial Other endows her with the ability to contend with the romance of Englishness without suffering the derangement or exile that rewarded the previous characters who embraced it.

If Chris’ narrative is to be considered successful, it is not so in absolute terms, for her subsequent life as factory worker and forsaken woman is grim and impoverished (*DL*, 70–1); rather, her success is embodied in her son Michael, the play’s narrator and the sole example of a child resulting from an Irish–English union in Friel’s dramatic career. As a character he remains an empty cipher, for we are never informed of the adult Michael’s career or personal life; yet comparing him to the other sole son of five sisters, Gar O’Donnell, reveals much that is pertinent to our reading of Gar. My earlier reading of *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* identified the two plays’ synchronous thematization of the transition of the Free State into the Irish Republic; both sons are manifestly preoccupied with the events of 1936–7 and the mystery of eroticism and death that constitutes the

present selves who seek to recapture the past. While Friel has employed diverse metatheatrical devices throughout his career, only these two characters are staged as split subjects: Gar is memorably divided into his Private and Public personalities, while Michael looks back upon events in which his seven-year-old self participates, also a type of public and private selves. Whereas Gar's division is staged to represent the self as an internecine struggle for domination of the psyche, the absence of a manifest and separate younger Michael demonstrates this later character's unity and coherence, the younger Michael's absorption into the older without residue. Indeed, unlike the riot that often characterizes the interaction between the two Gars, the two Michaels speak with one voice and confirm one experience.³⁹

The comparison of Gar to Michael also suggests a profound dissimilarity in their relationship to history, which returns us to the vicinity of O'Toole's dichotomy of history and memory. However, with his preference for the simultaneous past-and-present constituting the "time of the now" rather than the sentimental myths of bourgeois history, Walter Benjamin's juxtapositioning of historicism to remembrance more constructively provides a strategy for distinguishing Michael's relationship to the past from Gar's (Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 254-5). Gar's obsession with constructing a definitive narrative with agreed significance for his childhood incident at Lough na Cloc Cor reveals his belief in a causal relationship between past events and the present; thus, his inability to formulate a strategy for his future results from his failure to recover his past (*SP*, 82-3, 94-5). However, despite the importance of this memory to him, Gar cannot assert authority over his own past and seeks its validation from his father, whose response humiliates and disappoints him. In his reverence for the special relationship of the past to his present, Gar resembles the elite historian who seeks to delineate the contemporary through the accumulation of historical facts, which incidentally is the strategy Friel employs in *Translations* and *Making History* (Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 254). By contrast, while Michael also returns to a patriarchal event that occurred when he was about ten years old, his narration expresses his authority over the past events as well as their present significance. Unlike Gar, his family history is not

obscured by doubtful memory or hidden within discarded newspaper clippings (*SP*, 37), rather he sees clearly into the past and confidently reconstructs events with minute detail (Kramer, "Unexcused Absence," 172–80). This perspective promises to liberate history, transforming it from a causal prison, which constrains the present, to a dynamic resonance in which the viewer recognizes the past as symptom of the present, an emblem which enhances our apprehension of "the now" without reducing it to a sterile result of sequential events (Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 255).

Unfortunately, Friel's attempt to liberate Benjamin's Angel of History fails; instead of illuminating the present, the drama declines into the sentimentality of its ending because there is no present to illuminate. Whereas the play's other characters are provided specific ages, Friel resists establishing the narrator's chronological perspective, listing him only as a "young man." Thus, it is unlikely that Friel envisioned the play's temporal frame to be its production date in 1990 when Michael would be more than sixty years old; rather, he narrates from another, less remote past. Born in 1929, Michael could hardly be termed "young" much after his thirtieth birthday in 1959; in other words, the events of *Dancing at Lughnasa* are remembered from the vantage of a generation before its staging in 1990, probably the 1950s or early 1960s.⁴⁰ Michael's inability to situate the narrative in the present reveals Friel's ultimate failure to reconcile elite and subaltern histories, his subtle disavowal of the narrative's relevance even in the act of authoring it. In short, the play's framing through Michael betrays an historical ossification or barrier that doubly traps the play in the economic and social torpor of the de Valera premiership – remembering Ballybeg at the beginning of de Valera's austere Republic, and narrating it from its dismal end.

In closing, Friel's reluctance to confront history fully is further betrayed by Michael's inability to embody the author himself in this supposedly autobiographical play. The drama's autobiographical perspective has been pervasively sanctioned by Friel both in the play's dedication to his maternal aunts, his comments to Mel Gussow, and his additional ones to the audience after the play's performance in the town of Glenties (*EDI*, 139, 145, 146, 148–9). Nevertheless, whereas

Michael superficially occupies Friel's position before the audience, his construction implies that in this last exploration of the patriarchal narrative of nation, he denatures the ideological dilemma that troubles such plays as *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*, *Living Quarters*, and *Aristocrats*: the son's oedipal struggle with a father whose authority is increasingly entwined with the state. But in this late play, Friel eliminates the confrontation between son and father; indeed, he seeks to erase the autobiographical content of both. Friel's father Patrick was a local politician, and the often unflattering portrayals of him in the *Irish Press* articles suggest the depth of the author's own conflicting emotions for him.⁴¹ While Michael's mother Christina Mundy reifies Christina Friel, if Gerry Evans bears any relation to Patrick Friel it is a parodic one at best – gone is the Irish teacher and city councilor providing for his family, replaced by a womanizing wastrel, who abandons his Irish family for a Welsh one (*DL*, 61). As a foreigner associated with Ireland's colonizer, Gerry is stripped of any potential authority as patriarch within the nationalist paradigm. Through such an oedipal evisceration of paternal authority, Michael assumes command of the stage and his past; indeed, not only does Gerry fail to correct his son's version of seminal events of their shared past, but Michael never even converses with his father on stage. In short, Gerry Evans is forced to conform to his son's memory. Yet Michael's oedipal victory is pyrrhic at best and fails to signify the coming of age for the generation of such hectored sons as Gar O'Donnell, Ben Butler, or Casimir O'Donnell. While his Welsh heritage may deny him a full claim upon Irishness, this partial identity reflects an alienation on many levels; chronologically dislocated from the action in the past and seemingly isolated and alone in the present, he narrates his family's disintegration with the banal indifference of a voyeur. Moreover, this autobiographical distortion emphasizes the extent to which Friel considers himself, and by extension Northern culture, not as conventionally Irish, but as resulting from the illicit union of England and Ireland.

The realism employed in *Translations* and *Making History* represents Friel's intention to realign nationalism, to broaden it to articulate the shared heritage of South and North, which legitimates the idea of nation inherent in the subaltern's attempt to influence its

politics. With its resurrection of an autochthonic Irishness and diffusion of English identity, *Dancing at Lughnasa* most clearly suggests the rehabilitative postcoloniality posited by Appiah in his reading of Yambo Ouologuem's novel *Le devoir de violence* (Appiah, *Father's House*, 150–2).⁴² Indeed, the play's robustly pagan Irishness, imperfectly repressed by the Mundy sisters and barely consigned to the Lughnasa rites offstage, challenges traditional ideological constructs and the government that propounded them in a manner that formulates an ethical repudiation of its conservatism. However, Friel's retreat in this play from history to memory, a prevarication that masquerades as autobiography, conceals the erosion of the playwright's faith in the possibility that even a reformed nationalism can suture the two Irelands into a single nation in the present. The relegation of this fiction to a past embedded within the past betrays the irreconcilability of the author's ideological stratagems with political realities in the present.

Wonderful Tennessee

Friel initiated his historical series in 1980 and had not set a play in contemporary Ireland since 1982. The premiere of *Wonderful Tennessee* in 1993 marks Friel's return to the portrayal of contemporary Ireland after more than a decade of writing history plays. While the production's reception among theater critics suffered from the drama's didacticism and its inevitable comparison to *Dancing at Lughnasa*, which by 1993 had been revived three times by the Abbey Theatre the *Tennessee* play was also successful with Dublin audiences; indeed, whereas *Dancing at Lughnasa* enjoyed an initial run of fifty-seven performances on the Abbey stage, *Wonderful Tennessee* held the boards for eighty-one.⁴³ Although McGrath precipitously dismisses the play in but a few sentences (McGrath, 248), such critics as Richard Pine and Helen Lojek provide more nuanced considerations of the debates over staging and authorial intention that continue around the play. Indeed, no recent work by the author has so vigorously engaged, and divided, the critical community: eliciting the condemnation of such scholars as David Krause and Márton Mesterházi, the defense of Elmer Andrews and Csilla Bertha, and a

robust exploration of the play's aesthetic and cultural strategies.⁴⁴ While this debate has largely focused on issues of religious faith and, as Friel has defined it, "the necessity for mystery . . . not religion" (*EDI*, 148), a diverse field of analysis has characterized the criticism from Jent's early materialist analysis and Lanters' structuralist examination of sacrifice, through Pine's detailed discussion of the play's narrative technique and levels of allegory, to Corbett's survey of song as a type of metalanguage functioning in the play. By comparison, although *Dancing at Lughnasa* has generated a comparable body of criticism, few scholars diverge from discussions of its portrayal of memory or dance.⁴⁵

All the characters of *Wonderful Tennessee* are related by either birth or marriage, and the three couples travel to an isolated and abandoned pier in the area around Ballybeg with the expectation that the boatman Carlin will ferry them to Oilean Draoichta, an island that was once the site of religious pilgrimage. However, Carlin reneges, and the group is abandoned on the desolate pier through the night to celebrate Terry's birthday and commemorate George's life, for he is expected to die soon. As they wait, they recount stories of past religious mysteries, sing spirituals, reflect on their lives, and generally betray an acute longing for spirituality. After a wakeful night of drinking, the group is moved to grasp after religious transformation; filled with stories of pagan rites and their own visionary experiences, the group enacts the mock sacrifice of Terry, and each vows to return and repeat their private mystery the following year.

If this work marks Friel's escape from the historicist preoccupations of the past decade, he is able to free himself from history topically only by consigning his characters to a narrative obsessed by it. Along with *Volunteers*, *Aristocrats*, and *The Communication Cord*, the characters of *Wonderful Tennessee* are trapped in a setting conceptually dominated and physically determined by the past. Seeking to fill the time as they await the return of their driver the next day, Terry Martin and his in-laws bear the greatest resemblance to Knox, Keeney, and their fellow prisoners in *Volunteers*, who also exhaust their allotted duration imagining stories inspired by their medieval subject. History manifests itself as the physical site of both

Aristocrats and *The Communication Cord*, where characters cannot move freely without colliding with the history embodied in furniture (*SP*, 274) or becoming enchained by its shackles (*CC*, 91–2). In these earlier plays that transpire amid the detritus of Irish history, we witness the characters' struggles to exert control over the nation's stereotypical narrative of identity inherent in the very physical world around them. By seeding the family history with references to their furniture (O'Connell), books (Moore), cushions (Yeats), and other anthropomorphized objects, the O'Donnell family of *Aristocrats* strives to situate their small history squarely within the patriarchal narrative of Irish aristocracy. If Tim and Jack of *The Communication Cord* also strive to exploit the cultural capital associated with the McNeilis cottage and its contents, their strategy relies upon their ability to exploit the myths of orthodox nationalism that are evoked by representations of nineteenth-century peasant life. Even the prisoners' tales of *Volunteers* are inspired by the tangible skeleton and archeological artifacts that litter the ground and are destined for incorporation in the medieval subsection of Ireland's official story.

If these characters employ the tangible artifacts that surround them to contextualize the present with the deceptively superficial objects of the past, the celebrants of *Wonderful Tennessee* find history no less enthralling despite its physical relegation to the horizon; indeed, its remoteness endows it with greater fascination. Unlike the earlier plays staged amid Ireland's material history, these six celebrants are stranded in the generic landscape of postindustrial society with no recognizably Irish props to contextualize them. The stage's derelict steps, bollards, rings, and nets could describe any abandoned pier throughout Europe, while the only ostensibly Irish element accessible to the characters, Carlin's cottage, is barely observable even with the aid of binoculars, and not at all to the audience (*WT*, 23). The literal stuff of Irish history – the ruins of St. Conall's chapel, holy well, and other attributes of Irish pilgrimage – are too distant for the characters to discern directly; at times even the island itself is difficult to locate on the horizon. However, if the tangible Irish past proves constricting for such characters as Jack McNeilis or Casimir O'Donnell, its absence proves disorienting for those of *Wonderful Tennessee*.

Lacking the tangible remnants of a specifically Irish past to moor themselves, their Irish cultural heritage shrinks into an undifferentiated element in the heterogeneous miscellany of European religious lore. Terry, Frank, Berna, and Angela browse the commodity texts of Indo-European myth in which Celtic floating islands, Hellenic gods, medieval European monasticism, and Christian miracles, vie for both consumption and credence. But as in Aijaz Ahmad's critique of the High Modernist "supermarket of packaged and commodified cultures," Friel's "multicultural list of literary resource and [spiritual] possibility" betrays only the failure of the characters to reconcile these diverse influences into a coherent religious praxis (Ahmad, *In Theory*, 128, 129).⁴⁶ Indeed, by the play's end, the audience is unsure whether the celebrants will return annually to commemorate Terry's ritual sacrifice and rebirth (*WT*, 75), or George's euhemerized passage into Dionysian deification (*WT*, 78); whether Angela is a priestess who has tapped a Celtic vein of Eleusinian Mysteries (*WT*, 72), or Frank a prophet of a more terrifying combination of pagan and Christian human sacrifice (*WT*, 68–9).

More tellingly, after more than a decade interrogating historiography, Friel creates a narrative in which history is undecidable and its authority often illusory. Indeed, it cannot be coincidental that the two anterior events which provided the attributes of historical validity are also the least accessible to verification as History. First, Berna's story of the Holy House of Loreto provides such extensive detail that it resembles research rather than legend; she assures us that the levitation transpired on 7 March 1294, that the house floated "for a few seconds" before beginning its known migration, and that it can now be found specifically "in the centre of" Loreto (*WT*, 45). Terry's account of O'Boyle's murder also boasts considerable specificity; again we are offered an exact date (26 June 1932) and a wealth of exact information concerning the events preceding and succeeding the act (*WT*, 63–4). However, in each example, the deluge of detail cannot compensate for the inherent ahistoricity of each event, with the miraculous nature of the first consigning it to the realm of lore and the conspiratorial secrecy of the second ensuring that the essential questions surrounding the youth's death will always remain beyond examination. By contrast,

The Measurement of Time and its Effect on European Civilization, Frank's traditional *analyste history*, lacks the details of either Berna's legend or Terry's rumor. Indeed, despite his years of research he lacks faith in his own work's assessment of the past; when Terry challenges him to admit whether he "[believes] a word" of his theory of the effect of timekeeping on monastery life, Frank replies, "How would I know? . . . there must be some explanation, mustn't there?" (*WT*, 40). Ultimately, though the play's presumptive historian within the scholarly mode, Frank retreats into the discourse of mysticism the more he explains his work: his subject is "beyond language. The inexpressible. The ineffable" for which "there is no vocabulary" (*WT*, 41).

The juxtaposition of meticulous fiction to amorphous history is mediated by Terry's narratives of a personal past that intersects broader familial or social history. Yet, despite the authoritative appearance of his memory, under examination his reminiscences betray an inconsistency that undermines the reliability of even personal recollection, the type of narrative praised by Friel in his introduction to McGlinchey's memoir. For example, early in the play Terry assures his guests that pilgrimages to Oilean Draoichta "ended years and years ago" (*WT*, 20), later implying that this decline can be dated to the Second World War and the subsequent "bad" times that depopulated the area (*WT*, 64). However, Terry accompanied his father on such a pilgrimage when he was a child of seven, which according to the play's internal chronology occurred sometime in the late 1950s or early 1960s (*WT*, 21).⁴⁷ Indeed, his recollection recreates an episode that suggests the survival of the practice rather than its extinction; not only does he remember the area replete with the crutches, canes, and "*bratoga*" left by other pilgrims, but that "for the night you were on the island you were given only bread and water" (*WT*, 19). While this last statement may seem inconsequential, it implies the survival of an institutionalized practice well into the era after the pilgrimage's supposed abandonment. Significantly, Terry does not claim that his father provided the bread and water, or even more amorphously that custom dictated the practice; rather, he implies that a third party, the custodians of the site perhaps, provided the meager fare to all pilgrims.

Of course, such a reading of Terry's comment assumes that this fictive rite is modeled after the practice of Ireland's most famous surviving ritual, the Station Island devotion on Loch Derg on the border between County Donegal and Northern Ireland, which also involves a water crossing, vigil, fast, and circumambulation of stone mounds, or *turas*, and the provision of a single, plain meal daily.⁴⁸ Even Terry's decision to surround himself with his close friends on Oilean Draoichta reflects Loch Derg's tradition of spiritual *communitas*, where the pilgrimage is "usually made in the company of a group of friends or siblings" (Taylor, *Occasions of Faith*, 194). Ultimately, Terry's description of the island and even his insistence that his companions remove their shoes rely upon this rite of St. Patrick, whose vigorous survival had been frequently commemorated by writers throughout the twentieth century, as well as by Seamus Heaney in *Station Island*, a mere eight years before Friel's play.⁴⁹

If on this occasion Terry's memory seems benignly incomplete, perhaps the play's most indicative scene also develops from another failure of memory. Late in the first act, Terry and his sister Trish disagree over a fundamental fact concerning one of her cherished memories: the reason that George, then her fiancé, arrived ten minutes after the scheduled start of their wedding ceremony (*WT*, 51–2). When Trish recounts her remembered anxiety, she reports that George was late because he had performed classical music with the Aeolians near Limerick the night before the wedding (*WT*, 51). However, Terry interrupts her to assert that George had actually been playing country music with the Dude Ranchers in County Cork. We are tempted to believe Terry's version of events because the play portrays Trish as the company's least intellectually capable member: not only does she repeatedly confuse Carlin the ferryman and Charlie the driver, but her cerebral limitations are metaphorized in her visual myopia – her repeated inability to even see Oilean Draoichta on the horizon (*WT*, 16, 74). Moreover, Terry's confidence and assertiveness ultimately force Trish to doubt her own memory. However, this conflict between bride and groomsman remains unresolved because the other participants refrain from endorsing either version. While Frank and Angela occasionally attempt to redirect the argument, neither

clearly endorses either account; curiously, though, Frank initially attempts to discourage Terry from challenging Trish at all (*WT*, 51). More significantly, though George himself listens to the dispute, he withholds endorsing either narrative through word or gesture; indeed, he remains silent even after Terry solicits his agreement, saying "Right, George?" (*WT*, 51). More than presenting an emblematic moment of irreconcilable memories in the Frielian mold, this dispute between brother and sister reveals that even personal memories are as unrecoverable as history. Indeed, if the play portrays the disappearance of historical certainties amid the erosion of Irish cultural identity, this breakdown of even personal memory indicates the extent to which this transhistorical disintegration contaminates all manifestations of history – public and private, cultural and domestic – making all undecidable and unrecoverable.

I initiated this chapter by exploring the ideological dynamics that influence Friel's slow evolution from seeking to envision an Irishness supplemented by Northern identity in the early 1980s to his retreat from nationalism by the mid 1980s. Theorists as diverse as Partha Chatterjee, Kwame Anthony Appiah, and Luke Gibbons have discussed the fundamental role of an ideological deployment of history in the formulation of a shared national identity; thus, Friel's obsession with contemporary characters engaged with history and recreations of history itself should be seen as the artistic counterpart of the intellectual struggles hinted at in his interviews. Viewing the arc of these history plays from *Translations* in 1980 through *Wonderful Tennessee* in 1993, Friel's disillusionment with statist nationalism expands into an emerging repudiation of national identity itself. If Friel begins the decade with both *Translations* and *The Communication Cord* attempting to articulate a compelling version of the past that fulfills the verisimilitudinous expectations of his audience, *Wonderful Tennessee* demonstrates that once a community fails to share a single historical narrative, its members find it increasingly difficult to recover even the details of their personal, shared past.

In a 1991 interview Friel recognized *Wonderful Tennessee* as a companion to, if not continuation of, the numinous examination of *Dancing at Lughnasa* (*EDI*, 148). Within the previous play's context of

the chthonic Irishness suggested by both the persistence of and the characters' susceptibility to the dictates of this ineffable Lughnasa, the inaccessibility of such an Irish spirituality in *Wonderful Tennessee* underscores Friel's pessimism regarding the survival of an innate Irishness into contemporary Ireland. Similarly, this play is the product of a period in which the author was equally gloomy regarding contemporary Ireland; thus, his characterization of political conditions in 1991 as culminating in "a whole history of failure" manifests itself in plays about the failures of history as well (*BFC*, 227). In other words, if the sentimental celebration of the Mundy sisters' momentary respite from lives of despair and privation strives to balance Friel's political disillusionment with determined optimism, *Wonderful Tennessee* portrays a people lacking such an essentialist Irishness, a people without a specifically Irish history or identity with which to define themselves.

5 **Plays 1994–2005: Retreat from Ireland and *The Home Place***

Molly Sweeney and Give Me Your Answer, Do!

Although *Molly Sweeney* enjoyed considerable popular and critical success when it premiered in Dublin in 1994 and transferred to New York in 1996, even winning the New York Drama Critics Circle award for Best Foreign Play of 1996, it has attracted surprisingly little scholarship; in fact, the more recent *Give Me Your Answer, Do!* (1997) has inspired more articles, despite its failure to satisfy either audiences or critics.¹ The earlier play's structural similarity to the acclaimed *Faith Healer* – both are composed of monologues delivered by two men and a woman – may account for this critical reluctance on the part of those who suspect that in this play the elder Friel is repeating himself in diminished form.² These monologues reconstruct the story of Molly, a blind massage therapist in Ballybeg, who marries Frank Sweeney after years of contentedly living alone and pursuing her modest interests. Frank becomes obsessed with the idea of having Molly's sight surgically restored, though she has been blind since infancy, and his quixotic quest brings him to consult with Dr. Rice, a gifted surgeon, whose career collapsed after his wife left him for a colleague. Although Rice restores Molly's sight, the visual world overwhelms her, causing psychological blindness and an emotional trauma so dire she must be institutionalized at the play's end.

One of the first essays to consider the play, David Krause's "The Failed Words of Brian Friel" (1997), notes the contradiction between "the glowing Irish reviews" and what Krause considers the play's "static and failed artistic endeavor" that leaves the main character Molly "stillborn" (Krause, "Failed Words," 361, 363). Indeed, he argues

that *Molly Sweeney* shares the structural and thematic flaws that in his opinion also weaken *Dancing at Lughnasa* and *Wonderful Tennessee*. The subsequent treatments have been considerably less critical both of this play and its companions, though much of the scholarship regarding *Molly Sweeney* has been content to trace its clinical sources rather than interpret its narrative strategies.

Christopher Murray's "Brian Friel's *Molly Sweeney* and its Sources" is the earliest example of the strategy to read the play against its literary and scholarly antecedents; yet, his article distinguishes itself from the later examples by its ability to interrogate and illuminate Friel's method. Indeed, rather than merely situating Friel within the context of broader literary traditions or psychological studies, Murray deploys Foucault's critique of authorship to pry open the playwright's manipulation of Oliver Sacks's material, which he subsequently translates into an innovative discussion of Friel's career of explicitly, and often controversially, manipulating academic texts (Murray, "Case History," 90–1). McGrath initiates his later treatment with a lengthy review of George Berkeley's empiricist theory of blindness; however, the bulk of his chapter exhaustively expands upon Christopher Murray's identification of Sacks's study of "Virgil" as the play's literal antecedent (McGrath, 251–7). Pine and Corbett broaden this discussion of blindness to include psychomedical phenomenon, literary motifs, and philosophical topics. Pine explores the allegorical readings suggested by Sacks's influence as well as Stephen Kuusisto's *Planet of the Blind*, while positioning the play within a dense network of philosophical readings (Pine, 290–300). Although Corbett introduces such new material as a survey of the traditional depictions of blindness in Irish myth, he repeatedly defines his analysis in relation to Pine and McGrath – expanding Pine's reading of *Molly* as "the contested site of conflict" between Rice and Frank, or refining McGrath's analysis of Berkeley and Enlightenment philosophy (Corbett, 123–30).³ While these readings initiate interpretations that exploit traditional literary associations with blindness and Friel's overt narrative strategies, I will seek to explore how *Molly Sweeney* also intensifies the portrayal of contemporary Irish society as disadvantageously engaged with the outside world.

Premiered less than a month before the IRA declared its cease-fire on 31 August 1994, *Molly Sweeney* is the last of Friel's plays written during the Troubles. Although the Ballybeg depicted in *Molly Sweeney* is spared the violence that plagues Northern Ireland into the early 1990s, its setting strips away the façade of happiness that the characters strive to maintain in *Wonderful Tennessee*, which was staged merely a year earlier. If the previous play was dominated by the manic singing and desperate festivity that such characters as Berna adopted to conceal "how desperately unhappy" they were (*WT*, 5), *Molly Sweeney* presents its three speakers on a bleak and isolated stage dominated by the tragedy that unites them. While Terry and his friends stranded on Ballybeg pier manifest a peculiar interest in past European cultures and their rituals that resonate with their Irish setting, Frank Sweeney and Paddy Rice express dichotomous aspects of Ireland's struggle to find its place in a contemporary world where the Irish and the foreign mingle. That broad Irish aspiration to assume a place among the developed nations of Europe also recalls the context of *Living Quarters*. Whereas in the earlier play Frank Butler confidently, indeed heroically, marked Ireland's entrance onto the world stage after decades of national isolation imposed by its rigid neutrality, Dr. Rice presents an Ireland whose elite dares to compete as equals against the world's most talented and well trained (*MS*, 19, 25). Likewise, if Butler's hubris is marked by his marrying a conspicuously young bride, Rice's marriage to a noted Swiss beauty makes him Butler's counterpart both in his sexual hubris and his emotional ruin after his wife's adultery (*MS*, 13). Finally, both plays conclude with widespread devastation; not only do they transpire against the background of failed marriages and psychological collapse, but in both dramas the final tragedies force most of the characters to abandon Ballybeg in the end.

The two male protagonists of *Molly Sweeney*, Frank Sweeney and Paddy Rice, represent two distinct Irish strategies for confronting the influx of foreign influences in the internationalist milieu that characterizes the late twentieth century. Rice's embodiment of a muscular, assertive Irishness finds its antithesis in Frank Sweeney, an Irishman equally insatiable in his thirst for the world beyond

Ireland but less capable of mastering it. Rice asserts Ireland's stature as an economically developed nation as a type of positive hybridity, or robust cosmopolitanism; he strives to embody the representative European as Irishman, to export Irishness in the sense that he endeavors to make it an influential component of a more composite Western culture. Conversely, though both Frank and Rice have traveled extensively (*MS*, 5), Frank's sojourns in Nigeria, Norway, and later Ethiopia bespeak the quixotic idealism that most resembles Friel's Gerry Evans from *Dancing at Lughnasa*, another unemployed dreamer who left his wife for a different "Big Cause," in his case fighting in the Spanish Civil War (*DL*, 31). Frank's internationalism represents a negative hybridity, in which Irishness is in retreat; he attempts not to export Irishness internationally, but to import foreign variants to replace failing domestic examples. This insecurity regarding innate Irishness is manifest nowhere more tangibly than in his repeated schemes to colonize Ireland with Iranian goats (*MS*, 8–9), Pacific salmon (*MS*, 28), and African bees (*MS*, 67–8), to replace the native species that Frank considers inferior to more robust foreign rivals. But if multiculturalism fails in the history plays, Frank's experiments in agricultural eugenics, such as raising Iranian goats on an island off the Mayo coast, portray such attempts to graft new species to Irish soil as doomed by nature's rigid adherence to origins:

I had those goats for three and a half years, and even after all that time their metabolism, their internal clock, stayed Iranian; never adjusted to Irish time . . . Some imprint in the genes remained indelible and immutable.

(*MS*, 9)

Spoken by an individual who ends the play as a sojourner in Ethiopia, Frank's observation expresses the play's suspicion that the foreign cannot be adapted to Irish conditions.

Despite the fundamental differences in the two men's experiences, both reveal that contemporary Ireland no longer finds itself isolated on the northwest fringe of Europe with only the vast North Atlantic as its neighbor; rather, it has become integrated into the world economy and global culture. Not only has Ballybeg entered the

service culture of late twentieth-century consumerism with tourism and its own health club where Molly works as a massage therapist (*MS*, 6), but with its array of Indian anesthetists and Chinese restaurateurs, the play provides its audience a glimpse of a town radically changed from the desolate hinterland that thirty years earlier Gar O'Donnell repudiated as "a backwater, a dead-end!" (*SP*, 79). However, despite such material improvements, the flooding of Lough Anna to create a reservoir for the town emblemizes the risks inherent in such development. While Frank assumes that the flooding will "ruin the trout fishing" and threaten part of the lake's badger population (*MS*, 60), the expansion of Loch Anna also will obliterate a site of considerable significance to autochthonic Irishness in Friel's work. In *Dancing at Lughnasa*, Lough Anna is home to the Lughnasa bonfires where the locals observe their pagan Irish rites; it is also where Rose Mundy and Danny Bradley meet for their romantic outing almost sixty years before the events depicted in *Molly Sweeney* (*DL*, 59). Thus, whereas *Wonderful Tennessee* portrayed Irishness as inaccessible, *Molly Sweeney* suggests the incompatibility of Ireland's traditional identity with contemporary development, both cultural and economic, that threatens to submerge its formerly resilient essence.

Such a reading of the play ultimately seeks to understand Molly within this paradigmatic struggle between the protagonists' two poles of Irish cosmopolitanism: Paddy's confident essentialism and Frank's uncertain hybridity.⁴ While Molly lacks the attributes and affectations of a studied Irishness to counterpoise the internationalism embodied by the two male characters, her wrought dance to a nameless hornpipe has its resonant antecedent in the seminal dance of the Mundy sisters in *Dancing at Lughnasa* (*MS*, 24, *DL* 21–2). In both cases traditional Irish music elicits the characters' only dissent to their tacit surrender to the social forces that restrictively delineate their lives' narrow course, and, as such, suggest a recalcitrant Irishness constituting their characters. Like the play's "half blind" badgers and narcoleptic goats whose genetic imprinting – or "engrams" (*MS*, 10) – inhibits their response to a changing environment, Molly embodies a form of "banal" Irishness. To borrow from Michael Billig's use of the term, Molly's Irishness is without self-conscious denotation: it "is not

a particular political strategy, but is the condition for conventional" existence (Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 99). Yet, if she promises to fulfill Seamus Deane's call for such an unselfconscious national identity, "unblemished by Irishness, but securely Irish,"⁵ her inability to survive the combined interventions of Frank Sweeney and Paddy Rice betrays Friel's apprehension over the future of Irish identity as it contends with these two faces of modernization. Thus, it is not coincidence that Molly and Lough Anna share a single fate; both become victims of the indifferent modernizations and destructive improvements that erode the authentic and indigenous and replace them with an ersatz Irishness.

Give Me Your Answer, Do! (1997) marks the last time that Friel will write a play concerned with Ballybeg, or even Ireland for that matter, for much of the next decade; his subsequent series of translations and one-act plays, which occupy him from 1998 through 2003, will all transpire in the Eastern Europe of either Chekhovian Russia or the contemporary Czech Republic.⁶ When he returns to Ballybeg with *The Home Place* at the end of his career, it will be to the historical town in 1878; in short, *Give* ends the 1990s trilogy of plays set in contemporary Ireland and, as such, is his final word on contemporary Ireland. The play depicts several hours in the home of Tom and Daisy Connolly, during a dinner party with Daisy's parents, fellow writer Garret Fitzmaurice and his wife Gráinne, and the couples' mutual acquaintance David Knight, a buyer of archival papers from America. The night's festivities are wrought with anxiety caused by the Connollys' uncertainty over whether David will judge Tom's papers worthy of acquisition by his university and thus offer the Connollys a substantial sum for his archive, as he had provided Garret several months earlier. Although professional friends, Tom is considerably less successful than his friend, who enjoys a wide readership; however, Garret suffers under the stigma of being a writer who, unlike Tom, panders to popular tastes (*Give*, 69–70). Thus, while Garret and Gráinne hope that David will offer Tom a sum sufficient to end their constraining poverty, both couples are apprehensive because David's decision will also assess the writers' artistic worth in relation to each other.⁷

The critical response to *Give* has been surprisingly diverse and sustained for such a recent and poorly received play. Although McGrath tries to account for his refusal to discuss the play in his book with the assertion that it fails to “[advance] our understanding of Friel’s exploration of language and illusion” (McGrath, 249), language has been the focus of the articles by Lanters (1999) and Germanou (2003), while the jointly authored analysis by Bertha and Morse in part considers the self-delusions of such characters as Daisy’s father Jack and both writers. Not surprisingly, the play has also been interpreted within the established critical strategies of viewing Love as Friel’s enduring theme (Pine, 304–7), and also that of reading some plays as discussions of the nature of art and artistic inspiration. Corbett’s recent discussion sketches out the broad outlines of the play’s exploration of the social “status and validity” of the artist and his art (Corbett, 87–8); by contrast, Bertha’s and Morse’s earlier article offers a sustained and nuanced examination of several characters’ relationship to previous artists portrayed in *Aristocrats*, *Faith Healer*, and *Wonderful Tennessee* (Bertha and Morse, “Singing,” 128–35).

In my discussion of Friel’s plays of the late 1970s, I employed Žižek’s interpretative strategy based upon linked narrative triads to argue for a thematic evolution from *Living Quarters* through *Aristocrats* predicated upon the receding authority of the patriarchy. Rather than seeking merely to add nuance to the established interpretations of *Give*, I will endeavor to position this play as the conclusion of the triad initiated by *Wonderful Tennessee* and *Molly Sweeney*, one that assesses contemporary Ireland within the context of his earlier career’s concerns over a son’s ability to supplant the patriarchy, with an additional interest in the place of women in Ireland’s power structure as well. Friel’s earlier plays set in contemporary Ireland often manifest the young generation’s anxiety over the patriarchy and their ability to assume authority over the Ireland they inherit; conversely, in these plays of the 1990s, the adults who have inherited Ireland are increasingly portrayed as preoccupied by private and trivial matters. In *Wonderful Tennessee* the patriarchal generation suggested by Carlin and Terry’s father are absent from the stage; however, both embody a link to an authentic Irishness that is the objective of this younger generation’s

search for “the wonderful – the sacred – the mysterious” (*WT*, 17–18). While the aged Carlin survives as the guardian of Oilean Draoichta, he refuses literal passage to Terry and his party; conversely, Terry’s dead father reminds the audience that the younger generation lacks their elders’ direct familiarity with the island’s rites (*WT*, 19–21), which they can only coarsely mimic, despite their desire for unmediated experience. Indeed, Terry’s incapacitating alienation from this generation is manifested by his apparent reluctance to personally petition Carlin to ferry them there, even though the old boatman had presumably ferried him there when he previously visited the island as its potential buyer.

Furthermore, while these three later plays focus on the generation of those born in the early 1950s, no patriarchal models influence, inform, or intimidate such male figures as Frank Sweeney, Tom Connolly, or Garret Fitzmaurice.⁸ However, like Frank Butler of the earlier *Living Quarters*, such a freedom from paternal influence constitutes a cautionary rather than liberating framework; in these later plays, the absence of the specter of paternal rectitude and Irish identity dooms the men to ordeals in the fetishism of generic consumer culture. Finally, it must be noted that in the earlier plays such awkward young men as Gar O’Donnell and Tim Gallagher endeavor to confront Ireland’s political power structure embodied in their girlfriends’ fathers who are Irish senators, while Ben Butler and Casimir O’Donnell struggle under the weight of their fathers’ and forefathers’ contribution to the Irish state. By contrast, the families of such figures as Frank Sweeney and Tim Connolly reveal no such associations with the patriarchy; freed of the onus of authority, history, and public expectations, these characters struggle not with Irishness and cultural identity but with the mundane complications of merely private lives.

If in these later plays we read the erosion of the oedipality that structures Friel’s earlier interrogation of nationalism, so too this triad reduces the ideological dynamics of the sorority narratives to vestigial elements. In my earlier discussion of such central female figures as Helen in *Living Quarters*, Grace in *Faith Healer*, and Judith in *Aristocrats*, I posited a dense charactological framework that constitutes a Frielian paradigm concerned with the crisis of

disempowerment for women within the patriarchal power structure. In these plays of the 1990s, these defining elements have been reduced to a palimpsestic trace. Gone is the family's patrician pretensions, its social decline symbolized by the daughter's inappropriate marriage, and the traumatic death of the patriarch that haunts the family. Notwithstanding, these later plays retain other elements that remain undeveloped and establish vestigial links between Friel's two dramatic periods. For example, female hysteria pervades the background of Friel's middle period dramas: the dead mothers in *Living Quarters*, *Faith Healer*, and *Aristocrats* are all associated with mental illness, while Claire of *Aristocrats* takes medication for depression (*SP*, 276).⁹ Similarly, not only does each of the plays of the 1990s portray institutionalized women (Berna, Molly, Molly's mother, and Bridget), but Molly's remembered mother is described with much of the same language as Grace's (*MS*, 3, *SP* 347), and both heroines tragically end their lives either institutionalized or under observation.¹⁰ While Berna's emotional frailty and legal career also associate her with these earlier women and their families, her characterization is considerably underdeveloped and synchronic by comparison; for example, there is no indication of a family tradition of lawyers or judges, nor is there any suggestion that her marriage to a turf accountant was considered socially inappropriate by her family.

While Molly is endowed with considerably greater depth and personal history than Berna, *Molly Sweeney* stages a desiccated and diminished version of this sororal narrative that culminates in the mature daughter's traumatic experience of the dying father. Although Molly's father is similarly a judge, he is far from the earlier plays' frightening patriarchs; rather, she remembers him as tenderly indulging his young daughter (*MS*, 1–3), and she allows herself to only tentatively interrogate his ghost in her final monologue (*MS*, 69). More importantly, unlike her analogues in the plays of the late 1970s, Molly fails to demonstrate the intellectual promise that initially propelled Grace into a legal career or the fortitude that designated Judith as the family's agent of cohesion and authority; not only is there no reference to the family's legal tradition to intimidate Molly, but there is no family of siblings, aunts, uncles, or cousins for her to engage with.

Consequently, though she too married unwisely, there is not the implication that she has married beneath her station or, more pointedly, that she has betrayed the family as had Helen in *Living Quarters*, Grace in *Faith Healer*, or Judith in *Aristocrats*. By comparison to her rebellious and prodigal sisters, Molly's past is indistinctly without merit or scandal.

By contrast, if the heroines of the plays from the 1970s faced the daunting, authoritarian fathers who came of age in the Edwardian era, in *Give* Daisy endures no such trauma when confronting her father Jack Donovan. Born only a few years before Gar O'Donnell and Casimir O'Donnell, Daisy's father lacks the gravitas of Judge O'Donnell or Judge O'Dwyer; rather, Jack suggests a trivial and dissolute version of their temperamentally impaired sons in their decline. Indeed, in the final act he is exposed as "that shabby little swindler" and "coxcomb piano-player" whose petty crimes have embarrassed the family throughout Daisy's life (*Give*, 67); in short, as representative of the generation that inherited Ireland at the end of the de Valera era, Jack embodies not the patriarch against whom his children must rebel to gain their freedom, but a diminished generation of men that has failed to make its mark upon Ireland. Likewise, Molly and Daisy lack the horizontal relationships that define the extended families of the earlier plays; these final two heroines lack a network of sisters, an emotionally frail brother, and the single male child who was the focus of sororal attention. Thus, Tom and Daisy's generation are freed from the onus of responsibility that defined such earlier sororal groups and the Gallagher sisters, the Butler sisters, the O'Donnell sisters, and the Mundy sisters.

While it is quite possible to read Daisy as the last example of this increasingly attenuated paradigm of such failed women of promise as Grace in *Faith Healer* or Claire in *Aristocrats*, her daughter Bridget emerges as the zero degree formulation of Friel's characterization of women and Ireland's patriarchy.¹¹ On the one hand, Bridget is the unfortunate, but logical conclusion of a progression that was initiated by Gar in *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* – Friel's first depiction of a child who struggles against the specter of paternal authority. Although Gar may be able to free himself physically from home, the

significance of his childhood reverie at Lough na Cloc Cor assures the audience that he will not as easily free himself from S. B.'s specter. While Joe in the later *The Gentle Island* must also escape from home to free himself from overt patriarchal domination, the adult children in such plays as *Living Quarters* and *Aristocrats* demonstrate that both men and women remain subordinated long after their fathers have released their literal dominion over the family. However, for Bridget there is neither struggle nor escape, for she will be a helpless ward of the patriarchy for life; indeed, with only rare contact with her mother (*Give*, 22, 34, 54), godparents (*Give*, 45), or grandparents (*Give*, 28), she is the ward of her father's care alone.

Bridget is far younger than any other staged character in Friel's oeuvre, she is even junior to Judith's son conceived during the Battle of the Bogside or the children left motherless after Lily's death in *The Freedom of the City*. Born into one of the most violent and bloody periods of the Troubles, Bridget's childhood is marked by such events as the Bloody Friday bombings, the assassination of an Irish senator, and the bombing of Dublin's Central Criminal Court, which all occurred in 1974. Bridget enters a traumatized society, and her childhood was marked by such events as the Shankill Butchers' murders (1975), the Cooley bombing that killed twenty soldiers (1979), and the hunger strikes in the Maze Prison (1981). However, the act of terror that most affected public sentiment was the Remembrance Day massacre in Enniskillen, which occurred in the year that she was institutionalized, 1987 (*Give*, 57). Whereas earlier IRA attacks targeted soldiers or British officials, this bombing of a service memorializing the Great War killed eleven civilians, injured dozens more, and elicited harsh criticism from such diverse figures as Ronald Reagan, John Paul II, and U2's Bono (Bardon, *Ulster*, 776-7); indeed, in his history of Northern Ireland, Marc Mulholland identifies this and other IRA "executions" of 1987 and 1988 as "distasteful" attacks on the general public that "could hardly be defended as 'war'" (Mulholland, *Short Introduction*, 129).

Pine has aptly described Bridget as "the unexplained shadow . . . over the play" (Pine, 312), and Tom's desperate framing monologues to her deny the play conventional closure.¹² If she guards the entrance to

the drama's interpretation by forcing the work beyond the mundane personal and economic anxieties of the main characters, we have very little information with which to decipher her significance; she was institutionalized at age twelve (*Give*, 40, 57), her condition promises no improvement (*Give*, 22, 54), and her father was inspired to write two pornographic novels when she was committed into professional care (*Give*, 57–8). On a superficial level, Bridget's reification as the "hard-core porn" novel *Bridget* endows Tom with a form of shame complementing that of her mother, grandparents, and godparents (*Give*, 57–8); Tom initially hides the existence of his pornography from his assessor David, just as all her other relatives admit that they hide from their responsibilities to the young woman (*Give*, 22, 28, 45).

I would argue that the critical community has failed to come to terms with Tom's pornography, rationalizing it as his attempt "to express the obscenity of his daughter's madness" (Lanters, "Uncertainty Principle," 169), "to tell Bridget's side of the story or at least to speak about her other than as insane" (Germanou, "Scene of Writing," 472), or to reveal the "obscene quality of the world" (Bertha and Morse, "Singing," 134). To understand Tom's pornography, we must first remember that it represents a fundamentally private act for a writer in Ireland; the Censorship of Publications Act of 1929 made "banning a book or periodical . . . alarmingly simple" and reinforced the Irish Constitution's sanction of all published material deemed "blasphemous, seditious, or indecent" (Procida, *Pornography*, 45). Indeed, if the generally soft-core *Playboy* was banned or heavily censored throughout the Republic until 1995 (Procida, *Pornography*, 44), Tom's hard-core novels would have had very little chance of public distribution when he wrote them in the mid 1980s (*Give*, 57). Daisy's characterization of them as "hard-core" rather than soft-core novels implies that they depict explicit "penetrative" sex acts rather than mere nudity or suggestive descriptions (Hardy, *Soft-core Pornography*, 50); moreover, since Tom wrote them about his own daughter when she was merely twelve years old, these associations with child pornography and their incestuous connotations would render these novels "obscene" in the public eye – the worst, least

defensible form of pornography (Caputi, *Voluptuous Yearnings*, 21). In fact, rather than serving as Tom's apologist by asserting that he "speaks for Bridget" and counters the world's "demeaning objectification" of her (Germanou, "Scene of Writing," 472, 475), the play's discussions must contend with the professional consensus that pornography in general, and thus Tom's pornography in particular, "is concerned with power and female submission" (Hardy, *Soft-core Pornography*, 149) that "casts [women] as objects" (Caputi, *Voluptuous Yearnings*, 16).¹³

Rather than celebrate Tom's novels merely because he putatively occupies the position of the play's protagonist, we must view them as symptoms – a symptom that Tom's concern for his daughter suggests an inappropriate relationship that other critics have recognized as threatening his marriage,¹⁴ and a symptom that he has retreated too far into the private world of his remote household. In this respect, Tom completes the progression initiated by such figures as Terry Martin and Frank Sweeney; his life is entirely preoccupied with the domestic and private, and he no longer engages with the public life of his culture – indeed, the Connollys do not even have a telephone. As the founding generation recedes into history and those coming of age in Ireland no longer must wrest their identity from it, Friel suggests that rather than develop into the nation's new authority, this generation retreats from the public stage to increasingly private concerns. Indeed, Tom and Garrett each fulfills Friel's admonition of a decade earlier that the artist must "only . . . find out who he is and what he is and the structure of his own life" in isolation from any idea of national culture (*EDI*, 127). However, if these writers and their wives have survived the Troubles that plagued both Northern Ireland and the Republic by retreating from public engagement, Bridget raises the specter that such a turning away from political life has failed to benefit them.

Thus, in this final play depicting contemporary Ireland, Friel presents a land that, despite the tenuous ceasefire, internalizes the Troubles. Bridget suggests that the accumulated violence of Ireland's unresolved civil strife traumatizes and debilitates the generation born after the Civil Rights movement devolved into sectarian warfare. Ultimately, unlike the previous generation that inherited Ireland

only after the deaths of the nation's tenacious patriarchs, Friel suggests that Bridget's generation has been destroyed by Ireland's violence. However, her parents demonstrate that a solution to Ireland's cultural impasse does not lie in the attempt to establish a "green world" removed from society. In their remote and decaying refuge, Tom's career degenerates, Daisy drifts aimlessly, and the benefits of Europe's Celtic Tiger evade them. As his framing monologues aptly display, Tom's retreat to the family trivializes his literary talent; indeed, Friel reveals the bankruptcy of the solipsistic artist who no longer draws inspiration from his society.

Three Plays After and Performances

In 1999, more than forty years after his first staged play, Brian Friel wrote briefly on seven topics concerning his career. "Seven Notes for a Program Festival," his own contribution to the Friel Festival commemorating his seventieth birthday with numerous public lectures and the simultaneous staging of eight of his plays in all of Dublin's theaters, allows the playwright to briefly reflect on such topics as "Words," "Music," and "Translations" (*EDI*, 173–80).¹⁵ Whereas these subjects have been central to the critical discussion of Friel's work for more than twenty years, others, like his view of the director's role ("Directors"), find their earliest expression in his comments from the mid 1960s (*BFC*, 55–6). Surprisingly absent from his assessment of his career's concerns is any reference to Irish nationalism or his sense of Ireland as place, even though two sections discuss Russia ("Translations" and "Kitezh"). Not only have various critics written extensively about Friel's "commitment to place," which Richard Pine defines as "intense and acute" (Pine, 43), but Friel's own interviews provide ample examples to illustrate his early claim that "I feel very emotionally about this country" (*EDI*, 1).

Rather than considering this omission an unintended oversight, we would more productively understand this as Friel's attempt to elude issues of nationalism; yet, his seventh topic, "Kitezh," suggests Ireland's trace surviving beneath his notes' surface. With its reference to a mythical Russian town that could intentionally disappear from sight to avoid detection, this last reflection seemingly lacks the

topicality of his other reflections on a life in the theater; conversely, the vanishing locality recalls an ancient Irish trope of the disappearing island associated with Tír na nÓg, which Friel also includes as one of the myths associated with Oilean Draoichta in *Wonderful Tennessee* (WT, 18). Thus, the anecdotal Kitezsh can be read as a proxy for Ireland, which disappears from Friel's stage after 1997, to be replaced by Russia in *Three Plays After* and the Czech Republic in *Performances*. We may in part understand this series of one-act plays as symptomatic of Friel's ideological disillusionment with Ireland as well as illustrating his inability to sustain a dramatic vision of a foreign culture; not coincidentally, his only other play with a foreign setting, *"The American Welcome"* (1980) is the shortest work of his career. Nevertheless, despite his attempt to force Ireland from his stage, Friel admits that Russia in some ways represents his homeland: "I'm not sure why I find the late-nineteenth-century Russians so sympathetic. Maybe because the characters in the plays behave . . . a bit like people of my own generation in Ireland" (EDI, 179). Thus, just as Kitezsh's resounding bells continually remind the countryside that the village remains despite the individual's failure to see it, the reader discerns Friel's inability to fully erase Ireland from his retrospective considerations.

Friel's affinity with Russia and specifically the late nineteenth-century Russia of Chekhov was first posited in a brief article by James Coakley in 1973, nearly a decade before Friel's first translation of any Russian work. With the publication of the major critical studies on Friel in the late 1980s and early 1990s, after his version of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* (1981), the Chekhovian ethos of Friel's drama became commonly accepted by the critical community.¹⁶ Indeed, especially in their discussions of such plays as *Living Quarters* and *Aristocrats* both Richard Pine (Pine, 323–6) and Robert Tracy (Tracy, "Russian Connection," 64–8) convincingly demonstrate the affinities between the two writers. While David Krause has roundly criticized Friel's *Three Sisters* for being "inconsistent, careless, and often awkward" and a "questionable experiment with Irish English idioms" (Krause, "Ballybeggared," 645), Tracy argues that "Friel re-works Chekhov's failed dialogues" and creates more coherent characters" (Tracy, "Friel's Russia," 70).¹⁷ Whereas Tracy seeks to convince his audience

that Friel improves upon Chekhov's original, Marilyn Richterik posits that Friel's rewritings specifically "reflect experience in Northern Ireland" (Richterik, *Acting*, 121); indeed, rather than merely noting Friel's addition of such Irish idioms as "wane" and "eejit," her analysis convincingly argues for the political significance of his numerous, subtle divergences from literal translations (Richterik, *Acting*, 122–4).

After *Give Me Your Answer, Do!*, Friel enters into his most sustained period of engagement with Chekhov's works, beginning in 1998 with his version of *Uncle Vanya*, continuing in 2001 with his dramatic adaptation of the story "The Lady with the Dog," which appeared as "The Yalta Game," and concluding in 2002 with his version of the brief farce "The Bear" and an original sketch based upon two Chekhovian characters entitled "Afterplay." Friel's "The Bear" relies heavily upon Chekhov's original and refrains even from incorporating the "Irishisms" that Krause criticizes in his *Three Sisters* (Krause, "Ballybeggared," 637–9).¹⁸ By contrast, though Friel demonstrates a broad fidelity to Chekhov's characterizations and plot of "The Lady with the Dog," he endows his compressed stage version with greater humor and intimacy. For example, Friel changes the setting of the climactic reunion between the two adulterous lovers from a crowded opera house to a quiet street; nevertheless, both play and story end with the lovers in the early days of their secret liaison looking for a "solution" to their marital impediments, with Chekhov's narrator stating that "the most complicated and difficult part of it was only just beginning" (Chekhov, *Omnibus*, 530), and Friel's Anna remembering that "we were now embarked on the most complicated and most frightening and the most painful time of all" (*TPA*, 35). Ultimately, these incidental pieces merit consideration because they signal a type of artistic redirection for Friel, not only does he textualize his avoidance of Ireland as a dramatic setting, but "The Yalta Game" and "The Bear" share a focus on sexualized romance that, as I argued in my treatment of *The Gentle Island*, has heretofore been absent from Friel's drama. His previous plays had often politicized their romantic content through the inclusion of Irish senators as blocking figures, English and Irish soldiers, rebels against the crown, and scenarios that stage the action against the broad background of the Irish political

milieu. By contrast, these tales of private passion expand the topic of illicit sexuality from the contextual signifier that it had been in *Give* to the narrative element upon which the action rests.

Within this context of generally faithful versions that introduce minor changes to plots or characterizations, the two final plays of this series, "Afterplay" (2002) and *Performances* (2003) stand out for consideration because they are neither translations nor adaptations, they are original, albeit short, works. "Afterplay" stages a conversation between two Chekhovian characters more than twenty years after their original plays' action. Andrey Prozorov of *Three Sisters* (1901) initiates a conversation with Sonya Serebriakova of *Uncle Vanya* (1897) when the two meet in a "run-down café in Moscow in the early 1920s" (*TPA*, 73). Actually, the two had conversed the previous night, and Andrey seems to have timed his arrival to encounter Sonya a second time. Neither live in Moscow, rather, each has traveled to the city to fulfill personal obligations, and the audience slowly witnesses the unraveling of Andrey's glorified account of his life before the play ends with each character confessing to a life of personal disappointments. *Performances* focuses on the debate between the Czech composer Leoš Janáček and a graduate student researching the relationship between his late string quartet *Intimate Letters* and the epistolary romance that he conducted with Kamila Stösslová during its composition.¹⁹ While the composer chats about his diet and general health with members of the Alba String Quartet, who are at his retreat outside the city of Brno, we quickly realize that the composer has been dead for over seventy years and Anezka Ungrova is conducting her research in the contemporary Czech Republic. Although Janáček and Anezka initially display a friendly regard for each other, she eventually leaves abruptly and barely concealing her anger after Janáček refuses to give credence to her theory that his *Intimate Letters* "is a textbook example of a great passion inspiring a great work of art" (*P*, 22).

Despite their topical differences, these two plays reveal considerable similarities that are both formal and strategic. Not only are the plays of comparable length, but both present the conversation between a man and woman in which the man is intimately involved

with music – Andrey is an itinerant violinist, Janáček a composer. Moreover, both men find themselves in discussions in which their accounts of their personal pasts become the contested issue. Andrey confesses that he has aggrandized his life, posing as a concert violinist, grieving widower, and doting father, while none is true; ultimately, his admission forces Sonya to sever their nascent relationship and leave Moscow (*TPA*, 98–9). Conversely, Janáček defends not his version of his biographical past, but of his artistic relationship to his muse Kamila Stösslová; claiming not that his love for her inspired his music, but that he “invented her as an expression of what was the very best in himself,” thus denying his love for the literal woman (*P*, 34). Finally, not only does each play end with the woman leaving the stage – leaving, in fact, the very city of the action – after having expressed her exasperation with the man’s fabrications, but each play ends with a pronounced epistolary image: Andrey “with great determination” begins “writing furiously” his first letter to Sonya (*TPA*, 100); Janáček holds the volume of his letters to Kamila, “leafs through it,” and reads passages from them (*P*, 39).²⁰

From the perspective of this study, however, the most significant similarity is the manner in which both plays force pertinent issues of history and nationality from the narratives. In his review of “Afterplay,” Fintan O’Toole notes an “absence of historical reality” (O’Toole, “Two Plays After,” 14) that is most pronounced in the failure to incorporate the effects of the Russian Revolution. Set in the early 1920s, the play transpires in the immediate aftermath of the Russian Civil War (1918–20) and the famine of 1921–22, which combined to leave Russia “in shambles” (Pipes, *Russia*, 371). Indeed, the historian Richard Pipes describes the Russian famine as “the greatest human disaster in European history . . . since the Black Death” (Pipes, *Russia*, 419). Yet, Sonya and Andrey enjoy their coffee and soup in a Moscow café, and discuss having “a grand dinner together” at the expensive Romanoff’s restaurant (*TPA*, 97), without a hint of these recent upheavals. Moreover, though the 1917 Land Decree started the process of abolishing private ownership of property (Pipes, *Russia*, 19), the play opens with Sonya studying her bank’s proposal to return her 300 acre estate to solvency (*TPA*, 78), which would have been highly unlikely

in this era when the collectives were forming and peasants were laying claim to estate lands. In short, "Afterplay" denies history; rather than portraying Chekhov's characters contending with the new Soviet era, this short play imagines a nostalgic survival of tsarist Russia.

Conversely, *Performances* incorporates a more subtle, though equally significant, historical erasure – that of Janáček's devotion to Czech nationalism. The historical Janáček was "a fervently patriotic Czech" who started his career in the late nineteenth century, working on what was to become the "the massive definitive collection" of Moravian songs and dances (Sadie, *Grove*, 770).²¹ Moreover, even though he was in his mid sixties when Czechoslovakia was established, *The Grove Dictionary of Music* attributes his "amazing creative upsurge" after the Great War partly to "his patriotic pride in the newly acquired independence of Czechoslovakia" (Sadie, *Grove*, 772). However, not only does the play itself fail to mention either Moravia, Czechoslovakia, or Janacek's lifelong support of nationalist organizations, his patriotism is mentioned only briefly in one of the play program's three essays, as a single sentence's clause in a paragraph discussing his relationship to Kamila (White, "Leoš Janáček," 13). Thus, the play as well as its program portrays a simplified debate regarding whether an artist's work is a product of his personal life or "that amorphous world of feeling . . . the language of feeling itself" (*P*, 31), which is a myopic view that oversimplifies the complex influences that inspired the composer.

In their complementary manipulation of history "Afterplay" and *Performances* function like the anecdotal Kitez: they construct thinly veiled proxies for Ireland and Friel's engagement with nationalism, as if Friel sought to return to Ireland after having erased the Irish cultural context altogether. Indeed, early twentieth-century Ireland shares much with the Russia of "Afterplay"; both eradicated the nobility and monarchy that had ruled them for centuries, endured civil wars following the Great War, institutionalized land reform, changed their forms of government, and revolutionized their relationships to Europe; in other words, "Afterplay" stages a scene with as much relevance to Irish society in the 1920s as to Russian. With *Performances* Friel strives to envision how a nationalistic artist could be conceptualized if his

political ideology were effaced; thus, he presents his audience with a one-dimensional Janáček whose pervasive inspiration by Moravian culture and folk songs fails to merit even one comment from the play's characters. Indeed, this entire series of short plays could be described as one dimensional, for they examine only romantic passion in a type of ideological vacuum from which all references to patriarchy, generational struggle, and cultural tensions have been eliminated.

Yet, Friel envisions a Janáček with considerable autobiographical resonance; if he was attracted to him because of the enthusiastic nationalism that informed his work, he was compelled to write about him because of more personal correspondences. The 74-year-old playwright who was suffering the longest artistic drought of his career was writing this short drama about a 74-year-old composer who was also struggling to end an unwanted period of silence. Indeed, both artists were "tackling that complex architecture" of the full-length composition for the last time – Janáček in his *Intimate Letters* and Friel in *The Home Place*. Indeed, one cannot but suspect that Friel speaks for himself when Janáček says:

Facing that mountain again? – of course I was terrified. And then there was that other fear: will the seventy-four-year-old body have the stamina to keep up with this (*head*)?²²

(*P*, 29)

Significantly, though Friel envisions a composer inspired by a woman who serves as his muse, Friel is himself inspired to write another full-length play by returning to his nation's history and the ideological dynamics that have characterized it for him.

The Home Place

The eight years between the productions of *Give Me Your Answer, Do!* (1997) and *The Home Place* (2005) constitutes the author's greatest gap between full-length plays. During the six-year interim between *The Communication Cord* (1982) and *Making History* (1988), Friel occupied his time not only with the management of the Field Day Theatre Company, but also with the editing of McGlinchey's memoir and his stage adaptation of Turgenev's novel *Fathers and Sons* (1987);

similarly, this later period was marked by his version of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* (1998) and the short plays of the early 2000s. While the reviewers noted the Chekhovian ethos of this last drama, it squarely situates the action in Ballybeg for the last time in his career.²³ Set in late August 1878, *The Home Place* stages a series of confrontations on Christopher Gore's estate that rupture the façade of the family's peaceful authority within the community as well as the father's within the household. The play opens as Christopher's elder cousin Richard nears the end of his visit, and he prepares to travel to the Aran Islands where this amateur ethnologist will continue his research on the Celtic race. This atmosphere of heightened race consciousness contextualizes the efforts of both Christopher and his son David to wed Margaret O'Donnell, the local Irish woman who oversees the estate's management; in fact, at one point in the action, Christopher and Richard are engaged in a debate on whether his Kentish blood will be irredeemably diluted through such a marriage or the hybrid Irish race benefit from his "generous infusion of English blood" (*HP*, 33). However, during Richard's phrenological examination of several of the area's poor villagers, a group of local vigilantes, who recently murdered the abusive Lord Lifford, disrupt the field work and force Richard to leave the estate. Christopher's surrender to the peasants' bold defiance of aristocratic privilege shames him before his family and leads to his emotional collapse after Margaret rejects his marriage proposal.

In chapter 4, I argued that Friel recognized an ideological kinship with Charles McGlinchey because both sought to reveal the small voice of history in their narratives, to imagine subaltern rather than elite history. However, the fifteen years that elapsed since his last history play, *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990), mark for Friel a break rather than a return to his previous strategy, for *The Home Place* focuses on the Protestant Ascendancy. While the Big House and especially the gentry in decline is a familiar topic for Friel, we should resist superficial homologies between *The Home Place* and such plays as *Aristocrats*. Indeed, though I will discuss it as his final history play, any analysis of *The Home Place* should recognize that it is the sole work of Friel's corpus to portray the Protestant community. While

Mabel's sister is allowed a scene in *Making History* to represent the group that would become known as the Ascendancy, Friel avoided focusing on the Anglo-Irish even in the play that most directly alluded to the class's declining fortunes in the Republic, *Aristocrats*. In this earlier play, the O'Donnell family represents the old Catholic aristocracy, which was an historical anomaly, while such plays as *The Loves of Cass McGuire* and *Living Quarters* portray the Republic's rising Catholic meritocracy. Finally, while the O'Dwyer's family tradition in the law profession suggests that Grace in *Faith Healer* represents the Protestant community, such an association is made less assured by her Irish surname, her mother's choice of Dublin for medical treatment rather than London or Belfast (*SP*, 373), and the absence of sectarian arguments in her father's opposition to her marriage to Frank (*SP*, 347–9).²⁴ Ultimately, while she may possibly be Protestant, her character's construction betrays considerable continuity with Friel's interest in the declining Catholic gentry of *Aristocrats*; thus, she cannot be discussed as a representative of the Protestant Anglo-Irish without considerable qualification.

Conversely, Christopher Gore is more closely affiliated with his English family heritage than would be expected from a stereotypical member of the Ascendancy. Although early in the action he curtly reminds Margaret that he considers himself one of the "locals" (*HP*, 17), when he refers to "us" (*HP*, 17) or "the tribe" (*HP* 61), he speaks of the landlords who maintain strong ties to England and not of his peers who are "going native" (*HP*, 33). In short, he readily voices the emotional displacement of one who considers himself a colonizer, or "planter," as he twice refers to himself (*HP*, 63, 68). Indeed, though Christopher readily reminds people that The Lodge "is my home" (*HP*, 44, 55) when he is trying to assert his authority, he only becomes nostalgic for "the home place," his family's ancestral seat in Kent; first, he admits that the previous evening's reminiscences of his "boyhood escapades" there "almost made me homesick" (*HP*, 19); later, after his capitulation to Fenian intimidation, he finds comfort in his memories of the Kentish estate (*HP*, 62–3). Ultimately, though Christopher more frequently uses the terms, "the home place" and "home," than any other character in the play, for him they represent

different lands and cultures, and his inability to reconcile them finally leaves him "an exile from both" (*HP*, 63).²⁵

Although Friel constructs a plot that strongly suggests the events of the Land Wars of 1879–82, he specifically sets the play in 1878, the uneasy year of agrarian recovery between the bad harvest of 1877, when unremitting August rain destroyed Ulster's oat and potato crops, and 1879, the wettest and coldest summer on record, "a disastrous season, the worst since the Famine" (Bardon, *Ulster*, 361). In fact, Friel reveals his attention to historical specificity by incorporating the details of the brutal murder of William Clements, the earl of Leitrim, into his drama. Jonathan Bardon's description of Leitrim as "the nationalist caricature of the predatory landlord" and "a pariah even within his own class" (Bardon, *Ulster*, 364) clearly informs Friel's story of Lord Lifford, whose equally grim murder haunts the play's action, even though Christopher informs us that "Even his own people hated him" (*HP*, 18). Like the fictional Lifford, Leitrim was murdered in 1878 by the men of Donegal after years of abusing tenants, raping women, and bullying his peers in the gentry; in fact, each dead lord is found still grasping a clump of his murderer's hair (*HP*, 18). Despite the sensational ambush of Leitrim, by setting the play in 1878, Friel deliberately chooses to depict the Protestant aristocracy in the last days before its power was decisively challenged. In some ways 1879 inaugurates the final phase in the Irish struggle for independence; indeed, it is a year of such importance, R. F. Foster's *Modern Ireland 1600–1972* cites it nine times in three pages as a year of considerable significance; not only does the great crop failure occur, but it is the year that Home Rule nationalists adopted "the attack on landlordism as a political campaign," that initiated the resistance that became the Land Wars, that the Irish National Land League was founded, that Charles Stuart Parnell became its president, and finally it was the year that saw Parnell rise from relative obscurity to chair the Irish Parliamentary Party by May 1880 (Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 402–4). In other words, *The Home Place* shows its audience the complacent Anglo-Irish world before Parnell's rise and the series of events that would erode the Ascendancy's dominion over Ireland – the Land Wars, the Land Acts of 1881, 1885, and 1891, and the Home Rule Bills of

1886 and 1893, all of which combined to disempower Ireland's aristocracy.

If this crisis of the Protestant Ascendancy forms the historical context for understanding *The Home Place*, its political construction must condition our reading of the ideological significance of the oedipal competition between father and son that structures the play. In such works as *Philadelphia*, *Here I Come!* and *Living Quarters*, the son's personal struggle with his father's intimidating specter is projected against the background of the nationalist ideology of Ireland's founders and rulers. However, the patriarchy in *The Home Place* is one that from Friel's perspective is neither legitimate nor destined to survive; indeed, though David Gore will inherit The Lodge from his father, Friel's audience is aware that he will oversee the extinction of both his class and their dispensation. To this end, we should recognize that if David is "about thirty" in 1878 (*HP*, 23), he will be in his sixties when Home Rule legislation is passed in 1912 and in his early seventies when the Anglo-Irish Treaty is signed; thus, after 400 years as masters of The Lodge (*HP*, 67), he will be the last of the Gores to be lord of Ballybeg.²⁶

Friel gives indications that David is more aware of the village's political state than his father or uncle; indeed, he suggests to his father that Richard's ethnographic work may be inappropriate because everybody "in the village . . . seems to be a bit . . . on edge" (*HP*, 24). Similarly, whereas Christopher demonstrates a Victorian *laissez-faire* paternalism towards the peasants even in the face of Mary Sweeney's desperate poverty (*HP*, 45, 51–3), David appears both more comfortable and more familiar with such locals as Con Doherty, the local Fenian leader (*HP*, 58). Nonetheless, David defers to this colonialist power structure, and his tacit co-optation within it renders him complicit with its outrages. For example, when Richard demeaningly grips the Lodge's servant Sally and "forces her head back" to illustrate her Celtic physical traits, David refrains from interceding on the young woman's behalf. Indeed, even when Richard releases her and "slaps her bottom," telling her to head "Back to the paddock," David fails to object to her mistreatment and offers her only oblique comfort by encouraging her to pour herself a cup of tea (*HP*, 35). Similarly, when Richard conducts his

examinations of the local Irish, David retreats to the stables rather than oversee or intervene (*HP*, 44). Finally, when David returns to witness his father's humiliating capitulation to Fenian intimidation, he fails to involve himself even though he knows Con Doherty, the group's leader (*HP*, 58–9). Thus, though David does not share his elders' patronizing attitude towards the peasants, neither does he emerge as the poor's ally; rather, he remains inhibited by his learned deference to patriarchal authority.

David's reluctance to challenge the Protestant patriarchy and establish his maturity establishes a broad temperamental resonance between him and Friel's other hectored sons: Gar O'Donnell of *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*, Joe Sweeney of *The Gentle Island*, Ben Butler of *Living Quarters*, Casimir O'Donnell of *Aristocrats*, and Manus O'Donnell of *Translations*. Nevertheless, David alone fails to either liberate himself from or rebel against patriarchal domination. Both Joe of *The Gentle Island* and Manus of *Translations* hastily depart from their fathers' houses after traumatic events, and even though the plays end with their futures uncertain, they have freed themselves from the subordination endured in their father's households. Whereas Ben of *Living Quarters* and Casimir of *Aristocrats* largely remain the uncertain and insecure men who started their plays, each had asserted at least nominal autonomy by moving from the family home before the play's action, and both are promised some psychological liberation by the death of their fathers. Although Ben remains Friel's character most in thrall to the patriarchy, his conquest of his father's second wife constitutes an oedipal mutiny unequalled in Friel's oeuvre. While Friel clearly emphasizes Casimir's dread of paternal authority, he too enjoys the general catharsis shared by all of Judge O'Donnell's children after his death. Finally, even Gar, Friel's earliest and most immature son, benefits from his comparison to David, for he at least has severed his filial bonds by quitting his father's shop and completing his plans to emigrate.

While David Gore may remind the reader of Ben Butler, who also emerges as his father's romantic rival, or Joe Sweeney, who repeatedly falls short of his father's expectations, he fails to achieve any discernible relief from paternal domination. David's equivocal

position at the play's conclusion is accentuated by his two irreconcilable actions – if on the one hand he has physically marked his father as one of the weak trees to be cut down (*HP*, 73), his final image is as the contrite son who has obeyed his father's command (*HP*, 74–5).²⁷ However, a less undecidable interpretation suggests itself as well, for even though he has witnessed the collapse of Christopher's patriarchal authority, David fails to assert himself as the dynasty's rising patriarch. In fact, his subsequent appearance with brush and white-wash betray his intention to ignore his father's humiliation and return to the day's earlier dynamic with himself playing the dutiful son (*HP*, 23, 68–9). More significantly, though Margaret has finally rejected his father as her suitor (*HP*, 66–7), she withholds this information from David and announces that he is not to speak to his father about their marriage for twelve months (*HP*, 69). Thus, the play ends with David's romantic overtures rebuked, and his submission to Margaret's authority as well.

In my earlier discussion of Hugh O'Neill of *Making History* and Maire Chatach of *Translations*, I explored the temptation for Friel's Irish figures to become enthralled by the romance of Englishness. Whereas Christopher and David Gore suggest as seemingly benign an English identity as those embodied by Mabel Bagenal and George Yolland, the Gores no longer constitute the challenge posed by a benevolent Englishness. Rather, like Gerry Evans in *Dancing at Lughnasa*, Christopher and David represent a diminished Englishness; if the father is the "bumbling" Anglo-Irishman who is devastated by his inability to exert his authority over his English cousin and Irish tenant (*HP*, 16), the son fails to develop beyond his initial description as "hesitant [and] uncertain" (*HP*, 23). Indeed, while his romantic outbursts may have won for him Margaret's love (*HP*, 28), the patent absurdity of his "audacious plan[s]" for their elopement suffuse his character with quixotic impracticality (*HP*, 25–6).

In other words, in Friel's dramatic calculus Yolland and Mabel present the possibility of benevolent English intervention into Irish affairs; thus, their characters must be eliminated before they contribute to the construction of Irish society. Conversely, though Christopher and David embody an unequivocal Englishness, they

survive at their play's end because they fail to benefit Irishness as a whole. Limited to modest acts of charity in the face of abject poverty (*HP*, 51–3) or the resolve not to abuse his tenants, Christopher's strategy for personifying "the good landlord" perpetuates the Anglo-Irish domination of the Irish, which within this proto-nationalist framework represents the English domination of Ireland (*HP*, 66). While David demonstrates finer social sensibilities, this thirty-year-old man's inability to respond to the political challenges posed in the play suggests that such an accommodationalist complicity with Ireland's oppressors will continue to define him after he has inherited the Lodge.

Not surprisingly, the undecidability inherent in this depiction of the Ascendancy is resolved through Friel's portrayal of the mere Irish; or, to put it another way, if this play stages the historical moment prior to the decline of the aristocracy, it equally depicts a nascent nationalism the moment before it decisively exerts itself. Such a statement should not be interpreted to suggest that peasant society in the play is portrayed as ideologically monolithic or united against their landlords; rather, it is a class composed of the irreconcilable contradictions that for Gramsci define peasant subalternity before it realizes itself as a class (Arnold, "Gramsci," 30). In his analysis of Gramsci's construction of peasant ideology, the theorist David Arnold delineates the ostensibly incompatible coexistence of active and passive attributes that consigns the peasant class to "a continuing dialectical tussle within itself" (Arnold, "Gramsci," 30) and allows even rebels against the dominant hegemony to admire elements of the class it resists (Arnold, "Gramsci," 29). Such contradictions are readily discernible in the play's Con Doherty, the young Fenian leader who disrupts Richard Gore's phrenological work and demands his expulsion from the Lodge. Con is an emerging leader who has just returned from a two-week, covert tour of England during which he spent his time "meeting people" and "addressing small groups" of sympathizers (*HP*, 14); indeed, he embodies a confident proto-nationalism capable of calmly defying Victorian landlords who assume their innate superiority (*HP*, 55–60). Although Con compels Christopher's maid to prepare Richard's bags for departure and even successfully intimidates Christopher into expelling him from the house (*HP*, 56), throughout

this scene he remains respectful to Christopher, if not even slightly deferential: “we have no quarrel with you, Sir. All we ask is that these men leave” (*HP*, 57). Indeed, though members of this group had murdered Lord Lifford four weeks earlier, Con has convinced the more militant members of his company to wait off the property while he seeks to influence Christopher without force (*HP*, 57–8).

Margaret O'Donnell, Con's cousin (*HP*, 16, 53) and the Lodge's “chatelaine” (*HP*, 21), exemplifies another facet of the peasant subalternity, that which denies its own identity, “even seeking to emulate many of the attributes of the subordinate classes” (Arnold, “Gramsci,” 29); indeed, every significant peasant character in the play pointedly comments on her status as class traitor. Shortly into the drama's first scene, the young maid Sally introduces this idea by innocently asking her, “Do you never go home now at all, Maggie?” (*HP*, 13); similarly, shortly after her father arrives for his only appearance, he comments that she “cut herself off from her home and her people” (*HP*, 40). The casual reader might assume that Margaret's repudiation is of her father alone, for Clement's appearance as a ragged and obsequious alcoholic elicits her revulsion (*HP*, 38–40). However, Con later arrives to reenforce Clement's accusation, for he is another relative who insinuates that she has ignored both her relatives and her community:

CON And how are you, Maggie?

MARGARET (*Icily*) Well.

CON Haven't seen you for ages.

(*HP*, 53)

Significantly, when Ballybeg's poor present themselves for Richard's ethnological measurements, she remains aloof – observing from within the house and ready to identify or soothe individuals as needed (*HP*, 46). Ultimately, Sally, the house's “saucy” maid (*HP*, 11), most directly criticizes Margaret for her intention to pass as one of the gentry:

MARGARET . . . We'll have afternoon tea outside today.

SALLY Will “we”? You'd do anything to be one of the toffs, Maggie, wouldn't you?

(*HP*, 16)

In short, when Margaret claims late in the play that the Lodge "is my home," she admits that she has changed her cultural allegiance (*HP*, 65). Indeed, though she admits to loving David (*HP*, 27–8), the audience suspects that she awards him her love because he promises her membership in the class and culture to which she aspires.

This book offered Chris Mundy of *Dancing at Lughnasa* as unique among Friel's characters for her ability to balance the interests of Irishness with the attractions of Englishness, allowing her to avoid the tragic consequences visited upon others who engaged in such transnational romances. By comparison, Margaret ends the play in a position that is materially better, but less promising nonetheless. Although she has suffered neither the exile of Hugh O'Neill nor the emotional devastation of Maire Chatach, Margaret fails by the play's end to have either borne a son or consummated a romance, which within the expanded context of Friel's sororal narratives establishes Chris Mundy's successful mediation of Irish and English identities. Moreover, even if we assume that in the future she marries into the Lodge, we must remember that within Friel's dramaturgy such an accomplishment is less than auspicious. Indeed, the commoner who marries into the Big House constitutes the cautionary narrative associated with the maternal history imbedded in *Aristocrats*, rather than inaugurating a redemptive theme that has heretofore been lacking from Friel's oeuvre. Indeed, as suggested above, we must rather read somewhat against the grain of *The Home Place* to anticipate the emergence of a nationalistic peasantry, an ideologically realized subaltern, that will form the intimidating background to such plays as *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*, *Crystal and Fox*, *The Mundy Scheme*, and *Aristocrats*.

Notes

Introduction: Friel, criticism, and theory

1. For Dantanus, see List of Abbreviations.
2. See, for example, Graham's "Subalternity and Gender."
3. See especially David Lloyd's "Pap for the Dispossessed," and Declan Kiberd's "Friel Translating," *Inventing Ireland*.
4. For an analysis of identitarian issues in terms of ethnicity, nationalism, and sectarianism, see Coulter, *Northern Irish*, 10–60.
5. Ronnie Munck's critique of the recent evolution of republican ideology and James Goodman's discussion of the trends favoring the development of a "cosmopolitan" nationalism within the Irish Republic offer nuanced additions to the debate regarding the structure of an eventual relationship between Northern Ireland and the Republic; see Goodman, "Cosmopolitan Nationalism," 89–106 and Munck, "Republicanism," 176–92.
6. Friel limits the autobiographical content of the play to its depiction of his mother and her sisters in interviews with Gussow (*BFC*, 206), Lahr (*BFC*, 214), Kavanagh (*BFC*, 222–3), and Delingpole (*BFC*, 230). Similarly, he emphasizes the theme of paganism in interviews with Gussow (*BFC*, 203–4), Lahr (*BFC*, 214–15), and Sherlock (*BFC*, 257).
7. Andrews, 226–30; Cave, "Questing," 113–19; Corbett, 135–7; Llewellyn-Jones, *Contemporary Irish Drama*, 34–6; McGrath, 234–47; Peacock and Devine, "Some Otherness," 113–19; Rollins, "Memory, Ritual," 81–6.
8. McGrath, 235; O'Toole, "Marking Time," 211; Pine, 272.
9. The exceptions would be *The Enemy Within* (1963), which portrays a community of Irish monks on the island of Iona off the Scottish coast, and "American Welcome" (1980), a very short play depicting a European dramatist who discovers that an American theater has largely rewritten his play for its production.

The *Irish Press* essays, 1962–1963: Alien and native

1. Although this article, “Test for Abbey Rejects,” quotes Friel’s assertion that he “[looked] on the play as much better than his first work, *The Enemy Within*,” after its failure he withdrew it and has subsequently prevented its publication. It is useful to note that even at this early stage of his career, Friel chooses to ignore the existence of such earlier staged plays as *To This Hard House* and *A Doubtful Paradise*.
2. Both Andrews and Pine provide rigorous and nuanced treatments that argue for the importance of various themes functioning throughout this small corpus. See Andrews, 8–44; Cronin, “Donging,” 1–13; Maxwell, 15–18, 31–47; McGrath, 49–63; O’Brien, 5–28; Pine, 50–66.
3. Andrews, 16–20, 41–2; Dantanus, 48; Pine, 54–5.
4. See Andrews, 44–56; Dantanus, 50–75, 161–2, 180–2; Maxwell, 48–54; O’Brien, 30–41; and Pine, 69–75.
5. Quoted from a private letter.
6. A complete bibliography for Friel’s *Irish Press* series can be found in *BFC*, 245–7.
7. During this period, Friel additionally supplemented his income by writing nearly a dozen book reviews for *The Irish Press*.
8. This total does not include his informal “Extracts from a Sporadic Diary” (1976–78), but, along with the titles mentioned above, it includes the very brief “Programme Note for Tom Murphy’s *Blue Macushla*” (1980) and “Making a Reply to the Criticisms of *Translations* by J. H. Andrews” (1983).
9. Although the reader may assume that many of these pieces were inspired by Friel’s participation in actual events or recollection of memories, his intention to reify and otherwise fictionalize autobiographical material is frequently both overt and literary; for the most obvious examples see 4 August 1962, 20 October 1962, 17 November 1962, 1 December 1962, 19 January 1963, 23 March 1963, 25 May 1963, and 29 June 1963. Thus, this chapter will maintain a distinction between the fictional character of the columns, “Brian,” and the author who wrote them, “Friel.”
10. Likewise, Friel never discusses his work as a writer of prose even though he writes four installments that are clearly fictional stories: “Brian Friel in the Role of The Demon Fisherman” (20 October 1962), “Marching with the Nation by Howard B. Hedges, Junior (alias Brian Friel)” (19 January 1963), “The Importance of Being Frank: Brian Friel Writes from America” (23 March 1963), and “Brian Friel’s American Diary: 8. Living a Dog’s Life” (8 June 1963).
11. Since this article lacks any context that would allow me to definitively date this trip, I have assumed the causal relationship between the play’s

production and their holiday in Dublin for two reasons: first, the close timing of the article to the play's premiere; second, Tom Moore's newspaper interview with Friel cites him as in Dublin for the premiere (Moore, "He'll be glad," 9).

12. See Andrews, 56–8; Dantanus, 50–3; Maxwell, 61–2; Pine, 21.
13. For a full account of the Derry Nationalists' attempt to include this majority-Catholic city in the Irish Free State, see Gallagher, *Violence and Nationalist Politics in Derry City*; for a broader historical survey of the attempts of Nationalists in the six counties to join the Free State, see Bardon, *Ulster*, 491–501.
14. For a discussion of the colonial dynamics in Northern Ireland, see Bardon, *Ulster*, 638–43, and Wichert, *Northern Ireland*, 32–5, 66–83.
15. That this hamlet 8 miles north of Dungloe is the model for Ballybeg is strongly suggested when the events narrated in "Brian Friel's seaside adventures" (21 July 1962) are transposed to Ballybeg when recast for the story "Gold in the Sea." The hamlet is frequently also spelled "Mullaghdoon"; sometimes even in the same article.
16. As if in a parodic attempt to reconstitute his masculinity, the next installment "Seagull in Distress. Brian Friel to the Rescue" (28 July 1962) portrays Brian as the hero who saves a baby seagull from drowning, thus becoming "the hero of my daughters, with a wife who knew she was important to me. I felt my narrow shoulders swell and my jaw square itself."
17. Kristeva confirms that even those who travel from a different region within a single state are liable to the same treatment as conventional foreigners, becoming "those 'foreigners' who had come from another province" (Kristeva, *Strangers*, 18). As seen in Kristeva's example, this especially applies to those who, like Friel, seek access to enter more conservative agrarian communities.
18. "Brian Friel's American Diary: 4. The News from Home" (11 May 1963).
19. Friel's next *Irish Press* article satirizes this attempt to imagine himself as Ireland's liberator. In "Marching with the Nation" (19 January 1963), a short story set in America, Friel parodies his previous column's fantasy that an ordinary individual can revitalize a nation; indeed, the character's "head-shrinker" expresses Friel's rejection of his previous hubris: "March with the Nation. Follow the Trends. You Ain't no Abraham Lincoln, Mister."
20. Not only did gerrymandering guarantee overwhelming legislative majorities for the Unionist Party, but the Nationalist Party's refusal to participate in the legislative processes of Stormont rendered all campaigning and voting ineffectual rites of sectarian identity for the

Catholic community; for details on conditions in Derry, see Bardon, *Ulster*, 638, and Hennessey, *A History*, 129. Friel's satire anticipates the collapse, by the decade's end, of the Nationalist Party as a result of its perceived inability "to liberalise and modernise . . . to participate not only in the economic and social life of Northern Ireland but in its political life also" (Hennessey, *A History*, 127); see Bardon, *Ulster*, 644–54, 661–4; Hennessey, *A History*, 160–1; Wichert, *Northern Ireland*, 99–104.

21. In his discussion of Friel's "American Diary," George O'Brien argues that isolation from the "familiar props and amenities of home" force him to recognize "the primacy of language" over action (O'Brien, "Meet Brian Friel," 37).
22. Brian frequently finds himself in situations where he responds with anger or passion (see, for example, 5 May 1962, 24 November 1962, or 20 April 1963), but his reactions to sectarianism are unique for the absence of his typical control and retrospective recollection. In such cases, Brian blacks out; the encounter with sectarianism is sufficient both to erase from his memory his response and to blind him to all outside stimuli during his rebuttal: "when I finally realised that the wheezing lift was silent and that the cage door was open, and that my holy operator was watching me with nervous and suspicious eyes, only then did I draw breath." Such aphasiac breaches when confronting sectarianism, accompanied by the suggestion that others question his mental stability, occur also when Friel speaks to representatives of Northern Ireland's state authority, such as the police (3 November 1962) or even sanitary inspectors (12 January 1963). These examples suggest that Brian is subject to a conflicting combination of intimidation and indignation, both in their extreme form, that can only be overcome through a violent disruption, allowing him to speak, as if unconsciously, against the injustice that he struggles to suppress. Although these are far from the violent examples discussed by Kristeva in her analysis of Celine's narratives of the Second World War's brutalities, Friel's essays too suggest an "abject" literature, albeit in diminished form, in which "narrated identity is [made] unbearable" and ultimately "shattered," to be resumed in "flashes, enigmas, short cuts, incompleteness, tangles, and cuts" (Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 140–1).
23. See "Brian Friel in the Role of The Demon Fisherman" (20 October 1962), "Marching with the Nation by Howard B. Hedges, Junior (alias Brian Friel)" (19 January 1963), and "The Importance of Being Frank: Brian Friel Writes from America" (23 March 1963).

24. According to the National Library of Ireland's catalogue for the Brian Friel Papers, Friel's journal of "daily entries" for his work with the Guthrie Theater (which has not yet been released for public consultation) does not begin until 25 March 1963, two days after the publication of "The Importance of Being Frank: Brian Friel Writes from America" (23 March 1963). Thus, Friel may have written this short story prior to his departure, to coincide with his arrival in America. Significantly, it is not part of his ten-installment "Brian Friel's American Diary."
25. Tyrone Guthrie began rehearsing his theater's inaugural production in early April after auditions in New York City (Forsyth, *Tyrone Guthrie*, 278). Guthrie's two directoral works for Minneapolis, *Hamlet* and *The Three Sisters*, both premiered within five weeks, with the latter opening on 18 June and Guthrie returning to Ireland by 12 July (Forsyth, *Tyrone Guthrie*, 275–83). Since Guthrie's directoral work with these two plays was relatively brief – approximately twelve weeks – it is likely that Friel's arrival in New York was scheduled to coincide with Guthrie's work there, though he would have certainly relocated to Minneapolis with the troupe in April to observe Guthrie's work on the new stage. Curiously, Friel's columns maintain their setting in New York into early June, with his flight to the mid-west only recounted in his ninth column (15 June 1963), four weeks after the theater's celebrated opening and only three days before the premiere of Guthrie's *second* production. Clearly, Friel seems to have resisted writing about his theater work for between eight and ten weeks and long after his relocation to Minneapolis, again demonstrating a psychological resistance to self-disclosure concerning his artistic activities. Friel's brief account of his sojourn fails to clarify such discrepancies; see "An Observer in Minneapolis" (*BFC*, 35–9).
26. See "And Then What Did She Say?: A Tragic Dialogue" (17 November 1962) or "Daughter Talk: Doing Down Daddy" (16 February 1963).

The plays of the 1960s: Assessing partition's aftermath

1. Although Pine posits that *Cass McGuire* is also a Ballybeg play (Pine 107), it refers to no cities in Donegal or Northern Ireland; rather, the characters twice mention Cork as if it were nearby: Cass' brother hired a stone mason from Cork to prepare their father's headstone (*CM*, 13), while Cass later fantasies that her entire family met her there when she returned to Ireland (*CM*, 64).
2. All dates refer to the year of initial production.
3. Friel states this as having been his intention in several early essays and interviews; for example, see *EDI*, 32 and 47, and Hickey and Smith, *Paler Shade*, 222.

4. Pine and Dantanus follow the lead of D. E. S. Maxwell, who first sought to explore Friel's early "tetralogy on the theme of love and family" (Maxwell, 55). See also Bell, *Theatre in Ulster*, 106; O'Brien, 53; Grene, *Politics*, 212–13.
5. See also Corbett, 6; Dantanus, 79–80; Maxwell, 57; O'Brien, 41; Pine, 112.
6. See also Bell, *Theatre in Ulster*, 102–3; Dantanus, 79–83; Deane, *Celtic Revivals*, 170; Etherton, *Contemporary Irish Dramatists*, 153–4; Pine, 117–19. In his brief treatment of the play, Lionel Pilkington asserts that Friel seeks to juxtapose "the authenticity of the spontaneous self" to "traditional loyalties to Ireland as mediated by family and kinship bonds" (Pilkington, *Theatre*, 160–1).
7. For a detailed analysis of the twentieth-century evolution of Irish nationalist ideology within the context of relations between the Catholic Church and the Irish state see Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 570–3, 577–81, and Boyce, *Nationalism*, 352–3, 360–1.
8. Aijaz Ahmad explores the interpretive distinctions between exile, self-exile, migrant, and vagrant in "Salman Rushdie's *Shame*: Postmodern Migrancy and the Representation of Women" (Ahmad, *In Theory*, 123–58).
9. One readily recognizes that the cultural dynamics symptomatic to Ireland are distinct from those for the Indo-Pakistan of Ahmad or the West Africa of Kwame Anthony Appiah. These "Third World" theorists share a common concern over the manner in which the adoption of an imperial language and the geographic remoteness of writers who reside in the West creates a comprador canon which has been determined by the West's ideological strategies and commercial means of production in isolation from the authors' home dynamics (Ahmad, *In Theory*, 124–32, and Appiah, *Father's House*, 74–6, 148–9). In his exploration of methodology suitable to Irish Studies, David Lloyd posits that such constructs developed by "Third World" theorists may require such a "differential" rather than comparative analysis to render them applicable to the specific dynamics of Irish culture (Lloyd, *Ireland*, 3).
10. For previous critical readings of these temptation scenes, see Andrews, 79–83; Corbett, 6; Dantanus, 80–1; Maxwell, 56–7; Pine, 104.
11. Anthony Roche similarly views Oswald as Columba's "younger, more idealistic self" (Roche, *Contemporary Irish Drama*, 77).
12. In her analysis of the Brechtian techniques of Friel's early plays, Ruth Niel discusses the disruption of chronology and the deployment of metacommentary by characters in *Philadelphia* and *Cass McGuire* (Niel, "Non-realistic Techniques," 352–4).

13. See Andrews, 95; Dantanus, 101; O'Brien, 55; Pine, 4.
14. See, for example, Andrews, 91–4, 98–103; Corbett 38–9, 109–110; O'Brien, 48–9, 56.
15. Despite his material success, Friel clearly suggests that Harry's attempt to raise children during the socially regressive de Valera premiership produced affluent, though alienated children (*CM*, 54–5).
16. Although Kate anecdotally relates her encounter with Bernie O'Donnell, which shatters Maggie's composure, there is no indication that Bernie is even distantly related to S.B. (*DL*, 18–20).
17. The eldest Mundy sister, Kate, was born the year before S.B., while the youngest is more than seven years his junior.
18. Helen Lojek's article "Stage Irish-Americans in the Plays of Brian Friel" includes an extended and insightful comparison of Cass and Lizzy (80–1).
19. Gregory intends to limit the play's competitive dynamics to a macroeconomic context in several ways: first, by excluding any allusion to a source for Christy's emigration in an oedipal conflict within his village; second, by defining Kate's husband, Michael Ford, as a suitor who appeared only after Christy's departure, she refrains from juxtaposing the two men as rivals; finally, by portraying Michael Ford as a subsequent victim of the same economic forces that affected Christy, Gregory emphasizes that the colonial metanarrative dictates personal circumstances.
20. See also Ruth Niel's brief survey of the psychology of several oedipal relationships in Friel's plays (Niel, "Disability," 146–49).
21. Grene, *Irish Drama*, 202; McGrath, 70; Murray, *Twentieth-century Irish drama*, 169; Pine, 4.
22. See Niel, "Non-realistic Techniques," 354–5.
23. Even Grene's ostensibly political interpretation falls victim to this preoccupation, see Grene, *Irish Drama*, 206–11.
24. Robert Welch also comments on the general importance of these anniversaries to his reading of *The Loves of Cass McGuire* (Welch, *Abbey Theatre*, 183).
25. *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*, *The Loves of Cass McGuire*, *The Gentle Island*, *Living Quarters*, *Communication Cord*, *Wonderful Tennessee*, and *Give Me Your Answer, Do!* all transpire merely in "the present."
26. On 5 October 1968 the Derry Civil Rights Association attempted to march along "a traditional Protestant route" (Bardon, *Ulster*, 653) to the city center; among the approximately 400 marchers were three Westminster MPs, Eddie McAteer, and the young politicians John Hume and Eamonn McCann. Whereas the brutality with which the

- police attacked the peaceful marchers was not without precedent in the province's history, the news film of the unwarranted viciousness of the police assault "changed the course of Ulster's history" (Bardon, *Ulster*, 655); see Coogan, *The Troubles*, 17; Bardon, *Ulster*, 653–5; Hennessey, *A History*, 142–3; Wichert, *Northern Ireland*, 108–9.
27. For historical details of the spring and summer of 1966 and its political aftermath, see Bardon, *Ulster*, 634–6, 645–8; Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 585–8; Wichert, *Northern Ireland*, 95–8.
 28. James Hurt usefully discusses the *Trauerspiel* in relation to the works of Frank McGuinness in his article "Frank McGuinness and the Ruins of Irish History."
 29. Despite their general praise for the play, O'Brien (64–6) and Pine (112–13) present very limited discussions of it.
 30. Whereas Friel does not explicitly associate his plays with the rebellious theater of Arnold Wesker and John Osborne, in his early interviews he does express qualified respect for these Angries. Indeed, Archie Rice, the embittered showman of Osborne's *The Entertainer* (1957), seems a hitherto unrecognized analogue to Friel's Fox Melarkey.
 31. Although beyond the framework of this analysis and its interpretive strategies, a rigorous Lacanian treatment of the textualization of the real in *Crystal and Fox* would allow for the explication of primary tropes that remain latent in the more conventional interpretations that focus on the generic concept of "illusion." For example, Lacan's argument that "fantasy protects the real" (*Feminine Sexuality*, 41) implies that the above quotation betrays Fox's enjambment of his fantasy for a future with Crystal against his redemption of the forgotten "encounter" on Galway's coast.

The plays of the 1970s: Interrogating nationalism

1. Friel's choice of "mixed" betrays a degree of apprehension because the word is conventionally used to denote the socially perilous marriages of Catholics and Protestants (Coulter, *Northern Irish*, 40). As the murder of the Quinn boys in 1998 reminds us, too often "mixed" families are the first targeted by paramilitaries in the sectarian cleansing of neighborhoods.
2. Jacques Derrida too marks the distinction between the foreign and the absolute Other to remind us that the former inhabits a limited, if not liminal, space *within* society, allowing it distinct prerogatives and a conceptualized relationship to the host society; whereas the Other "has neither name, or patronym, nor family, nor social status, and who is therefore treated . . . as another barbarian" (Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, 25).

3. D. George Boyce's *Nationalism* provides the most comprehensive analysis of Irish nationalism from the Tudor period to the present, while Declan Kiberd's *Inventing Ireland* examines this same period within a specifically literary context. David Cairns and Shaun Richards' *Writing Ireland* evaluates this history within the context of emerging and competing ideologies within Ireland.
4. In the autobiographical version, Friel and his father return from a day fishing, walking down a road sharing a song; yet he soon admits that this memory cannot be factually accurate because the road on which his memory places the scene does not run by any river or lake. Likewise in the play, S. B. O'Donnell tells Gar that he has misremembered significant details of the event.
5. Marilyn Throne's article "The Disintegration of Authority" surveys the domineering fathers and their children who "have been damaged because of . . . their relationships with their fathers" in *Philadelphia, Here I Come!, Living Quarters, Aristocrats, Faith Healer, and Translations*. While her intention to sketch "the failure of the Irish culture to communicate its heritage" is largely compatible with my argument, I propose a more historically and ideologically particularistic analysis (Throne, "Disintegration of Authority," 167, 171).
6. The reader should note that slight differences separate the versions published by Samuel French (1970) and Farrar, Straus, and Giroux (1970) suggesting that former was modified for an American audience: for example, it uses "police" and "prime minister" for the latter's "guards" and "taoiseach." However, there are instances where the two texts diverge, as in the final conversation between Ryan and his mother.
7. Andrews, 118–21; Corbett, 141–2; Dantanus, 120–4; Maxwell, 85–7; McGrath, 74–5; O'Brien, 68–70.
8. For discussions of Ireland's complex development within the economics of colonialism see Joe Cleary's "Misplaced Ideas," 29–35, and David Lloyd's "Introduction" to *Ireland after History* (8–15).
9. Bardon provides a thorough review of the industrial strength and diversity of Belfast and Derry in relation to the island as a whole at the turn of the century (Bardon, *Ulster*, 386–99).
10. Christopher Murray describes *Volunteers* as a "sardonic attack on Southern complacency" that so displeased Dublin audiences it "put paid for a considerable time to plays about the North on the Abbey's main stage" (Murray, *Twentieth-century Irish Drama*, 202).
11. See Niel, "Digging," and Seamus Heaney's "Trial Pieces," *North*.
12. See Andrews, 144–8; Corbett, 162–73; Dantanus, 153–61; Imhof, "Re-writing History," 86–92; Llewellyn-Jones, *Contemporary Irish*

Drama, 38–40; McGrath, 123–34; Niel, “Digging,” 36–40; O’Brien, 83–7; and Welch, *Abbey Theatre*, 195–6.

13. See also Corbett, 165–6.
14. Lionel Pilkington also unquestionably accepts that the setting in Dublin allows the play to address “issues of immediate political importance in Northern Ireland” (Pilkington, *Theatre*, 202).
15. Internment was suspended in Northern Ireland in 1959; however, it continued in the Republic until 1962.
16. In their history of the Provisional IRA Patrick Bishop and Eamonn Mallie describe “the Republic’s own anti-republican legislation . . . as harsh as the Special Powers Act in the North” (189); for a detailed history of Northern and Southern governmental responses to IRA political and military activities through 1974, see Bishop and Mallie, *Provisional IRA*, 148–95.
17. Friel no doubt was also acutely aware of the similarly dire conditions in Northern Ireland. The cycle of protests, riots, and paramilitary violence that had originated in 1966 seemed to culminate politically from 14 to 27 May 1974, when the province became “ungovernable” and public order all but collapsed during the Ulster Workers’ Council strike; see Bardon, *Ulster*, 707–11.
18. The biographical applicability of this sketch is reinforced by Keeney’s earlier reference to Butt as “a real primitive” with “ten kids” (*Vol*, 38).
19. For attempts to displace the Lief narratives regarding Butt into the past, see Corbett, 170–1; Dantanus, 157; McGrath, 132.
20. For a history of the march and the events that led to the murder of thirteen civilians, see Bardon, *Ulster*, 686–9; Bishop and Mallie, *Provisional IRA*, 160–3; Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 589–92.
21. In his *Irish Press* article “Disposing of the Body” (23 June 1962), Friel farcically recounts a day that culminates in his own symbolic act of protest perpetrated in the Guildhall.
22. In her “Non-realistic Techniques,” Ruth Niel provides the most nuanced discussion of Friel’s relationship to Brecht as well as other experimental playwrights.
23. See Andrews, 129–38; Corbett, 142–62; Dantanus, 133–42; Grant, *Literature*, 38–45; Maxwell, 100–6; McGrath, 100–23; O’Brien, 78–82; Pilkington, *Theatre*, 196–202; Pine, 131–42; Schrank, “Politics,” 122–43; Winkler, “Historical Actuality,” 12–29.
24. See also Pilkington, *Theatre*, 198–9.
25. A decade before McGrath made his argument, Michael Etherton also discussed this trio within the context of Sophocles’s *Oedipus* and tragic destiny (Etherton, *Contemporary Irish Dramatists*, 165–9). For

- Etherton, the trio is also helpless against the historical forces that will endow them with mythic significance, but in his argument the trio's subordination to fate enhances their tragic centrality.
26. For other interpretations of Professor Dodds, see Corbett, 150–1; Dantanus, 136; Fulton, "Hegemonic Discourses," 70–2; Schrank, "Politics," 140–1; Pine, 135–7; Winkler, "Historical Actuality," 22–3.
 27. In a group of essays "clustered around questions of empire, colony, nation, migrancy, [and] post-coloniality," Aijaz Ahmad discusses Rushdie's *Shame* as a similarly postmodern rather than postcolonial celebration of migrancy within the consumption model of a Western supermarket of national identities (Ahmad, *In Theory*, 123–39).
 28. See Bardon 675, and Bishop and Mallie 35–6.
 29. Helen Fulton notes Skinner's ideological refinement; however, she argues that such independence from and fluency in the discourses of power betray him as a disaffected member of "a more middle-class section of society," a "class traitor" in fact (Fulton, "Hegemonic Discourses," 78). However, such a middle-class background is never implied by the choric policeman who identifies the trio to the tribunal Judge (*SP*, 108–9) or Skinner's own descriptions of his background (*SP*, 130–1, 152); rather, he affirms his identity as one of "us – the poor" (*SP*, 154).
 30. See Bardon, *Ulster*, 675–8 and Bishop and Mallie, *Provisional IRA*, 67–9, 89–105.
 31. Elizabeth Winkler describes Skinner as "an irresponsible drop-out" with "a keen political awareness"; though she claims that "at the most [he is] a potential revolutionary," she asserts that Friel "avoided making Skinner a convinced left-wing activist" (Winkler, "Historical Actuality," 20); see also Grant, *Literature*, 42–3.
 32. Lionel Pilkington presents a brief argument recognizing the play's opposition between "political formulations" and the betrayal of "the essential complexity of individual experience" (Pilkington, *Theatre*, 200).
 33. Whereas O'Brien devotes his brief discussion of the play to generally recount Sarah's importance to the plot (O'Brien, 72–3), Andrews and Helen Lojek pursue more detailed analyses of Shane (Andrews, 127–8 and Lojek, "Lamentation," 50–3).
 34. See also Corbett, 44–6.
 35. The four plays from 1969 through 1975 contain forty-three male characters and seven female (6:1); this disparity slightly increases when only main characters are tallied: fifteen men and two women (Sarah and Lily). Throughout Friel's early career from 1962 throughout 1975, the casts include eighty men and twenty-two women (3.8:1).

36. See Andrews, 128, and Corbett, 44.
37. Ultimately, Philly's sexuality remains difficult to assess and too elusive to determine. His stark unresponsiveness to his wife's emotional fragility suggests an absence of tenderness towards her that would support the assumption that he represses his homosexuality (*GI*, 24–5). Conversely, his most evocative statement in the play occurs when he rapturously describes the heterosexually romantic image of the medieval maiden who accompanied two young monks to their deaths (*GI*, 32). Perhaps Philly should be read as representing "a real man" who is briefly lured into the "Tiger Life," a heterosexualized homoerotic, a theme not uncommon to Mac Liammóir's plays of the 1960s and 1970s (Walshe, *Sex, Nation*, 157–65).
38. Parenthetically, such a suspicion of Dublin society as susceptible to sexual-cultural deviance recurs in comic form in Friel's *The London Vertigo*, a 1990 adaptation of a play by Charles Macklin, in which Nancy O'Doherty returns to Dublin having adopted the sexual libertinism and cultural pretensions of London society.
39. *The Mundy Scheme* identifies Ryan as exactly fifty in 1969 (*Mundy*, 10); however, our dating of Peter's birth requires a literal acceptance of two incidental statements. First, we must assume Shane's honesty when he confides to Sarah that he is thirty-two (*GI*, 35), which would date his birth to 1939; second, we must accept Friel's description of Shane as "twenty years younger" than Peter as literal (*GI*, 25).
40. Arguments discussing Friel's strategic reworking of *Hippolytus* are presented by Andrews, 138–40; Cave, "After *Hippolytus*," 103–6; Dantanus, 146–7; Etherton, *Contemporary Irish Dramatists*, 175–6; Michael Lloyd, "Friel's Greek Tragedy," 244–51; McDonald, "Irish and Greek," 47–51; McGrath, 135–6; O'Brien, 92; O'Hanlon, "Friel's Dialogue," 107–12; Peacock, "Translating the Past," 114–17; Pine, 155–6; Welch, *Abbey Theatre*, 196.
41. For a reading of the play suggesting that this exercise of male authority includes "a sort of psychic murder of the feminine," see O'Hanlon, 113–15.
42. With equal vigor, Thomas Kilroy has also defended the play against the view that it is an inferior "exercise in preparation for *Aristocrats*," arguing that in *Living Quarters* Friel developed the psychological subtlety and complexity of such later works as *Faith Healer* (Kilroy, "Theatrical Text," 97).
43. See also Niel, "Non-realistic Techniques," 355–6.
44. In a complementary manner Terence Brown also makes reference to the play's relevance to understanding "the defeated quality of so much Irish

life even in a decade which seemed to see Ireland escaping from the impotent isolation of its recent past" (Brown, "Transition," 192).

45. Girard, *Deceit*, 186–7 (note).
46. Friel's late play *Performances* (2003) allows the Czech composer Leoš Janáček to debate a graduate student of musicology more than seventy years after his death; conversely, though the structure of *Molly Sweeney* (1994) is modeled after *Faith Healer*, the audience cannot discern whether Molly speaks from the vantage of someone who has already died or whether she languishes in a catatonic limbo between life and death.
47. The associated topic of memory, especially the conflicting accounts of the events at Kinlochbervie, is discussed by Andrews, 158; Corbett, 120; Kiberd, "Faith Healer," 115–6; Maxwell, *Modern Irish Drama*, 201–3; McGrath, 164–7; O'Brien, 98–9; Pine, 110; Roche, *Contemporary Irish Drama*, 111–13. George Hughes suggestively surveys the interplay of memory with rite, a Yeatsian "Dreaming Back," and Noh drama (Hughes, *Ghosts*, 175–85).
48. Kiberd's analysis of Frank as artist was followed by Andrews, 159–60; Corbett, 166–7; Dantanus, 172–9; Deane, "Name," 109–11; Lanthers, "Gender and Identity," 283; McGrath, 172–3; O'Brien, 100–1; Tallone, "Friel's Fox Melarkey," 34–8. Bruce Wyse's recent analysis of Frank as a troubling devolution of the Romantic "specially endowed" genius demonstrates that valuable work can still be produced within this paradigmatic framework (Wyse, "Traumatizing Romanticism," 449).
49. McGrath offers the most detailed examination of the complex psychological symbiosis binding Grace and Frank (McGrath, 159–62).
50. In his summary of the play's nationalist implications McGrath summarizes Roche's argument (McGrath, 174–5); Corbett's brief consideration of the topic also notes his debt to Roche (Corbett, 122).
51. Michael Etherton stands apart from this tradition with his attempt to read *Aristocrats* and *Faith Healer* as sharing a "deliberate, contradictory, structural relationship" that relies upon the resonances between the two judges and their radical daughters Judith and Grace (Etherton, *Contemporary Irish Dramatists*, 186). Unfortunately, the potential of his hypothesis is diluted by digressive readings of such tangential figures as Frank Hardy and Tom Hoffnung (Etherton, *Contemporary Irish Dramatists*, 183–93).
52. I have adopted "O'Dwyer" for Grace's family surname because she does not refer to Frank's use of O'Dwyer with the derision or obvious irony that accompany her reference to the other surnames attributed to her: "Dodsmith or Elliot or O'Connell or Macpherson" (*SP*, 345).

53. Several critics have contended with the unreliability of Frank's narrative, which is significantly contradicted by the accounts provided by Teddy and Grace, though these two also fail to agree on fundamental details. Frank seems especially disposed to manipulate information intentionally; for example, he first identifies his father as Jack Hardy while remarking on the singular import of his own name Frank Hardy (*SP*, 333), yet in his final monologue he casually recalls a family friend addressing his father as "Frank" (*SP*, 373). Since the play is permeated by such irreconcilable and competing statements, my juxtapositioning of Frank and Grace's memories will examine them as symptoms of the play's ideological preoccupations, rather than competing narratives to be reconciled.
54. The earlier death of Grace's mother is implied by her father's accusation that Grace's irresponsibility had "killed [her] mother" (*SP*, 348).
55. Lanters makes a similar observation in her analysis of gender, creative energy, and identity (Lanters, "Gender and Identity," 285).
56. For example, see Andrews, 150; Corbett, 85; O'Brien, 25–6; Pine, 88, 92.
57. Both Andrews (Andrews, 155) and McGrath (McGrath, 150) briefly comment on the Polish character of the name "Casimir," but neither recognize its personal resonance for Friel. In his first *Irish Press* article, Friel confesses that "At my confirmation I was instructed to take the name Casimir, after an aunt who was a nun in England . . . it is no name to saddle a boy with. Never call your son Casimir: he will always hold it against you" (28 April 1962).
58. See Andrews, 151–2; Corbett, 79–82; McGrath, 153; O'Brien 94–5.
59. See Andrews, 151; Corbett 75–6; Dantanus, 171; McGrath 153–4; O'Brien 93.
60. While Richard Pine valuably emphasizes Friel's focus on women in the plays commencing with *Dancing at Lughnasa* (Pine, 276–7), the most sustained survey of the playwright's depiction of women is offered by Claudia W. Harris in "The Engendered Space." Harris' discussion of women as mothers, daughters, wives, and sisters often recognizes their traditional subordination to their families' male figure; however, her intention to structurally map "what cumulative effect Friel's engendering might have" for twenty-three female characters in twelve plays proposes a more generalized reading of the relationships that define sisters than offered above (Harris, "Engendered Space," 54).
61. Even as late as 1991, Margaret Ward argued that "women are not seen as part of Irish history" (Ward, *Missing Sex*, 7), and they are only allowed into the margins of this "male-oriented consciousness" when they participate in male causes. Her pamphlet *The Missing Sex* chronicles

the exclusion of women even from such revisionist works as Foster's *Modern Ireland 1600–1972* and Lee's *Ireland 1912–85* (Ward, *Missing Sex*, 7–12), thus revealing that the O'Donnell's erasure of women from Irish history is symptomatic of broader cultural and institutional biases in the late 1970s.

62. See Bardon, *Ulster*, 668–9, and Bishop and Mallie, *Provisional IRA*, 75.

Plays 1980–1993: The North

1. In "Field Day Five Years On," John Gray describes Heaney as "a long standing friend of Friel" (Gray, "Field Day," 6); their professional contact must date from at least 1968, for Friel's essay "The Theatre of Hope and Despair" was published in the first issue of *Everyman*, a "Religio-Cultural Review," for which Heaney was listed as one of five editors.
2. Paul Delaney's bibliography of Friel's print, radio, and television interviews reveals the period 1965–95 as one of considerable accessibility to the press. Eager to build his reputation, the fledgeling dramatist participated in twenty-eight interviews during this period. From 1963 through 1973, Friel averaged five interviews each year (including seven in 1964, 1965, and 1973); conversely, for the entire six-year period from 1974 through 1979, he engaged in only seven, with only one interview for the three-year period of 1977–79, a very brief series of statements focused on the absence of politics from contemporary Irish drama (*EDI*, 70–2). However, the premiere of *Translations* in 1980 required considerable public relations on his part; being only one of Field Day's two initial directors, Friel participated in twelve interviews in that year alone. As to his reluctance to write essays, which I discussed in chapter 1, Friel authored only brief occasional pieces between 1972 and 1979, and in them he avoids the topics of nationalism or the North.
3. Kirkland provides a valuable reading of the symbolic place of Derry for loyalists, nationalists, and Field Day (Kirkland, *Literature*, 131–6).
4. It is worth noting that Friel never employs the term "Ulster," which refers to the province composed of Northern Ireland's six counties and the Republic's Counties Donegal, Cavan, and Monaghan. With its sectarian appropriation by such paramilitary organizations as the Ulster Defenders and the Ulster Volunteer Force, Friel may have considered "Ulster" a term overly contaminated with Loyalist associations. Colin Coulter provides a sociological discussion of the recent evolution of such identitarian terms as "Northern Irish," "Irish," and "British" within both the Catholic and Protestant communities of Northern Ireland; see Coulter, *Northern Irish*, 15–22.

5. See, for example, Chatterjee, 1993, 173–81; Ranajit Guha's essay "On Some Aspects," 1–7; David Arnold's "Gramsci and Peasant Subalternity," 25–34; David Lloyd, 1993, 126–7; and Kamala Visweswaran's "Small Speeches," 86–7.
6. Both Spivak and Lloyd diagnose a "subaltern subject-effect" in the particularist analyses of the Subaltern Studies collective, whereby "it is only the texts of . . . elite documentation that give us the news of the consciousness of the subaltern" (Spivak, *Other Worlds*, 203); in other words, the subaltern tends not to narrativize itself (Spivak, *Other Worlds*, 203–5; see also Lloyd, *Anomalous States*, 126–7).
7. Similarly, in his study *Nationalism*, Boyce cautions us against embracing simplistic assumptions about ideological identity in Northern Ireland; writing in 1995, he concludes that "the overall impression that Northern Ireland nationalists give at the present time is one of confusion" (Boyce, *Nationalism*, 427). He adds that while Hume's "modified nationalism" has enjoyed considerable influence in Dublin and London, "neither Protestants nor Catholics in the north form the ideologically solid communities that they at first sight appear to constitute" (428); indeed, since the political reemergence of Sinn Féin under Gerry Adams in 1981, this more sentimental nationalism has robustly challenged Hume's ability to claim to represent the province's republicans. For his part, Friel refrained from publicly endorsing any nationalist party in Northern Ireland throughout the 1970s and 1980s; though in 1991 he referred to Hume as a "very skillful" politician, his interviewer did not imply that Friel subscribed to his political agenda (*BFC*, 225–6).
8. Patrick Grant argues that Field Day's increasingly nationalist associations and strategies are discernible as early as 1983 (Grant, *Literature*, 83–92); see also Murray, "Palimpsest," 85–6; Richtarik, *Acting*, 245–55.
9. Kearney first articulated his idea of "the fifth province" in the first edition of *Crane Bag* (1977); during the 1980s he became a frequent contributor to Field Day's series of pamphlets. His "Rethinking Ireland" collects his three proposals, under various joint authorships, to radically reimagine the governmental structure of a united Ireland; significantly, his first proposal for a Council of the Islands of Britain and Ireland, "A proposal for a joint sovereignty solution," dates from 1983; see Kearney, *Postnationalist*, 70–4.
10. Kearney, "Language Play," 47–51; Andrews, 192–3.
11. See Andrews, 193–6; Corbett, 55–61; O'Brien, 108–9; Pine, 246–52.
12. See Corbett, 62; Dantanus, 203; McGrath, 199; Richtarik, *Acting*, 129–32.

13. In a brief though complementary discussion, Cairns and Richards endeavor to assess “what, if anything, Friel wishes to put in [the] place” of the myth of “authentic Irishness” (Cairns and Richards, *Writing Ireland*, 148–9).
14. Not only did Friel author these history plays during this period, but he also maintained this fixation on the past through the translation or dramaticization of three nineteenth-century Russian works as well: *Three Sisters* (1981), *Fathers and Sons* (1987), and *A Month in the Country* (1992).
15. If, as noted earlier, the necessity to promote the Field Day Theatre Company initially forced Friel to engage in an unprecedented number of interviews, such access to the public was short-lived. By 1983 he had sharply reduced the number of interviews in all media (print, radio, and television); in 1985 he refused all requests, though he averaged two print interviews, though none over radio or television, throughout the decade until the success of *Dancing at Lughnasa* in 1990 (*BFC*, 253–61).
16. See Friel’s *Irish Press* column “The Shameful Road to Glenties” (2 February 1963); *BFC*, 100, 182; *EDI*, 38.
17. Nationalists in the majority Catholic border regions of Northern Ireland resolutely believed that their territory would be transferred into the Irish state throughout the mid 1920s. The failure of the Boundary Commission to satisfy such hopes and the subsequent political disillusionment following the collapse of the United Nationalist Party are recounted by Eamon Phoenix in *Northern Nationalism* (37–70).
18. By reading Donovan as emblemizing the “traditional nationalism . . . that chains the Irish unproductively to their past,” McGrath offers the most impartial view of the senator (McGrath, 199). Otherwise, Donovan elicits readings either as embodying “the hypocritical and confused attitudes of official modern Ireland” (Dantanus, 204) and its “cultured obtuseness” (O’Brien, 109), or more sympathetic ones that seek to balance his romanticization of Irish tradition against his flawed sense of history (Corbett, 60–1) or language (Andrews, 193–5).
19. See Corbett, 21–2; Dantanus, 189–94; Deane, *Celtic Revivals*, 170–1; Etherton, *Contemporary Irish Dramatists*, 201–5; Grene, *Politics*, 42–4; Kearney, “Language Play,” 33–42; Josephine Lee, “Linguistic Imperialism,” 172–9; Timm, “Modern Mind,” 449–53.
20. See especially Elmer Andrews (168–73) and Patricia Lynch’s “A Stylistic Approach to Irish Writing” (39–45) for interpretations of issues related to language. While Smith (“Hermeneutic Motion,” 393–403) and Pine (179–86, 359–63) present the most elucidating comparisons of passages from the play to their origin in Steiner’s book, McGrath introduces

Steiner's conception of Eros to the play's interpretation and otherwise seeks to reconcile Steiner's theories to Bhabha's "performative hybrid enunciation" and a postcolonial reliance on metonym (McGrath, 182–93).

21. Pilkington 213–20. While Grene notices a similarly anglocentric deployment of Latin in the play (Grene, *Politics*, 45–6), Cullingford discusses the contradictory associations to imperialism inherent in Hugh's devotion to Latin (Cullingford, *Ireland's Others*, 117–19).
22. See also Brown, "Transition," 195–6; Cullingford, *Ireland's Others*, 54–5; Grene, *Politics*, 41–2; Lee, "Linguistic Imperialism," 174–6; O'Brien, 105–6; Hawkins, "Schizophrenia," 471–2.
23. The earliest references to Friel's construction of Hugh are to be found in Deane, *Celtic Revivals*, 171; Heaney, "English and Irish," 1199; Kearney 1983, 42–3.
24. See also McGrath, 194–5; Murray, *Twentieth-century Irish drama*, 211–12; Pilkington, *Theatre*, 213–16; Pine, 204–5, 227–8; Richards, "Placed Identities," 56–7.
25. The readings that express the greatest sympathy with traditional nationalist ideology are offered by Corbett 20–2; Grene, *Irish Drama*, 37–9; Lee, "Linguistic Imperialism," 173–9; O'Brien, 103–8. The revisionist questioning of nationalism is presented by Boltwood, "Swapping Stories," 573–83; Cairns and Richards, *Writing Ireland*, 146–9; Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 614–23; Pilkington, *Theatre*, 212–21; Richards, "Placed Identities," 56–61.
26. Grene and Pilkington have additionally argued that Hugh's banter relies upon English cognates to such an extent that he always-already testifies to the erasure of a Gaelic structure from his teaching; see Grene, *Politics*, 45–6 and Pilkington, *Theatre*, 213.
27. These stories are part of the Middle Irish *Tóráiocht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne*, a collection of stories recounting various episodes in the tragic couple's flight across Ireland and Scotland. For a synopsis of the Fenian canon see MacKillop, *Fionn*, 19–34, and of the tales related to Grania in particular see *Fionn*, 28–9.
28. See Robert Welch's *A History of Verse*.
29. Yolland is rarely discussed apart from the thematic significance of his pairing with other characters; indeed, Salaris alone considers the character in isolation to examine his aestheticization of language (Salaris, "Masks of Language," 102–3). Dantanus juxtaposes Yolland to Lancey (Dantanus, 197), while Grene and Cullingford separately discuss Yolland's friendship with Owen within the context of Shaw's inversion of national stereotypes in *John Bull's Other Island* (Cullingford,

- Ireland's Others*, 54–6; Grene, *Politics*, 41–4). However, by far the most critical attention has been devoted to his courtship scene with Maire, and especially their attempt to communicate through a supra-semantic discourse that overcomes the absence of a shared language; see Andrews, 171–3; Deane, “Name,” 109; Grene, *Irish Drama*, 42–3; Lee, “Linguistic Imperialism,” 176–7; Murray, “Palimpsest,” 91–3; Pine, 226–7; McGrath, 185–6; Roche, *Contemporary Irish Drama*, 253–4.
30. Sean Connolly's early review of the historiographical method informing *Making History* remains one of the most critical (Connolly, “Translating History,” 158–63). While McGrath provides the most rigorous comparison of the play to its model, Sean O’Faolain’s *The Great O’Neill* (McGrath, 211–24), Andrews’ analysis explores the play’s interest in “the relativity of truth” (Andrews, 203–6). Pine’s discussion of the play is thematically more wide ranging and concerned with recognizing resonances within Friel’s oeuvre (Pine, 228–46). *Dancing at Lughnasa* as a drama about individual memory and, at times, the collective unconscious has been widely treated; see Kramer, “Unexcused Absence,” 173–9; O’Toole, “Marking Time,” 202–14; Pine, 270–3; Rollins, “Memory, Ritual,” 81–6; Tompkins, “Breaching,” 502–13.
 31. Pine also discusses both Friel and McGlinchey as historians (Pine, 44–5).
 32. David Arnold notes that the survival of a pagan substrata to modern Christianity can be read as a manifestation of subaltern recalcitrance to urban hegemonic ideology (Arnold 32).
 33. In Andrews’ comparison of Friel’s version to Macklin’s original, he argues that Friel’s changes are undertaken to “[produce] a more dramatically piquant text that relies on ‘showing’ rather than ‘telling’” (Andrews, 238); though I will offer a reading broadly compatible with Andrews, it will be one more concerned with discerning the ideological implications of Friel’s changes (Andrews, 234–41). See also Pine, 253–4 and McVeagh, “*Comhar*,” 225–8.
 34. To avoid confusion the reader should note that the name of Macklin’s hero, Murrough O’Doherty, is modified to Murrough O’Doherty in Friel’s version; likewise, Macklin’s title *The True-Born Irishman*; or, *Irish Fine Lady* is altered by Friel to *The London Vertigo: The True Born Irishman or The Irish Fine Lady*.
 35. In an article largely devoted to Macklin’s life and career, John McVeagh also posits that Friel trims the cast and excises speeches to accomplish a political strategy; though the play becomes less overtly nationalistic, “like the oak under the bog . . . the Irish dislike of English linguistic and cultural imperialism remains present in the text” (McVeagh, “*Comhar*,” 227).

36. For a review of English political and military policies through the Thatcher premiership see Bardon, *Ulster*, 699–707, 730–45, 750–8, 778–82.
37. Luke Gibbons' "local" history of the organized persecution of labor activist and dance hall operator Jim Gralton by representatives of both the government and church of County Leitrim in the early 1930s provides an instructive historical corollary to Friel's depiction of rural Ireland in 1936 (Gibbons, *Transformations*, 95–106).
38. In his screenplay for the play's film version, Frank McGuinness augments Gerry's Welsh character through additional references by Gerry to his national temperament as well as his encouragement to his son to learn to play rugby (McGuinness, *Lughnasa*, 37, 94).
39. In a postcolonial reading that employs Julia Kristeva's theories of abjection to read such "multiple or positional notions of identity," Joanne Tompkins argues that Michael Evans allows for "no illusions of unity" and is readable only as a fragmented psyche (Tompkins, "Breaching," 502, 510).
40. In a passing comment Declan Kiberd also notes the adult Michael's embedding within a secondary past, but in this case he associates him with "the swinging 1960s," rather than de Valera's less optimistic era (Kiberd, *Irish Writer*, 277).
41. Friel's articles concerning his father uniformly portray him unflatteringly; "Old Memories" creates the most critical view of him soaking his feet in a basin while his children endure his "screams" (12 May 1962), "Afternoon of a Fawn Pup" narrates how he naively fell victim to two tinkers' scheme (7 July 1962), "Thief in the Coal House" portrays his embarrassing efforts to avoid the local sanitary inspector (27 October 1962), while "The Shameful Road to Glenties" shows his father at his most stubborn (2 February 1963).
42. My argument is indebted to the critique of neotraditionalism, post-modernism, and postcolonialism offered by Appiah in his essay "The Postcolonial and the Postmodern," and my reconceptualization of elements in his treatment of African culture to fit this Irish context reflects his hope "that some of what I have to say will work elsewhere" (Appiah, *Father's House*, 147).
43. In addition, the Abbey launched a tour of *Dancing at Lughnasa* beginning in October 1992, shortly after the closing of its third revival in September 1992; details courtesy the Abbey Theatre's archive office.
44. See Andrews, 249–62; Berth, "Island of Otherness," 129–42, 155–8; Cave, "Questing," 119–24; Corbett, 63–6, 95–102; Jent, "Immaterial Contingencies," 25–40; Krause, "Failed Words," 363–8; Lanters,

- "Violence and Sacrifice," 170–6; Lojek, "Beyond Loch Derg," 45–55; Mesterházi, "Practitioner's View," 143–54; Pine, 279–87.
45. The ontology and function of memory is the topic of articles by Kramer, "Unexcused Absence," 171–80; McGrath, 243–5; O'Toole, "Marking Time," 207–11; Pine, 272–4. For discussions of dance as the play's operative theme, see Andrews, 223–8; Corbett, 67–9; Fusco, "Dancer," 110–17; Krause, "Failed Words," 369–71; Llewellyn-Jones, *Contemporary Irish Drama*, 35–6; McMullan, "In touch," 93–8; Peacock and Devine, "Some Otherness," 117–20; Pine, 275–6.
46. I have adapted a quotation in which Ahmad discusses T.S. Eliot's *Waste Land*.
47. Premiered in 1993, the play transpires in "the present" with all the characters "in their late thirties/early forties"; assuming Terry to be between the ages of thirty-seven and forty-three in 1993, he traveled to the island with his father between 1957 and 1963.
48. In his anthropological study of Irish Catholicism, Lawrence Taylor describes Loch Derg as Ireland's oldest and "quintessential penitential pilgrimage" (Taylor, *Occasions of Faith*, 190). For a description of the rite, see 190–6.
49. See, for example, Denis Devlin's *Lough Derg and Other Poems* (1946) and Patrick Kavanagh's poem "Lough Derg" (1971).

Plays 1994–2005: Retreat from Ireland and *The Home Place*

1. A review of the contents of the two journals that devoted special issues in 1999 to commemorate Friel's seventieth birthday illustrates the odd absence of *Molly Sweeney* from the critic assessment of his career. For both the *Irish University Review*, Special Issue (29.1) and the *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* (5.1), there is a total of three articles on *Dancing at Lughnasa*, three on *Give Me Your Answer, Do!*, two on *Crystal and Fox*, two on *Faith Healer*, two on *Translations*, two on *Wonderful Tennessee*, one on *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*, one on *The Gentle Island*, one on *The Freedom of the City*, and one on *Uncle Vanya*. Although *Molly Sweeney* is mentioned in three articles, significantly it is the only original play from the 1990s not the primary subject of an article.
2. Christopher Murray's article "Brian Friel's *Molly Sweeney* and its Sources" contains a skillful discussion of Friel's own concern that "the new play – form, theme, characters – is so like *Faith Healer*" (Murray, "Case History," 94).
3. See also Grene's article "Friel and Transparency," 142–3.

4. Murray and Corbett also discuss Molly as the victim of a rivalry between Frank and Rice; Murray analyzes the complex psychologies that define their competition (Murray, "Case History," 86–9), while Corbett outlines a briefer argument that situates Molly at the center of a competition for authority between the two men (Corbett, 126–7). See also Pine, 302–3.
5. Quoted in Cairns and Richards, *Writing Ireland*, 149.
6. *Uncle Vanya* 1998, *Three Plays After* ("The Yalta Game" [2001], "The Bear" [2002], and "Afterplay" [2002]), and *Performances* (2003).
7. *Molly Sweeney* and *Give Me Your Answer, Do!* incorporate autobiographical elements into their structures beyond Friel's normal practice. While I do not wish to suggest that his previous plays lacked autobiographical content, a comparison of the author's published "Sporadic Diaries" (for *Aristocrats*, *Translations*, *Molly Sweeney*, and *Give Me Your Answer, Do!* in *Essays, Diaries and Interviews*) fails to reveal such overtly autobiographical correspondences in the earlier plays' content. In this case, both of the latter play's writers, Tom Connolly and Garret Fitzmaurice, express ideas that Friel attributes to himself either in these diaries or such *Irish Press* columns as "The Play that Never Was" (6 October 1962). Not surprisingly, these two plays are the only ones that Friel directed himself; a fact that such reviewers as Fintan O'Toole and Emer O'Kelly used to suggest that Friel was too personally invested in this material.
8. Although Rice conforms to the following model, the reader should note that "Mr. Rice is older" than Frank and Molly (*MS*, 1).
9. As part of her broader discussion of the portrayal of various forms of "disability" in Friel's plays, Ruth Niel provides a valuable discussion of the psychological profiles for such female characters as Claire, Berna, Molly, and Bridget; see Niel, "Disability," 149–55.
10. Pine also observes in passing that Molly's father and mother have antecedents in these earlier plays (Pine, 301–2). For further comments on the relationship of *Molly Sweeney* to *Faith Healer*, see also McGrath, 250, and Corbett, 129.
11. Both Daisy and Claire were devoted pianists who failed to fulfill their dreams of becoming concert soloists. While Claire concentrated on the works of Chopin, Daisy's parents recall her devotion to Mendelssohn, though each woman abruptly abandoned her chosen composer. Finally, both Claire and Daisy vaguely plan to alleviate their poverty by giving piano lessons.
12. Various critics have attempted to resolve the multiple problems posed by the play's "antiphonal" last scene; see Bertha and Morse, "Singing,"

- 137–40; Germanou, "Scene of Writing," 476–7; Lanters, "Uncertainty Principle," 173–4; Pine, 187–8.
13. See also Caputi, *Voluptuous Yearnings*, 16–18, and Hardy, *Soft-core Pornography*, 47–50.
 14. See Bertha and Morse, "Singing," 139–40; Lanters, "Uncertainty Principle," 174; Pine, 315.
 15. During the late spring of 1999 *The Freedom of the City* and *Dancing at Lughnasa* were staged at The Abbey Theatre, *A Month in the Country* at The Gaiety Theatre, *Aristocrats* at The Gate Theatre, *Give Me Your Answer, Do!* at The Lyric Theatre, *Living Quarters* and *Making History* at The Peacock Theatre, and *Lovers* at Andrew's Lane Theatre.
 16. For example, see Andrews, 181–5; Dantanus, 182–4; Murray, *Twentieth-century Irish drama*, 213; Pine, 322–36; Richtarik, *Acting*, 112–15; Roche, *Contemporary Irish Drama*, 104–5; York, "Friel's Russia," 164–7.
 17. Andrews devotes his discussion of the play to the "notable affinity between the two writers" (Andrews, 182), making only passing comment on the "two new interludes" that Friel adds to Chekhov's original (Andrews, 189–90).
 18. *Chekhov: The Vaudevilles* provides a translation of the original "The Bear" (79–93).
 19. The two initial assessments of the play situate it within the critical mainstream of Friel's sustained examination of the rivalry between music and verbal language (Pine, "The Real Thing?" 7) and "the creative process . . . the relationship between art and life" (Corbett, "Master Performances," 38).
 20. The initial production of *Performances* at The Gate Theatre additionally accentuates the importance of the letters by projecting the image of Janáček's handwriting over the entire stage (musicians, walls, and even Janáček himself) during the final slow fade as the musicians perform his *Intimate Letters*; indeed, as the light fades, the handwriting increasingly dominates the play's final tableau.
 21. *The Grove Dictionary* emphasizes that Janáček considered Moravia, a Czech-speaking province, part of a larger Czech identity; see Sadie, *Grove*, 774.
 22. Within *Performances*, the graduate student, Anezka, recalls that Janáček died less than three months after finishing his *Intimate Letters* (P, 29); Friel suffered a debilitating stroke before *The Home Place* was staged in early 2005.
 23. In a brief, albeit insightful discussion, Corbett compares the characters' attempt to "'get the measure' of the Irish race" with the theme of

mapping and measuring in *Translations* (Corbett, "Master Performances," 39).

24. Bardon's study of Northern Ireland documents the survival of Catholic civil servants in majority Catholic areas well into the era that would correspond to the career of the elder O'Dwyer (Bardon, *Ulster*, 638–41).
25. He refers to The Lodge as his home on three occasions (*HP*, 18, 44, 55); similarly, he recognizes Kent as the home place three times (*HP*, 19, 47, 62). Although Margaret also uses "home" three times, significantly on two occasions she says "this is your home" to Christopher to bolster his spirits (*HP*, 58, 63), thus emphasizing how tenuous such an association is for him.
26. The position of this action at the extreme of living memory for Friel's generation is suggested by Charles McGlinchey's comment that a local priest appointed on the Inishowen Peninsula in 1878 served until 1933 (McGlinchey 75). Similarly, in 1878 McGlinchey would have been about the same age as "Virile Tommy Boyle from Lough Anna" (*HP*, 46), and McGlinchey lived until 1954.
27. Whereas the play's script merely presents David as having returned from the house to observe Christopher and Margaret "in their gauche embrace" (*HP*, 75), in the initial Gate Theatre production he returns with the clean shirt ordered by his father, holding it in front of him with both hands as if he awaits Christopher's further direction.

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