Irony and Irishness: Deconstructing the Home on the Contemporary Irish Stage

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Abstract

"Irony and Irishness: Deconstructing the Home on the Contemporary Irish Stage" investigates the reconstruction of the Irish home as an emblem of homeland and national identity in the twentieth-century. Considering the work of playwrights from both the Republic and Northern Ireland, I examine how the home, as image of national character and unity, is revised and deconstructed in the 1980s and 1990s to reflect an emergent global identity. I argue that "strangers in the house"—often marginal figures like tramps, women, even ghosts—are used to disrupt and remap the idyllic peasant cottage of Nationalist propaganda. A focus on relationships to the domestic allowed me to unearth and trace an important set of themes in Irish theatre: the geopathology of the home (and domestic set), the post-colonial nature of the tramp, and the reversal of the woman-as-nation topos. This study provides a model for reading irony in Irish theatrical staging, as well as a theoretical framework for examining the geo-politics of national identity.

Chapter One, "Interrupting the Idyll," situates the project by returning to the origins of the home as homeland trope. This section considers the development of the peasant cottage on stage as an anti-colonial symbol and J. M. Synge's and Sean O'Casey's refusal of the burgeoning national identity. Synge's and O'Casey's presentation of the home as claustrophobic and their celebration of placeless tramps establish a set of ironic conventions for contemporary work. Chapter Two, "Remapping Memory," investigates Brian Friel's return to the peasant cottage as a dominant set in the 1980s. During the Troubles, a period of violent sectarian conflict and shifting national borders, Friel gives the peasant

cottage a Brechtian treatment—reducing it to the remains of an "image of communion"—its peasant props are "broken" (383) and "forgotten" (383). Friel's travelling theatre company (Field Day), crossed peace walls and permeated isolated communities to draw together Catholic Nationalist and Protestant Unionist audiences. The assembly of these two groups in repurposed political buildings, such as the Derry Guildhall, proved that communication was possible across sectarian boundaries.

Chapter Three, "The Haunted Home," turns to Ireland's relationship to cultural memory and tourism in the 1990s. The ghosts of Ireland's national history turn up as interlopers in Conor McPherson's uninhabitable Western cottages and kitschy pubs. McPherson's ghost story monologues resolve this conflict by enacting wake traditions that release the past through performance. Chapter Four, "Claustrophobic Kitchens," centers on Martin McDonagh's deliberately inauthentic peasant cottage sets and the fragmentation of Irish identity, as stereotypes of Irishness are trafficked to Irish Diaspora and international audiences. Finally, "Exporting Kitsch," a concluding examination of recent solo performances by Colm Tóibín and Fiona Shaw, Marie Jones, and Marina Carr, considers how Irishness is embodied, especially how the Irish female body is limited to prescribed roles and spaces on stage.

Résumé

Cette thèse étudie la construction de la maison irlandaise sur la scène comme un emblème de la patrie et de l'identité nationale dans le xxe siècle. Considérant les travaux des dramaturges de la République et d'Irlande du Nord, j'examine comment la maison, comme l'image du caractère national et de l'unité, est révisée et déconstruite dans les années 1980 et 1990 pour refléter une identité globale émergente. L'étude examine comment les « inconnus » dans la maison (Yeats et Gregory, *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*, 7) servent à désorganiser et reconfigurer la maison de paysanne idyllique.

Le premier chapitre situe le projet en retournant aux origines de la maison paysanne comme une image nationale. Cette section considère le développement de la maison paysanne comme un symbole anticolonial et le refus de l'idyllique identité nationale par J .M. Synge et Sean O'Casey. Synge et O'Casey établissent les conventions ironiques du théâtre irlandais contemporain en présentant une maison claustrophobe et en célébrant les vagabonds. Chapitre deux, porte sur le retour de Friel à la maison paysanne dans les années 1980. Pendant les Troubles en Irlande du Nord, une période de conflits sectaires violents, Friel emploie la mise en scène d'une maison paysanne déconstruite — le reste de l'image de la communion, ses accessoires paysans cassés et oubliés (383). Ce traitement brechtien de la maison déconstruit ironiquement un stéréotype qui continue à séparer les communautés unionistes Protestants et nationalistes Catholiques dans le Nord. Dans le troisième chapitre, je tourne mon attention vers la relation de l'Irlande à la mémoire culturelle et le tourisme durant les années 1990. Les

fantômes de l'histoire nationale de l'Irlande se présentent comme des intrus dans les chalets et les pubs kitsch de McPherson. Le chapitre quatre fait le point sur la maison paysanne délibérément inauthentique de Martin McDonagh. La maison et ses habitants sont considérés comme stéréotypes de l’Irlandicité par des auditoires internationaux. Par conséquent de son identité nationale instable, Maureen souffre d'une dépression nerveuse.

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Mapping the Territory

This dissertation investigates a reconstruction of the Irish home as an emblem of homeland and national identity in the twentieth-century. Theatre has played a vital role in legitimating a national consciousness in Ireland since before the Celtic Revival. Thus, it is unsurprising that the search for a new national identity that would express Ireland's shifting political and social landscape in the 1980s and 1990s prompted a flood of Irish plays. The new wave of Irish theatre sought to destabilize rigid ethnic identities (Catholic and Protestant, Irish and British) and an entrenched narrative of colonial strife vis-à-vis England. Playwrights of the period struggled to reconcile a strong and lengthy theatrical tradition that was bound to a nationalist programme and a cultural mythology that stabilized identity with an increasingly uncertain, fragmented, global experience of Irishness. As Seamus Deane elucidates: "it is impossible to do without ideas of tradition, but it is necessary to disengage from the traditions of the ideas which the literary revival and the accompanying political revolution sponsored so successfully" (*Ireland's Field Day* 56).

The conflict between tradition and change, I argue, is registered through an ironic reconstruction of the traditional domestic space. The impossibly ideal, isolated, rural home has been a marker of "real Ireland" on stage and in the cultural imaginary since the establishment of the Irish National Theatre Society (later the Abbey Theatre) in 1897. Considering the work of playwrights from both the Republic and Northern Ireland, I examine how this image of national character

and unity is revised and deconstructed in the 1980s and 1990s to reflect an emergent heterogeneous, global identity. With attention to ironic staging techniques that render the pastoral unhomely, the study considers how "strangers in the house" (Yeats and Gregory, *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* 7) and tramps cross domestic thresholds and national borders to disrupt and remap the idyllic Naturalist peasant cottage.

Historically, the period between 1980 and 2000 warrants scholarly examination as a result of the increasing permeability and fluidity of the contours of Irish identity and national borders. The violent clashes of the Troubles, lessening role of the Catholic Church, and increasingly urban, international population fostered a more progressive society that supported women's rights movements, the legalization of divorce, and the decriminalization of homosexuality. Ireland's membership in global networks like the European Union promoted immigration and trade that altered the nation's social and cultural identity and contributed to an economic boom (the Celtic Tiger 1995-2008). With progress being made towards peace from the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985 to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, even the Constitutional definition of Irishness was modified. National identity, previously dictated by geographic and colonial boundaries, was rephrased to indicate that Irish identity was a "birthright" that may be claimed should citizens so choose (Trotter, *Modern Irish* 156). Legislatively, this allowed Northern Irish residents to identify as Irish or British, or both. Ideologically, it signalled a new flexibility in an identity that had traditionally been divided by firm ethnic and religious identifications. The redefinition also ruptured national borders to include "people of Irish ancestry

living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage" (*Constitution of Ireland*, Article 3). The revision was a significant gesture towards the formation of a less restrictive understanding of identity and national representation.

Theatrically, this period merits study as it saw the unprecedented success and global visibility of a number of Irish playwrights. The international box-office achievement of Brian Friel, Conor McPherson, Martin McDonagh, Marie Jones, and Marina Carr necessitates an inquiry into the popularity of the playwrights' ironic Irish homes. While Friel and McDonagh have received significant scholarly attention, what has not come to light is their position in relation to a cultural fixation on images of the home. In terms of literary studies, the home has received only a fraction of the attention paid to narratives of emigration and exile.[1] Through this project, I extend recent considerations of the peasant home as an emblem of nationality. Edward Hirsh's "The Imaginary Irish Peasant," Brenna Katz-Clarke's *The Emergence of the Peasant Play at the Abbey Theatre*, and Mary Trotter's *Ireland's National Stages: Political Performance and the Origins of the Irish Dramatic Movement* have illuminated the symbolic role of the cottage as a signifier of "real Ireland." These considerations of the home focus on the

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[1] Ellen McWilliams's *Women and Exile in Contemporary Irish Fiction* (2013), Loredana Salis's *Stage Migrants: Representations of the Migrant Other in Modern Irish Drama* (2010), Patrick Ward's *Exile, Emigration, and Irish Writing* (2002), and Paul Hyland's and Neil Sammells's *Irish Writing: Exile and Subversion* (1991), to name a few.

emblem's function in nation building in the early twentieth-century. My study pushes these investigations further to consider how contemporary deconstructions of the peasant home re-imagine nationalism through inversions of stranger in the home plots and renderings of The Abbey's anthropological Naturalism as kitsch. This project bridges a gap in studies on Irish theatrical history, which tend to focus either on the peasantry of the Revival or a contemporary global identity, by illuminating a sustained tradition of domestic disassemblages.

In tracing lines of literary inheritance, this investigation extends the parameters of Nicholas Grene's *The Politics of Irish Drama: Plays in Context from Boucicault to Friel* to incorporate Celtic Tiger playwrights. Like Grene's study, this work considers nationalism in Irish drama. However, through a close examination of the material conditions of performance and representations of the Irish home on stage, it evinces an alternate set of politics. For instance, while a study of the subject matter of Friel's *Translations* may reveal signs of nostalgia for Gaelic Ireland, my reading of the domestic set as a precarious space littered with forgotten peasant props and staged in a Brechtian fashion for the Derry premiere evinces an attempt to dispel nationalist tropes.

A diachronic study of Irish theatre's relationship to nationality and its interest in the home as homeland illuminates three recurring themes that overturned staid nationalist idylls: 1) the geopathology of the Irish home, 2) the breakdown of the traditional, nationalist metaphor of woman-as-nation, and 3) the tramp as post-colonial and/or transnational hero.

The Geopathology of the Home

Staging the Irish home is always a political gesture; for almost a century, the peasant cottage and its protection from un-Irish interlopers was the most potent symbol of anti-colonialism in Irish cultural performance. As Hirsch argues, the trope of the protected Irish home was so effective at unifying a divided population that, despite attacks by modernists like Joyce and Beckett, it remained a signifier of Irish identity until the late 1970s (1117). The Abbey's Naturalist portrayal of this home established an Irish theatrical convention that would dominate the twentieth-century stage.

From its inception, the Abbey Theatre struggled with its chosen theatrical mode of Naturalism. On the one hand, the theatre sought to guard against "misrepresentation" (Gregory 379) and saw itself as aligned with the Naturalist independent theatres springing up on the continent (like Antoine's Théâtre Libre in Paris and Nemirovich-Danchenko and Stanislavski's Moscow Art Theatre). In many ways, the Abbey's Naturalism was very much in accord with Zola's definition of Naturalist theatre.[2] The theatre claimed to show an accurate picture of life through pseudo-anthropological means. It sought to put human beings under the microscope in order to investigate how they were affected by race, milieu, and moment. Peasant plays were interested in exposing inherited Irishness

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[2] Zola adapts his theatre manifesto from "the new methods of science; thence, Naturalism revolutionized criticism and history, in submitting man and his works to a system of precise analysis, taking into account all circumstances, environment, and 'organic cases'" (Zola 429).

(both Irish national character and patrilineage), the ability of class environments and rural landscapes to shape characters, and the influence of the socio-political context. Like many Naturalist theatres of the period, the accuracy it sought demanded the retraining of actors and a new approach to staging. *The Abbey Method*, a brochure prepared for the players' first tour in 1906, suggests that:

> The Folk play needs a special kind of acting and the company selected to interpret the programme are all familiar with the ways of the Irish peasantry, and in their acting take care to keep close to the actual movements and gestures of the people. Their costumes and their properties are not the haphazard collection from the theatre store, but thoroughly appropriate and accurate, while the scenes in which they play are the actual replicas of some carefully chosen original; forasmuch as the plays are portions of Irish life, so are they put upon the stage with a care and accuracy of detail that has hardly been attempted before. (1)

While the Abbey's instruction to its actors and audience members centers on a platform of hitherto unattempted "accuracy," on the other hand, the theatre portrayed the nation as "the home of an ancient idealism" (Gregory 378), indicating a Romantic nationalist position. In order to uncover Ireland's national character playwrights were encouraged to return to Irish folklore and legend for inspiration and the peasant was resurrected as a quasi-mythical symbol of lost identity. As contemporary critic, Maurice Joy, suggested, "the tendency for unreality of the Anglo-Irish Literary Movement" stood in sharp contrast to continental Naturalism (3). While the Abbey claimed a Naturalist framework, the

mirror it held up to nature and nation was remarkably flattering. The Abbey staged fantasies of the peasantry as "real" and "natural," and with an anthropological accuracy.

In "Nationalism: Irony and Commitment," an essay commissioned by the Field Day Theatre Company, Terry Eagleton reflects on the problem of simply imagining a utopian national past and future. For Eagleton, "to wish class or nation away, to seek to live sheer irreducible difference *now* in the manner of some contemporary post-structuralist theory, is to play straight into the hands of the oppressor" (23). Eagleton argues that as a result of the binary nature of colonial and national identities, a nation cannot proceed directly from a colonial context to estranging definitions. Rather, ironically, one has to acknowledge one's national identity (and caricatures of it) in order to control the terms by which it is represented or to put an end to it. In particular, Eagleton claims that such a mode of ironic national commitment "can unravel what Marx and Stephen Dedalus call the nightmare of history only with the poor, contaminated instruments which that history has handed it" (27). In essence, a nation can only reach a utopian state by self-consciously embodying and subverting its hegemonic identities.

Eagleton frequently uses the term utopia to describe national irony and commitment, and the double meaning of this term is significant in the Irish context. The Abbey's domestic sets evoke the first possible definition, "the good place," by staging "real Ireland" an impossible idyll. The Abbey's peasant cottage sets formed a fictive alternate landscape—an Ireland untouched by colonialism. Thus, they functioned through an oppositional politics that relied on a colonial binary to forge an identity. Synge and O'Casey on the other hand, are more

concerned with the second definition, “no place.” Their theatre produces a model for Irish irony by employing the familiar domestic sets and plots of English melodrama and Irish peasant plays (the “contaminated instruments” of history) and inverting their ideological connotations in order to demonstrate the limitations of such identities and the potential freedom to be found outside of the home.

As Paul de Man argues in “The Concept of Irony,” irony has historically been difficult to define (164). Perhaps, the simplest definition is: a “turning away, that deviation between literal and figural meaning” (165). De Man’s definition exposes the central tenet of recognizing irony—that readers or audiences must be able to see where and how the ironic “deviates” from the original. In Irish drama the deviation is often evident in the repetition of familiar sets and plots with notable differences. By producing domestic dramas, recreating homes on stage with exacting detail, and even claiming to have gleaned their plots from real events, Synge and O’Casey draw upon the Abbey’s conventions for Naturalist, nationalist plays. However, in performance their plays probe the discrepancy between reality and fantasy at the core of Naturalist presentations of the peasant cottage. Synge and O’Casey were especially successful at deflating the nationalist idyll by using Naturalism to reflect poverty, social inequality, marginality, and political insecurity. The realistic homes on stage are impoverished, in a process of decay, and lacking in material comforts or props. Their lowered ceilings and overhead lofts reduced the visual space and fostered a feeling compression. Thus, Synge’s and O’Casey’s homes turned domestic stability into stasis and comfort into claustrophobia. Their characters are trapped in realistically staged destitute spaces and can only fantasize about or metatheatrically stage a more desirable

home. Audiences of Synge's and O'Casey's plays, like their characters, experience the home as limiting. The audiences were remarkably familiar with the Abbey's original peasant pieces, and thus felt the "deviation" from convention more keenly, when they were confronted with the single visual space of the squalid kitchen for the entirety of the play. With no glimpse of the outside world, spectators experience the typically idyllic Irish home as oppressive. Rather than reflecting the "real Irish" peasant cottage, these homes take on a frightening fun-house quality that turns the cottage into a horrifying haunted house. Synge and O'Casey portray the traditional Irish home as constricted, while their heroic placeless tramps radically empty the space of its historical borders and limitations.

A deconstruction of the Abbey's idealism via ironically claustrophobic presentations of homes continues in contemporary Irish theatre. In Friel, the hedge-school home, staged in Brechtian fashion as the dusty remains of a domestic space, is under imminent attack by the British Army. In McPherson the local pub, the play's main set, is staged with the trappings of the peasantry to attract tourists, while the actual Irish homes in the play are presented as almost uninhabitable. They are so saturated with the residue of versions of Ireland's past hiding in crevices and between walls that the current inhabitants in the 1990s hardly have room to breathe. In McDonagh, the presumed authenticity of the peasant cottage becomes a haunted Disney-like set. The set is decorated with gift shop kitsch, painted with an obvious faux-patina, and filled haphazardly with what seem like random peasant props left over from other plays. The Irish home in McDonagh is campy and staged for tourists and international audiences viewing the play through a touristic lens. The overtly fake peasant set becomes

the site of a matricide committed with the ultimate peasant prop—the poker. The poverty, claustrophobia, and dizzying visual presentation of these domestic spaces do more than confront nationalist propaganda masquerading as Naturalism; further they beg audiences to consider their interest in the idyllic Irish home, signaling perhaps an unhealthy, or even perverse connection to the space.

The audience's unease generated by the "Naturalistic" sets is paralleled in the mental fragmentation experienced by characters left in Irish homes at the plays' ends. Synge's *In the Shadow of the Glen*, O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock*, Friel's *Translations*, and to some extent McPherson's *The Weir* all conclude with a small group of men drunkenly inhabiting the homes and being forced to reconcile themselves to domestic instability (literal and political). Dan Burke in *In the Shadow* and Jack Boyle in *Juno* are abandoned by their wives, who were largely responsible for supporting the family and caring for the domestic space, and left without companionship in dire socio-economic circumstances. As they drunkenly struggle to form sentences and find stability on their chairs, they escape into reveries of masculine ownership and heroic self-sacrifice, while their homes crumble and street warfare rages around them. Similarly, facing imminent exile, financial ruin, and perhaps even death at the behest of the British army at the end of *Translations*, Friel's Jimmy Jack Casey uses drink to imagine a complete union with a mythic realm: a fantastical returning home. While less politically perilous, McPherson's *The Weir* ends with Jack's inebriated reflection on a missed opportunity for domestic bliss, suggesting a long-suffered loneliness and grief. The men's position in the abandoned, threatened houses indicates an inability to dwell in the Irish home. The common escape into fantasies of ownership and

mythic communion through alcohol indicates the unproductive nature of simply imagining an idyllic home, while also dangerously exposing the characters to risk should warfare or military threat penetrate the home.

Female characters fare no better when left in the domestic space. *The Playboy of the Western World*, *The Plough and the Stars*, *Translations, The Weir*, and *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* all present women trapped in the home experiencing varying states of psychological torment. *The Playboy*'s Pegeen keens the departure of the tramp that offered her a life outside of the rigid confines of her home and arranged marriage. Pegeen's performance of a wild lamentation, usually reserved for funerals, indicates the severity of the loss. Nora in *The Plough* is left hysterical by the loss of her husband and child in the Easter Rising. The play closes with her rambling about the tenement, screaming and rending hair and clothes, and imagining an alternate future where both survived. In *Translations*, Maire joins the inebriated men in the final moments of the play and mourns the loss of her lover, Yolland, presumably killed in anti-colonial retaliation. Valerie in *The Weir* has a "breakdown" following the death of her daughter and escapes her marriage and Dublin home to recuperate in the countryside, eventually finding a way to commemorate and release the memory of her daughter. Finally, the stifling atmosphere of the home and Maureen's unhealthy attachment to it seem to drive her sociopathic relationships and her eventual act of matricide. In addition to the haunting visual presentation of the home, the characters' interactions with the space demonstrate an "infection" of the Irish kitchen and kitchen sink drama (O'Toole xii). The space itself is contaminated with unhealthy and detrimental energy. The effect of the home and

its claustrophobic environment is almost always mental collapse, whether temporary delusion through drink, bouts of depression, or insanity.

Woman-as-Nation

Even this brief articulation of the effects of the Irish home on individuals indicates a gendered response to the space, not simply because of the relation between women and the domestic, but also as a result of how Irish nationalism is configured along gendered lines. A very significant portion of this dissertation explores the impact of nationalist female figures, like the virginal maiden, Mother Ireland, or the Marian martyr, that limited women's roles in society. The central aim of early Irish theatre was to "kill the stage Irishman" and much of the propaganda circulating on stage and in print during the period focuses on an inversion of English colonial constructions of the Irish (Clarke 79). Primarily, England represented its relationship to Ireland through a melodramatic love triangle, where Ireland is presented as feminine. Trotter argues that the Stage-Irishman was portrayed as child-like and in need of England's "paternal force" (*Ireland's National Theaters* 43) to civilize and protect him. The Stage-Irishman's counterpart, the innocent Colleen represented the virgin territory; she was frequently a helpless orphan who required the Englishman to protect her from Irish rebels. The Irish woman then was always representative of land—possessing her was symbolic of possessing the territory. The illustration from *Punch* on the following page illuminates these colonial tensions and gender binaries.

The image, notably titled "Two Forces," displays a Stage-Irishman on the left as uncivilized, armed only with a rock indicating a lack of technology. His political ideology is reduced to the "anarchy" scrawled on his hat. He is not only

emasculated, but inhuman or simian. On the right, a hyper-masculine Britannia is armed, authoritative, and treading on the Land League banner while protecting Hibernia (Richmond 22). Britannia's almost Roman garb indicates an Imperial status and a connection to an ancient civilization, while the Irishman's simian characteristics suggest that the Irish are still in a process of evolution. Britannia is also presented as a virago—a virile woman—she is noticeably larger and more masculine than the child-sized, unshod, unkempt Hibernia. As Trotter argues, Britannia's masculine nature is meant to show that even English women are more masculine than Irish men (*Ireland's National Theaters* 43).

Fig. 1. John Tenniel "Two Forces."

When the political terms of these colonial patterns were reversed in Ireland's nationalist propaganda the focus was placed on forging the image of a masculine, rational, patriarchal nation. Most of the energies of the nationalist movement went into creating an anti-Stage-Irishman who was an overtly manly, proper landowner able to control his wife and, often involved in an armed struggle

to control his land.[3] He is frequently linked to a long line of mythic heroes and warriors, most notably Cuchulain. While this did much to alter images of masculine identity, the gender roles ascribed to women remained almost the same in Irish and English cultural discourse. Women were still equated with landscape, or commodifiable objects, that could be used to solidify claims to the land and maintain lines of patrilineal descent. As symbols of the nation, women were relegated to the domestic space (especially as the Irish home represented a secure homeland). As Joy Richmond notes, the *Irish Homestead*, a widely circulated journal in the early twentieth-century, claimed that the Irish woman's "'domestic role in the home' was her contribution to shaping the 'character of Irish national identity'" (Richmond 24).

The connection between woman, home, and land reached its apex in the woman-as-nation topos epitomized in William Butler Yeats's and Lady Augusta Gregory's *Cathleen Ni Houlihan.* Simply put, the play conflates the body of Cathleen with the island—she is depicted as an old woman begging young men to rid her home and fields (her four fields are symbolic of Ireland's four traditional counties) of "strangers" who are unambiguously English colonizers. If young men risk their lives, she will be saved, and in some versions restored to her former youth and beauty. The gender binaries are clear: the masculine hero defends the

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[3] Gregory and Yeats's *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* (1902), Douglas Hyde's *Casadh an tSúgáin (The Twisting of the Rope*) (1902), Edward Martyn's *The Heather Field* (1899), Maud Gonne's *Dawn* (1908), and Padraic Colum's *The Land* (1903) and *Broken Soil* (1903) are representative of this type of drama.

passive, domestic Cathleen. The Irish inversion of colonial stereotype then simply wrests the weak Hibernia out of Britain's grip and settles her under the Irishman's arm. *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* shaped the terms for the development of female characters on stage, and since the image of the suffering woman as nation was readily seized upon by nationalists for posters and magazines, it limited the terms for female expression in the social sphere.

The limitations placed on women's agency were so strong that Cliona Murphy in *The Women's Suffrage Movement and Irish Society in the Early Twentieth Century* argues that "the suffragists were viewed by their contemporaries and the next generation as unnationalistic, if not traitors, for putting another issue before the sacred cause of nationalism" (1). The question of feminism or women's enfranchisement then was subsumed into the nationalist movement. Catholic gender ideology, of course, further complicated rigid gender roles. In addition to Mother Ireland tropes, like *Cathleen*, Marian iconography was frequently used to support the idyll of the moral, Catholic family at the heart of the movement. The role of the Virgin Mary as an ideal of sacrificial motherhood became increasingly important after the Easter Rebellion, perhaps as a result of Padraic Pearse's poetry, which casts his mother as Mary losing her son for a noble cause. The combination of religious restraint and nationalist tensions rendered women voiceless, passive, self-sacrificing mothers who were relegated to the home.

Perhaps as a result of the severe constraints placed on women's social role, women's authorial freedom too has traditionally been limited. Even more recent surveys of Irish female playwrights demonstrate a problem of finding enough

female Irish playwrights to round out a text. Melissa Sihra's 2007 volume *Women in Irish Drama: A Century of Authorship and Representatio*n, for instance, opts to include examinations of female figures in the work of Samuel Beckett, Stewart Parker, and Frank McGuinness. To be candid, the selected playwrights in this dissertation are primarily male, although Carr and Jones are included in the introduction and conclusion, and the directorial roles of Lady Gregory and Garry Hynes are examined as crucial to the aesthetic of the Abbey and the dramaturgy of McDonagh, respectively. This selection of playwrights seeks to illuminate a thread of feminism in plays typically read as masculine. Synge's and O'Casey's work, as it focuses a great deal on the problems of suitors and interlopers, the failures of home ownership, and the performative nature of the Irish warrior-hero, is often interpreted as exposing a crisis of masculinity. This reading, of course, is valid, but overlooks the acute suffering of the female figures trapped in fruitless marriages, circumscribed roles, and claustrophobic homes. The female characters in Synge and O'Casey respond to their circumstances not as the waifish, passive Cathleen Ni Houlihan, but rather in a strong, active, outspoken manner, usually choosing to leave behind that nationalist idyll.

The reinterpretation of the traditional woman-as-nation trope is also evident in Friel's *Translations*. While readings of the play typically focus on the charismatic male leads—Hugh, Owen, Manus—the struggles of Maire and Sarah in the hedge-school are often overlooked. Maire's role in the typical melodrama love triangle, whereby she pursues the Englishman and longs to leave Ireland for America, for instance, indicates her refusal to acquiesce to the social expectations continually forced onto her. McPherson's work, with its bar-room settings is read

as overtly masculine; however, a closer engagement with *The Weir* demonstrates that all of the men's tales of haunted homes centre on non-traditional, strong female figures, and Valerie's monologue is the impetus for the development of a new relationship to Irish history and commemoration. By making Valerie's voice crucial to the wake-like release of the play, McPherson revises literary genres too, as the monologue is always a male-dominated form in Irish theatre. McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* may center on the question of matrilineage, but much of the critical response to the play, and to McDonagh's work more generally, focuses on questions of violence, murder, and horror: masculine themes. By investigating the relationship between Mag and Maureen, I argue that Maureen is under extreme pressure to conform to traditional gender norms that result in a fragmented or incomplete personality—Maureen is simply a collection of performative roles.

An inquiry into the female figures in these plays indicates a continued convention of reprising traditional roles—maiden, mother, martyr—so that they may speak back to the nationalist trope of woman-as-nation and leave the claustrophobic Irish home. This analysis is significant as this type of feminist reprisal of typically passive nationalist female roles is ongoing, and perhaps even intensifying, in Irish drama. Even very recent work by Marina Carr and Colm Tóbín explores the leitmotif of women confined to extreme stasis within the home. In Carr's *Woman and Scarecrow* (2006) the role of the sacrificial mother and passive wife in the home is presented as deadly. The female lead, simply named Woman, is on her deathbed. The female character is fragmented into two parts on stage: her physical body, Woman, is too weak to move and lies immobile

reflecting on her life and her duties as wife and mother, while her deeper psychological self, Scarecrow, protects Woman from death. This division of the female character into two parts indicates that she must externalize and marginalize her more independent spirit in order to continue playing the role of the woman in the house. In fact, the play, as well as Scarecrow, seems to posit that Woman's unhappy family life lead to her death. Him, Woman's lover, reminds her of her duties and necessary obedience even in her final moments:

> HIM. You have a duty to leave me softly as I have a duty to watch you go without rancour.
>
> WOMAN. I am drowning in duty. (27)

Duty is deadly in this instance, and the reference to drowning is paired with Woman's shallow breathing and closing throat (29) to illustrate the effect of the claustrophobic home: women's limited roles become physiological.

Further, that the children, extended family, and wandering husband have returned to the home to watch the woman die indicates an odd type of gaze. Woman claims "They're all out there lining up for a gawk…" (32), which suggests a perverse ogling of female sacrifice. Him attends to Woman at the end in order to beg forgiveness, so that he may continue his life without guilt, and thus treats the death almost as a moment of idolatry. Woman is an object for Him, and she too gazes upon herself and talks of herself as a representation of a martyr. Early in the play she asks Scarecrow for a mirror "to watch [her]self die" (19) and she reflects on viewing Caravaggio's *The Death of the Virgin*, comparing the experience to her own death (46). Significantly, Scarecrow refuses Woman's attempts to romanticize her unhealthy relationship with Him and her self-sacrifice

as a daughter and mother by illuminating the falsely idyllic nature of her memories and even suggesting that the children are an "excuse" for passivity (30).

Woman's imminent death is represented visually by The Thing in the Wardrobe. Cathy Leeney observes that the glimpse we catch of The Thing: a wing and clawed foot, aligns it with "The Morrigán (or Morrigu)…a supernatural female figure of Irish myth and legend who had the ability to change shape, often appearing in the form of a crow, to make mischief and undermine male warriors on the field of battle" (713). Leeney further suggests that the legendary figure was revived in Yeats's *The Death of Cuchulain*, which drew a parallel between Cuchulain and the men who died in the Easter Rebellion, to show "an image of women as predators on the body of the nascent state" (713-4). Leeney's reading of this Morrigán figure in the play is that Carr reframes the crow as positive. However, the crow is present to kill and prey upon Woman. Given that the Morrigán was used to shame women who failed to support the nationalist movement by remaining in the home, The Thing in the Wardrobe may symbolize the fear of failing in one's feminine duties that prey on Woman's mind. Scarecrow's purpose in the play, above all, is to ward off the death-figure in the closet. Even the character's name suggests Scarecrow is meant to scare the crow away. The fact that Scarecrow guards Woman from the crow, and literally does battle with it, displays a power to resist succumbing to the pressure to conform to limited gender roles: saint or harpy. In contrast to Woman, who is weak, dying, and passive, Scarecrow fights off death, denoting the importance of independence and freedom from the home. Carr illuminates that women confined to the Irish home by nationalist gender roles are forced into a dangerously static condition

and a fragmented mental state that proves deadly: it is only Scarecrow's resistance to gender norms that keeps Woman alive.

Similarly, Tóibín's one-woman-show, *The Testament of Mary* (2013), presents a female figure rendered static and trapped in a single domestic space, as she struggles to bring a voice to a typically silent symbol of the tortured mother. The playbill displays the pained, and perhaps enforced, nature of Mary's silence, depicting actress Fiona Shaw with the crown of thorns across her mouth. Tóibín's purpose is very much to grant a voice and audience to the largely symbolic woman; he writes in his "Author's Note" that he wanted to "give a voice to Mary, the mother of Jesus, the silent woman at the foot of the cross" (3). The play demonstrates the claustrophobia of Mary's role by reducing the space on stage. As a precursor to the Broadway show, Fiona Shaw rests in a glass cube on-stage as audience members are invited to approach, gaze upon, and even photograph her. Constraint and the gaze are again at issue. Reviews note that despite being spatially constrained, Shaw is rather frenetic, she appears to be constantly attempting to settle the few objects on stage, which indicates her discomfort in the domestic space. The solo performance gives Mary the opportunity to correct interpretations of her as a symbol of ideal womanhood (virginal, motherly, and self-sacrificing). Mary's monologue shifts the focus of Marian iconography back to the actual woman. Usually, veneration of the Virgin focuses predominantly on Jesus: Mary becomes a symbol of a shared loss of a male hero. As the narrative of Mary mourning her son was a primary vehicle for counseling mothers on mourning children after the Easter Rebellion, this reinterpretation of Mary alters the framework for understanding a mother's loss. Primarily, that the loss need not

be suffered in silence and that mothers may experience a range of emotion; Shaw's performance illuminates that moments of rage and disbelief are also valid responses to grief. This very contemporary work by Carr and Tóibín thus demonstrates that the recasting of traditional nationalist stereotypes is still very much at the forefront of contemporary Irish theatre, and suggests avenues for further developing the potentially feminist sensibilities I have uncovered in playwrights, such as O'Casey, McPherson, and McDonagh.

The Post-Colonial Tramp

Perhaps as a corollary to the dystopic nature of the Irish home, in the works under review the tramp represents the possibility of a post-colonial and often transnational or global Irish identity. Despite the predominance of plays about idyllic peasants evicting tramps from 1900-1970, my reinvestigation of Synge and O'Casey shows the formation of an alternate role for the tramp. Part of Synge's and O'Casey's ironic "turn away" from convention is the recasting of tramps from unwanted intruders to desirable heroes whose itinerancy freed them from the stifling Irish home and its rigid colonial and anti-colonial definitions of Irishness. In the drama of Synge and O'Casey, the tramp is a perambulatory figure that contests and dismantles the architecture of the stable, claustrophobic home and homeland by wandering. If, as de Certeau claims, "a first definition of walking thus seems to be a space of uttering" (106), Synge's and O'Casey's tramps voice a new relationship to the national territory. In "Walking in the City," de Certeau argues that

> the walker transforms every spatial signifier into something else. And while, on the one hand, he makes only a few of

> the possibilities set out by the established order effective (he goes only here – not there), on the other hand, he increases the number of possibilities (e.g. by making up shortcuts or detours) and the number of interdictions (e.g. by avoiding routes regarded as licit or obligatory). …Thus he creates *discontinuity*, either by choosing among the signifiers of the spatial language or by altering them through the use he makes of them. (107)

In Synge's socio-political context, the simple act of walking away from the home indicates an opposition to nationalist doctrine, but the manner in which Synge's tramps walk the Irish landscape demonstrates a stronger, more individual connection to the national territory. Synge's tramps disregard "licit or obligatory" routes, and thereby gesture towards a reconfiguration of colonial or national borders. The "tramp" and the shepherds in *In the Shadow of the Glen* trace alternate geographies and economies by following rural paths and shortcuts to country fairs where they trade livestock; and Christy in *The Playboy of the Western World,* by "walking the world" (14), opens the possibility of radical freedom from territorial boundaries. The tramps, as itinerant figures, with a more global and individual perspective on Irishness stand in sharp contrast to the collectivist image of the contained, stable home. The celebration of the tramp in Synge's plays overtly suggests a fracturing of the nationalist idyll.

O'Casey's theatre of the 1920s deals more explicitly with Ireland's precarious political independence and his portrayal of the tramp reflects this unease. While in O'Casey's work walking takes on the role of performing an

identity through parades and marches, many of his characters share a sense of placelessness with Synge's early itinerants and they use their movements to contest the spaces and tropes of nationalism. In *The Plough and the Stars*, characters re-enact mock marches and battles in ornate costumes and with comically large props, and in doing so evince the performative nature of national identity. Joxer in *Juno and the Paycock* reconfigures the domestic space by entering and exiting the Boyles' home from unusual spaces, as though he confronts the very architecture of the protected Irish home. Certainly, the departure of both plays' protagonists suggests liberation from the confines of the home and homeland through wandering.

The early potential for global identity represented by Synge's and O'Casey's tramps is traceable in most contemporary instantiations of the figure. For instance, in Friel's *Translations*, the colonial dimension of the intruder highlighted in much Revival drama is taken to a logical conclusion, as the English intruders in Baile Beag map the Irish landscape in order to claim ownership of the colony. Friel's tramps reflect the effects of colonialism in Northern Ireland by evincing the unhomeliness of the territory—they are exiles at home. The tramps, however, also have the skills to forge new identities; they are polyglots with a sense of detachment from the national territory that allows for an alternate perspective. Their trampish detachment allows them to exercise a post-colonial irony.

In the 1990s, as evinced in McPherson and McDonagh, the figure of the tramp becomes postmodern, as well as post-colonial. In a broad sense, these plays reflect a burgeoning tourist industry, transnational labour, and the relationship

between Ireland and its Diaspora. The tramps of the 1990s typically probe the question of cultural memory and how one is sutured to a historical or mythical home, rather than a literal space. In McPherson's *The Weir* the Irish home is filled with tourist tramps on walking tours of the West and historical interlopers in the form of ghosts. The characters' curiosity about Ireland's past, their attempts to engage with a reservoir of authentic Irishness through the landscape and, in some cases their desire to maintain a connection to ghosts, indicates the strength and potential dangers of Irish cultural memory. In McDonagh, the tramps—visiting Americans and transnational labourers—are healthy intrusions into claustrophobic homes. In *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, it is Maureen's inability to accompany the trampish Pato to America that brings about the tragedy of the play.

My dissertation is largely proceeds by single author chapters. Chapter One, "Interrupting the Idyll," explores the early domestic disruptions of Synge and O'Casey as antecedents to contemporary themes of claustrophobia and fragmentation. From 1910 to 1930, the playwrights used ironic inversions of the "stranger in the home" motif to articulate that the image of the ideal peasant farmer and his isolated home was at least as limiting as the English stage-Irishman. Synge's and O'Casey's tramps and transient, deconstructed homes, and unconventional women caused riots and earned the playwrights the label, "Un-Irish" when they premiered, but have since been embraced as works that speak to current issues of national representation. Synge's work has recently enjoyed enormous international success through the DruidSynge project (2005). Garry Hynes's contemporary re-interpretation of *The Playboy of the Western World* especially, evinced the inherent performativity of Irish hero roles. O'Casey's

plays were among the first revived at the beginning of the Troubles as they deal with political events in a manner that elucidates a need for a broader conception of national identity—one not simply based on ethnicity and political conflict.

Synge's dramaturgy inverts the image of the land-owning peasant, and presents tramps as heroes in *In the Shadow of the Glen* (1903) and *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907). Synge's tramps are free to cross colonial fault lines and permeate isolated Irish communities, freeing women trapped in claustrophobic homes and disrupting relationships dictated by birth, heritage, and property agreements. The tramps, because they are "un-Irish" and lack connections to property and heritage, define their own "nativeness" by playing with stereotypes of Irishness—the traveller, the poet, the athlete, the storyteller. O'Casey's tenement dwellers find themselves in rented flats that are dismantled in the plays. Family members are obsessed with maintaining the image of a stable home amidst the street violence of the Easter Rebellion in *The Plough and the Stars* (1926) and refrains like "the counthry'll have to steady itself" (72) echo through *Juno and the Paycock* (1924) as the home is destroyed during the Irish Civil War (1922-23). In O'Casey, efforts to keep the home together are merely performative and fail to prevent the violent reality of political conflict. Through his literal deconstructions of the home, O'Casey elucidates a gap between reality and national myth and articulates the dangers of creating a fixed, performed Irishness. This section expands recent scholarly reconsideration of Synge, who has largely been cast as an antagonist to progression and maker of parochial nationalism.

Chapter Two, "Remapping Memory," focuses on Friel and Stephen Rea's founding of the Field Day Theatre Company. In 1980, Friel issued an ideological manifesto that expressed the desire for a theatre to act as a fifth province—a neutral space where Irish cultural discourse could be re-imagined. The theatre's choice of Londonderry/Derry—a city marked by the colonial tensions even in name—as a space for creating a new province demonstrated a clear political and post-colonial praxis. The theatre invited scholars Seamus Deane, Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, and Edward Said to write an introductory pamphlet that would express "the new pluralism of a heterogeneous identity" (Szabo 12). Like Synge and O'Casey, Field Day called for a "self-irony" (Eagleton 27) that would unsettle the emblems of Irishness that had proved limiting and conflicting. The Field Day manifesto launched a second-wave in Irish theatre that led to the establishment of several new production companies including Charabanc (Belfast, 1983), Rough Magic (Dublin, 1984), Corcadorca (Cork, 1991), and Blue Raincoat (Sligo, 1991) and formalized a new aim for national theatricality.

Against the backdrop of Field Day's desire to alter engrained myths and histories, this chapter investigates the company's first play, Friel's *Translations* (1980). Creating a new space for Irishness, the play notably eschews the marker of the cottage, and is set in a "disused barn or hay-shed" (383) that is part hedge-school and part domestic dwelling, both headed by Hugh. This space, free of the connotations of the cottage, allows Friel to situate discussions of home and homeland in a neutral, public venue. Set in the fictional town Ballybeg (Baile Beag), the play restages a moment of colonial division—the English Ordnance Survey of 1824. Friel illuminates how colonial divisions affect subsequent

constructions of Irishness and images of the home. Through the translation of Gaelic place names into English, characters experience "an eviction of sorts" (420)—an erosion of linguistic signs that results in a poignant sense of displacement. The inability to dwell in the colonial landscape is epitomized when the cultural eviction becomes literal at the end of the play as the military purpose of the map is fully realized: "they'll begin evicting and leveling every house" (439). The disjunction between characters' talk of an ideal Gaelic Ireland stands in sharp contrast to the reality of their impoverished conditions and imminent evictions. Friel ironically problematizes the Revival image of the peasant with irrefutable property rights and a dwelling that gestured towards middle-class propriety. The political implications of the map come to bear more directly on Hugh's household as well. His son, Owen, employed by the British Army to aid in the translation of the map, brings an English soldier into the school-house. Picking up the trope of the stranger in the home, the soldier interrupts the relationship between Hugh's older son, Manus, and his intended, Maire, leading to Manus's departure from the home and community, the soldier's apparent abduction by locals, and the orders for evictions. In reassessing this historical moment, Friel inverts the narrative of the peasant farmer protecting his home and portrays the realities of domestic and cultural dispossession.

Chapter Three, "The Haunted Home," investigates a similar problem of disconnections between past representations of the home and present circumstance through a use of the haunted house tale in McPherson's *The Weir* (1997). The monologic style of the stories is significant, as McPherson argues that it was a direct response to the uncertainty of the period: "Irish drama went 'inside'

because our stories were fragile, because everything was changing" (qtd. in Trotter, *Modern Irish* 223). Countering earlier theatrical movements that projected a stable identity, McPherson suggests that the monologue is an internal, personal reconsideration of identity and how one is sutured to national narratives. This direct address style also broke with the tradition of Naturalist staging in Ireland, as McPherson puts it: "Why mess about? The character is *on stage*, perfectly aware that he is talking to a group of people" (qtd. in Trotter, *Modern Irish* 223). In breaking this frame, McPherson moves away from the stage as a "mirror up to the nation," towards a space where characters communicate personal responses to contemporary fragmentation directly to an audience. In addition, McPherson's monologue style draws on Irish storytelling and wake traditions. The performance of the play itself then enacts a communal, commemorative release of Irishness opening up the possibility of a more healthy relationship with Irish history.

The Weir, set in a pub in the 1990s, like Friel's hedge-school refrains from utilizing the cottage and employs a new, public space for discourse on representations of the home as a national referent. At the pub, locals attempt to give Valerie, a newcomer to the rural community, "the history of the place" (27). In their historical retellings, the patrons find themselves telling tales of haunted houses. The stranger in the home in McPherson is a not an "un-Irish" tramp or colonizer, but rather the ghostly, residual remnants of Ireland's cultural past. There are a number of haunted houses in *The Weir*, but the Nealon home becomes the focus and the symbol onto which several reconstructions of Irishness are layered. Characters interweave ghost stories of cultural, national, and local reconfigurations of identity—all of which haunt the Nealon home—and Valerie,

adds her personal haunting after the death of her daughter. McPherson, thus uses the haunted home as a site where personal and communal histories can be accepted or dismissed, combined and altered. Valerie's convalescence in this contested space, and her ability to choose which pieces of the cultural narratives to believe, demonstrates that the haunted house—so long as the narratives of cultural, national, and regional hauntings are openly discussed and considered—allows for the formation of a heterogeneous national and personal identity.

Progressing from haunted houses to horrifying homes, Chapter Four, "Claustrophobic Kitchens," investigates McDonagh's use of the cottage kitchen as a locus of oppression and violence in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (1996). McDonagh is alternately lauded as "the new Synge" and "the Tarantino of theatre," and it is perhaps the combination of these two monikers that best illuminates his representations of the Irish home. Like Synge, McDonagh utilizes the typical Naturalist staging of the cottage as a generic red-herring of the pastoral, while the power dynamics of the home suggest a claustrophobic environment. *The Beauty Queen* opens in a "living-room/kitchen of a rural cottage in the west of Ireland" and the set is furnished with the trappings of peasant theatre: "a long black range," "a box of turf," "a crucifix," and "a heavy black poker" (3). Significantly, McDonagh punctures the cottage with markers of globalization—a radio, a TV that continually plays international headlines and Australian soaps, a "framed picture of John and Robert Kennedy" (3), and "a touristy-looking embroidered tea-towel" (3). These markers make visible the competing representations of Irish identity—rural and innocent versus international. McDonagh employs a range of signifiers to create a deliberately

inauthentic set. As Garry Hynes, suggests: “It’s a complete creation, and in that sense it’s fascinating” (Leeney, “Garry Hynes in Conversation,” 204).

More than using irony to reframe the peasant home, McDonagh represents the home as menacing. In *The Beauty Queen,* the bitterly repressed Maureen is trapped in the home. At forty, she has spent almost her entire life in the cottage kitchen, gleaning life-experience only through images on television. The strained familial relationship (already rife with connotations of emotional abuse and physical torture) and Maureen’s sense of claustrophobia, reach a crescendo when her mother reveals that she destroyed Pato Dooley’s invitation for Maureen to join him in America. At the revelation that she has been denied the potential of life outside of the confined home, Maureen slays her mother with the poker. The slaying of a parent to escape the home has a precedent in Synge’s *The Playboy of the Western World*, but where Synge’s patricide was fictional, McDonagh’s is shockingly gruesome. The ideal home is reconfigured as gothic (as in McPherson) and the markers of the peasantry take on a quality of the uncanny exploited in horror genres. McDonagh’s focus on a generational conflict suggests that links to inherited, historical constructions of Irishness need to be rent—possibly violently—or characters are left, like Maureen, trapped in the home and repeating the past: “The loons you do get in this house! Only repeating!” (80).

In sum, “Irony and Irishness: Deconstructing the Home on the Contemporary Irish Stage” offers a new investigation of the Irish home on stage. Its primary concerns are how the home functions as an emblem of homeland, how it is staged “naturalistically”, and how socially marginalized figures like the tramp

and the lady of house find identities outside of its walls and the constraints of nationalist definitions of Ireland.

Interrupting the Idyll: J. M. Synge and Sean O'Casey at the Abbey

When J. M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* opened at the Abbey in January 1907 it sparked a scene of unparalleled chaos. Police intervention was required to subdue riots in the auditoria almost every night that it ran, and cries of "God Save Ireland," "Sinn Féin Amhain," and "kill the author" were unremitting throughout performances. Protestors gathered outside the Abbey for a week, arguing that the play was "an unmitigated, protracted libel against Irish peasant men and, worse still, upon Irish peasant girlhood" (Anonymous qtd. in Kilroy 10). Critical reviews in Dublin newspapers contended that it was "stilted, impossible, uninteresting, and un-Irish" (Anonymous qtd. in Kilroy 10). Audience members who were brought to court for causing a disturbance argued that the playwright and Abbey directors should be on trial for producing "an outrage on Irish nationality" (Levitas 128).

Almost two decades later, in 1926, Sean O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* instigated a similarly riotous response. According to *The London Times*, "the stage was rushed at the beginning of the third act, and two actresses were assaulted by the demonstrators, a free fight taking place on the stage" (Anonymous, *London Times* 1926). During the riot small explosives were thrown inside the theatre and Yeats proclaimed from the podium that the audience had "disgraced themselves again" (qtd. in Fitzpatrick-Dean 32), referring to the Playboy riots. Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington assembled a group of protestors, many of them widows of the 1916 Rebellion leaders (the play's contextual backdrop),

and argued that the State-subsidized theatre made a "mockery and a byword of a revolutionary movement on which the present structure [of the nation] claims to stand" (qtd. in Morash 170).

While explanations for the disruptions vary what was clear about the riots was that the playwrights, the works, and the Abbey theatre that hosted them were considered "un-Irish" and slanderous. In late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Ireland, a period that saw the development of a surging nationalism, the Irish Literary Revival (1890-1920), two appeals for Home Rule (1886, 1914), Parnell's death (1891), increasingly violent colonial tensions, the Easter Rebellion (1916), and the Irish Civil War (1922-3) the label "un-Irish" had remarkably deep social and political implications. The audiences' protests against the plays on the nation's behalf illustrate the integral role theatre played in turn-of-the-century politics and the fashioning of a collective nationalist audience. The declaration of Synge's and O'Casey's plays about peasant-tramps and tenement houses as "un-Irish" in reviews and first-hand accounts suggests that images of the home and the tramp on the Irish stage were imbued with a political meaning that the playwrights question, counter, and subtly undermine.

The riotous responses are inextricably linked to the political movements of the period that sought to locate something particularly Irish in the culture and project it to the nation and to the world. The nationalist movement fostered during Parnell's time in office and his unwavering resolve to obtain Home Rule put Ireland on an international stage and in a position to articulate a new conception of the nation and its colonial relationship with England. As a result of the political unease between the countries and England's uncharacteristically long colonization

of Ireland, the development of a new national identity was based primarily on the recovery of a distinctive Irishness that would both differentiate Irish from English culture and oppose colonial stereotypes (Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland* 96-7). In effect, this meant finding an Irish identity that would unite the nation's inhabitants and off-set Englishness in habit, custom, language, and even commercial trade, as well as counter English caricatures of the Irish as hot-headed, pugnacious, drunken peasants.

The recuperation of authentic Irishness involved pseudo-anthropological investigations into Ireland's past and the collecting and recording of requisites for a shared cultural heritage (Wilmer, *Writing and Re-Writing* ix-xi). Cultural and political programmes led a concerted effort to uncover a pure, fixed, ideal Irishness based on "native" traditions, Celtic mythology, and a roster of national heroes and tales. While the movement sought accurate representation of the country and its inhabitants, the unifying national image it solicited was non-existent; the Revival relied more on invention than on the unearthing of historical evidence. Ernest Gellner argues, with regards to European Enlightenment, that "nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it *invents* nations where they do not exist" (168). The social and political organizations behind this gestative national structure are charged with the task of stabilizing and projecting a coherent depiction of the country which might unify the often divided and diverse demographic. The success of this invention depends almost entirely on the body politics' ability to recognize, identify with, and assert belonging to a nation (Hutchinson, *Dynamics* 7-8). Benedict Anderson illumines that "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-

members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6). In Ireland, theatre played a decisive role in nation building as a vehicle for the advancement of this "image of communion."

Since its establishment in 1897, the Irish National Theatre (later the Abbey Theatre) has been a central forum for cultural-political movements in Ireland. The theatre considered itself a "homing place" after the death of Parnell "for with that death, the loss of that dominant personality, and in the quarrel that followed, came the disbanding of an army, the unloosing of forces, the setting free of the imagination of Ireland" (Gregory, *Kiltartan* 8). As the "homing place" for Parnellite nationalist energy (the ardent desire for Home Rule and the re-definition of Real Irishness) the Abbey played a pivotal role in the recuperation of Irish identity and had a substantial stake in political discourse. Loren Kruger argues in *The National Stage: Theatre and Cultural Legitimation in England, France, and America* that theatre became a space of symbolic national coherence throughout Europe in the twentieth-century as the popularity of mass politics rose. She contends that "the idea of representing the nation in the theatre, of summoning a representative audience that will in turn recognize itself as a nation on stage, offers a compelling if ambiguous image of national unity" (3). While Kruger's study does not extend to Ireland, the Irish auditoria is perhaps an extreme example of the cultural unity to be fostered by staging the nation, especially given its colonial position and issues of national representation, as one might indicate one's allegiance by simply frequenting and supporting the theatre. The theatre space itself became a site and emblem of national unity—as Robert Owenson put it: "theatres should be erected 'like Martello towers, at regular

intervals over the land for the protection and instruction of the national mind'" (qtd. in Burke, *Riotous Performances* 285; qtd. in Pilkington, *Theatre & Ireland* 30*)*.

Politicians quickly realized the import of a space where a "mob becomes a people" (Yeats, "The Irish Literary Theatre" 141). Following the success of the 1902 Samhain season, Sinn Féin leader, Arthur Griffith, wrote an impassioned editorial on the importance of drama at the Abbey for the *United Irishman*, in which he argued that Irishmen

> look to the Irish National Theatre primarily as a means of regenerating the country. The theatre is a powerful agent in the building up of a nation. When it is in foreign hands and hostile hands, it is a deadly danger to the country. When it is controlled by native and friendly hands it is a bulwark and a protection. We have been cursed in Ireland with a horde of dishonest politicians, a stupid or a venal Press, and a degraded and anti-National Theatre. We are getting rid of all of these (*United Irishman* 1902; qtd. in Mathews, *Revival* 120).

For Griffith and his nationalist followers theatre played a consummate role in nation-building because it offered the audience the opportunity to control the images by which their nation was represented on stage and in the cultural imaginary through popular demand and by booing, hissing, and rioting against plays they felt misrepresented the country. Griffith's argument for theatre as a political vehicle turns on the use of drama by "foreign hands and hostile hands"—namely the English—to represent the Irish as infantile, buffoonish, and incapable of Home Rule. According to Griffith, a theatre controlled by "native and friendly

hands" will protect against such colonial stereotypes by allowing the nation an opportunity to provide an accurate depiction of Irish life.

The image that audience members deemed most Irish was an ideal peasantry. The force of the peasant play was its propagandistic undergirding. The tradition, to which Griffith alludes, of the Irish peasant on the English stage lasted from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century. The Irishman, for centuries the most common ethnic character in English theatre, was used to ease international relations and quiet English fears about colonial revolt by depicting the Irish as harmless and infantile. A music-hall phenomenon, the Stage Irishman was a hotheaded, warm-hearted, inebriated peasant with an exaggerated brogue and a proclivity to swearing, humour, and blarney. He wore tight fitting trousers, carried a shillelagh under his arm and a dart in hand, and ate potatoes invariably. He was easily duped, buffoonish, and uncivilized. The national stereotype was so popular that it transcended the theatre and cropped up in newspapers, editorial cartoons, and inflected political negotiations and historical studies on Ireland (Duggan 165-70). The colonial dimensions of the character were overt—the Stage Irishman fixed an identity and secured a political, ethnic hierarchy by undermining Irish claims to political and social equality. The Irishman on the English stage was always incapable of maintaining his own lands and was a servant or soldier under an English lord. His female counterpart was child-like and often left with lands she could not manage. As Trotter illuminates, tensions between the two countries were worked out through melodramatic love triangles whereby a naïve, virginal Irish maiden with untended lands was forced to choose a suitor—either a helpless drunken Paddy or dashing Englishman. Or alternately,

she sought the protection of an English gentleman against Irish rebels. Such representations reinforced the view of Ireland as England's helpless ward and imagined idyllic relations between the countries by suggesting a "marriage" of the two nations that purported to be beneficial to both (*Ireland's National Theaters* 29-43).

It was this caricature that Ireland sought to dispel through theatrical performance. The reclamation of the peasant was the bedrock of the nationalist movement and, with its focus on establishing a seminal literary canon and cultivating a nationalist audience, the Abbey was well poised to invent a distinct, yet aesthetic Irishness. In her theatre manifesto, Lady Gregory wrote: "We will show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and of easy sentiment, as it has been represented, but the home of ancient idealism. We are confident of the support of all Irish people, who are weary of misrepresentation" (*Our Irish Theatre* 378-9). As Gregory declared, theatre at the Abbey was an attempt to stage the nation, to represent and reflect the audience, and to establish or in some cases perform an ideal national identity rooted in "ancient idealism." The Abbey sought to counter hegemonic representations and encourage cultural unification by fostering a shared cultural experience—a romantic myth of the peasant—that sutured the individual to an imagined national heritage and "refashion[ed] a conception of self in relation to community, continuity, and communion with the mythic" (McKenna 1). The Irishness of this drama centered on a discourse of home based on oral traditions and a shared communal past. Plays invoked Celtic myths and relied on local culture and history as symbols of authentic Irishness.

The social capital traded upon to project and foster national unity—a pre-colonial authenticity and identity rooted in an ideal, noble peasantry untouched by modernity and the English language and a history of martyred heroes—was thus a direct foil to the English character. The peasant had a mystical connection to the natural world that, to some extent, eased religious divisions (if only by side-stepping them) and asserted irrefutable property rights that challenged colonial control and bolstered bids for self-government. Unlike English melodrama plots that involved marrying and merging land, Irish peasant drama centered on owning property and protecting the home from interlopers. The noble, victimized farmer always struggled and sometimes suffered to defend their home and homeland against threats from malevolent landlords, foreigners, and social class interlopers. The claim to realism resulted in very Naturalistic representations and the peasant cottage—staged with painstaking anthropological accuracy—became a powerful symbol of Irish nationality. Cottages were built on stage to the exact dimensions of real homes, genuine peasant props were sought out, and playwrights employed only common turns of phrase and accents. The image of the peasant or townsman and his home symbolically stood in as a representation of the homeland on stage that noble, "native" Irishmen defended from "foreign" threat. The realism on stage had such emotional resonance for audiences that they often read theatrical events literally. Perhaps most famously, Yeats wrote in a letter to Sir Herbert Grierson in 1926 that at the first performance of O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* a young nationalist mounted the stage in protest of the representation of Easter 1916 and quickly put his coat around the actress playing the sickly Mollser. According to Yeats, "she was not the actress in his eyes, but the consumptive girl"

(*The Letters of W. B. Yeats* 711). The protestor's inability to parse the distinction between real and realism (which ironically is what the play cautions audience members against), points up the effect that "real Ireland" had on the auditoria and the potential political power of such intensity.

Naturally, the peasant play was the most popular type of drama in Ireland for much of the early twentieth-century. Almost three quarters of the Abbey's repertoire was made up of peasant plays or plays with significant peasant elements (Clarke 1). In "The Imaginary Irish Peasant," Edward Hirsch elucidates the myth's ability to connect a divided population: "Beyond their real differences, most Irish writers had a common belief in a single undifferentiated entity called 'the peasants'" (1117). The myth of the Irish peasant and their rural cottage was such an influential unifying principle that it was not until the late 1970's that the image was deconstructed and cultural and literary attention shifted to urban centres. Inevitably, this iconic peasant mythology set a "horizon of expectations" (Jauss 3) for theatergoers—a prerequisite for satisfying the auditoria was the confirmation of the ideal peasantry. The plots of the most popular tales and plays focused upon successfully ridding the home of a poet-tramp. The removal of the tramp—a threat to the stable image of ideal Irish nationality bound up in the peasants' homes and middle-class proprietorship—was met with an emotional response in the auditoria. Plays were judged on their "peasant quality" and any play that did not meet the criteria—noble peasants, "native" traits, stable home, removal of foreign threat and troublesome intruders whose Irishness was indeterminate (someone without a defined lineage, home, or local dialect and custom) would be deemed un-Irish. This engendered rigid guidelines for theatrical

and national expression. To counter the image of the Irishman and the Irish home on stage was, in the eyes of nationalist audiences, to counter the political underpinnings of the Celtic Revival and to threaten bids for Home Rule in the case of Synge, or to challenge the newly independent state for O'Casey. It was, of course, Synge's and O'Casey's exposition of this ideal home and Irishness as fiction that led to their "un-Irish" labels.

Synge and O'Casey, cautious of attempts to control the terms for expressing national identity, on stage or otherwise, felt the propagandistic ideals of Irishness promoted through the cultural-political programmes of their period at worst limited the possibilities of Irish identity and at best provided social roles that were merely performative. The Revival was, as Seamus Deane argues, an early and ultimately unsuccessful attempt at decolonization (Introduction 4). Parnellites and Revivalists attempted to reclaim and remap the territory—both literally through bids for self-government and imaginatively through the fashioning of an Irish mythology and literature. In *The Wretched of the Earth,* Frantz Fanon argues "the colonial world is divided into compartments…if we examine closely this system of compartments, we will at least be able to reveal the lines of force it implies. This approach to the colonial world, its ordering and its geographical layout will allow us to mark out the lines on which a decolonized society will be reorganized" (37). The geographical divisions and the cultural representations of Ireland as a helpless ward that needed England's superior skills for mapping, naming, and governing had a significant impact on how the nation reorganized itself. The emphasis put on ownership and isolation from foreign

threat made national identity impermeable and rooted in specific communities.[1] To be "native" then, was to be, as Raymond Williams put it, "placeable" or "settled in a place" (180), to be bound to the community for generations, untouched by colonization and urbanity, and able to trace one's lineage back to pseudo-mythical origins (Easthope 9). Rather than eliminating the compartments and fault lines created by English colonization, early nationalists seized upon pockets untouched by the fray and held them up as impossibly sealed-off communities.

In an attempt to define and map out national relations Revival writers and early twentieth-century Irish nationalists relegated the source of Irishness to inaccessible, unreal rural communities and produced ethnic identities that were as restrictive as the colonizer's. As Synge claimed: "Lever, Lover, Boucicault and *Punch* have achieved much in the way of making the Irish character a sealed book to Englishmen" (*Collected Works* 397; qtd. in Schleifer 47-8). This nativeness was cultivated and affected since most Irishmen were English-speaking city dwellers rather than Gaelic-speaking farmers—as O'Casey famously asserted, "there's a lot of fretful popinjays lisping Irish wrongly" (*Drums Under the*

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[1] In *Nations as Zones of Conflict,* John Hutchinson argues that "the cult of the land had thus a unifying effect, binding a new mobile middle class of the cities to the larger territorial unit by rooting them in a defence of a highly individualized homeland. New imperatives bound this group – the unification of all members of the nation, freeing the land from foreign rule, and ridding the land of aliens who by their presence adulterated its cultural purity" (54).

Window 73). Synge's and O'Casey's tramps and transient, deconstructed homes thus take on a political tone. The tramps in Synge's *In the Shadow of the Glen* and *The Playboy of the Western World* are free to cross colonial fault lines and to permeate isolated Irish communities. They free women trapped in claustrophobic homes and relationships dictated by birth, heritage, and property agreements and define their own nativeness by playing with stereotypical Irish roles—the traveller, poet, the athlete, the storyteller—as they go. O'Casey's tenement dwellers find themselves in rented homes that are dismantled as the plays go on. The family members are obsessed with maintaining a stable home amidst the street violence of the Easter Rebellion in *The Plough and the Stars* and refrains like "the counthry'll have to steady itself" (72) echo through *Juno and the Paycock* as the home is destroyed. However, even the best attempts to keep the home together are performances and cannot prevent the violent reality of political conflict occurring around them. Both plays articulate the dangers of a theatrical nationality and cultural identity founded on spectacle. The ideal, protected Irish home, rendered dangerously claustrophobic in Synge, becomes a symbolically staged flat penetrated by warfare resulting in civilian death in O'Casey's dramaturgy.

In the Shadow of the Glen

J. M. Synge was a prominent figure in the Irish Literary Revival and was especially renowned for his travel writing, which focused on the conditions and customs of peasant life in Western Ireland. Synge's subject matter and his involvement with the Abbey have led many writers and critics to perceive his work as an extension of Yeats's and Gregory's peasant politics. G. J. Watson, for

example, reads Synge's writing as an "idealization of the peasantry [that] was in large measure a creative act of the imagination" (40): an "Irish version of pastoral" (45) along the lines of Wordsworth's Romanticism. Younger generations of writers from Joyce onwards have mercilessly attacked Synge's interest in rural Ireland and cast him as an antagonist to progress and globalization. P. J. Mathews, however, argues in "Re-Thinking Synge" that the image of the playwright that has dominated most criticism to date—Synge as signifier of ideal rural folk, parochial nationalism, and local culture—was "largely created by W. B. Yeats in the early years and decades immediately after the writer's death" (7). Yeats's essay "J. M. Synge and the Ireland of his Time" and Daniel Corkery's *Synge and Anglo-Irish literature, a study,* have done much to forge an effigy of the poet that fits with zealous nationalism and ideology. As Mathews claims, Synge's depictions of rural cottages and folk tales were "easily co-opted to the nation-building agendas of the new Irish State" (7).

While Synge contributed several plays and pseudo-documentary travelogues to the literary revival, to read his work as analogous to the well-received peasant pieces of his period is to overlook the riots his work caused. The public condemnation of his dramaturgy as "un-Irish" indicates that his writing did not sit easily alongside nationalist plays, such as *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*. Nor did it fulfill the requirements of documenting "real Irishness." As an audience member remarked of *The Playboy of the Western World:* "I am well acquainted with the conditions of life in the West, and not only does this play not truly represent these conditions, but it portrays the people of that part of Ireland as a coarse, besotted race, without one gleam of genuine humour or one sparkle of virtue..." (qtd. in

Kilroy 9). Far from idealization, Synge's audience felt he had produced "a hideous caricature [that] would be slanderous of a Kaffir kraal" (qtd. in Kilroy 9). The discrepancy between the reactions of his contemporary audience who felt his work was out of step with the ideal peasants of the period and the modernist audiences who saw him as a maker and marker of regressive Romanticism indicates a need for a closer engagement with the playwright's oeuvre and politics.

Synge's *In the Shadow of the Glen* was staged with all of the Naturalist trappings of Abbey Peasant drama, from the reproduction of an anthropologically exact cottage and real peasant props salvaged from country homes and auction sales to the language and form of the play that Synge claimed to have garnered from locals through "a chink in the floor of the old Wicklow house" (Preface to *Playboy* 1). Despite these outward manifestations of Irishness, the performance was met with the hissing of an agitated audience and the departure of high-profile nationalists Maud Gonne, Marie Quinn, and Dudley Digges (all of whom had played leading roles in W.B. Yeats's national parable *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* the previous year). The tirade against the play continued for weeks in Dublin newspapers and Sinn Féin founder and later president of the Irish Free State, Arthur Griffith, led an attack in his weekly newspaper, *The United Irishman*, denouncing the piece: "The play has an Irish name, but is no more Irish than the Decameron. It is a staging of a corrupt version of the old-world libel on womankind – the 'widow of Ephesus', which was made current in Ireland by the

hedge-schoolmaster" (*United Irishman* 1; qtd. in Mathews, *Revival* 138).[2] Griffith's central concern about the play was the representation of women's relationship to the home—a contention that nationalist audiences and critics echoed. The *Daily Independent* and *The Nation* argued that a young woman leaving her lonely home and her bitter husband was "nothing more or less than a farcical libel on the character of the average decently reared peasant woman" (Robinson 36).

It is doubtful that Griffith or the audiences of the period believed that there were no unhappy marriages in Ireland; rather the rejection of Synge's play as "un-Irish" has more to do with its refusal to perform an idealized version of the Irish home and nation. Peasant theatre at the Abbey promulgated an ideal depiction of domesticity, middle-class propriety, female virtue, marital power relations, and unwavering (often unquestioned) allegiance to home and nation. The home and the "lady of the house" had an incredible amount of emotional import on the Irish stage and Synge's inversion of the typical domestic plot prompted outrage. As David Cairns and Shaun Richards note in "Reading a Riot: The 'Reading Formation' of Synge's Abbey Audience," "given that the declared objective was to cultivate Irish culture in all its forms and 'above all, Irish Nationality', the

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[2] The reception of Synge's play was in fact so contested that the ensuing arguments between the Abbey board and Arthur Griffith caused a split in the Cumman na gaedheal and led to the foundation of separate cultural factions for art and politics.

chosen set for the productions is striking in its choice of the most potent sign of 'Irishness'" (225): the home. Although the play uses this potent trope, *In the Shadow of the Glen,* as Dr. Cousins's aptly claims "was a decadent intrusion where the inspiration of idealism rather than the downpull of realism was needed" (qtd. in Robinson 36). *In the Shadow of the Glen* demonstrates a sharp departure from and inversion of the key tenets of the Abbey's "real Ireland" programme and a disruption of the woman-as-nation metaphor. Synge's representation of a poor, lonely home, a loveless marriage, a domestic environment more akin to a prison than a haven, and a wife willing to risk death "under the heavens" (38) with a tramp over her home and her husband upends nationalist myths and asks audiences to consider their emotional reactions to such emblems.

Significantly, Synge does not merely invert a theme, but inverts an actual tale circulating in the cultural imaginary. Despite Griffith's and Gonne's allegations that the play suffered an "insidious and destructive tyranny of foreign influence" (Gonne qtd. in Fitzpatrick-Dean 75), the play had an undeniably Irish source. On sojourn in Aranmor, Synge kept a detailed account of his experience and the stories told by locals in a travel diary, which he later published as *The Aran Islands.* Pat Dirane's "The Unfaithful Wife" featured prominently in Synge's travelogue, where it is recounted with its intended idealism. In keeping with the cultural movement, Dirane's tale traffics in images of rural idylls and middle-class propriety. Dirane claimed that while travelling, he sought shelter in "a fine clean house" in rural Ireland where he was offered "fine sugar and bread" and "a fine new pipe off the table with a drop of spirits" (40). This large, well-kept abode was the home of a husband in "a fine clean shirt" and "fine flannel

drawers" feigning death, so that he may observe his wife to ascertain proof of her disloyalty. Dirane witnessed the wife's affair, as she went out and brought a young man back with her. When she retreated to the bedroom with the young man and lay "with her head on his arm," the husband sprang to his feet and "hit him [the suitor-interloper] a blow with the stick so that the blood out of him leapt up and hit the gallery" (40). Dirane's tale stresses the comfort and wealth of the peasant home, and through the repetition of the word "fine" and its associations with cleanliness, nourishment, and pleasurable entertainment it also stresses the propriety of the "fine" homeowner, the husband (40-2). The woman in the tale is merely a sketch. She has no name and no defining features—aside from lack of loyalty—and no mention is made of her cleanliness or "fine" clothing. The end of the tale, though bloody, celebrated the husband's ability to maintain the stability of his home by eliminating a threatening interloper and suggested that there are severe penalties for de-stabilizing the Irish home. "The Unfaithful Wife" is a quintessential example of the type of story promulgated during the Revival. On the one hand it demonstrates the idealization of rural life, and Dirane's tale is an epigrammatic description of a cultural programme to "clean-up" the Irish countryside urged by magazines like the *Irish Homestead,* and on the other it demonstrates the desire to protect or isolate the Irish home (and by extension homeland) from foreign influence.[3] It was this isolation of Irishness, this attempt

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[3] As Mathews claims, weekly magazines like the *Irish Homestead* encouraged social reform that "pitted a desirable middle-class propriety against the perceived uncouthness of traditional practices. It was not uncommon to find advice like the

to encapsulate and frame identity in the name of security that Synge found most disturbing and sought to dismantle. He does this by, quite literally, fracturing the home (or the myth of the home) on stage.

In narrative, *In the Shadow of the Glen* is almost identical to "The Unfaithful Wife," but when Synge transposed the tale to the stage, he made a number of crucial changes that transformed it into a parody of the original. Through a re-working of the tramp figure, Synge manipulates the idyllic, nationalist frame of the tale and alters the power dynamic between the husband and wife to suggest that the wife (and the nation she stands in for) are trapped

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following proffered on a weekly basis: 'A stranger passing along our Irish roads is sometimes painfully struck with the air of neglect and indeed the slovenliness which many of our wayside cottages present. The thatch in many cases is rotten, overgrown with weeds. The doors and windows are ill-fitting and ill-painted. A manure heap or a pool of filthy water not infrequently lies between the highway and the cottage door. There is a dismal absence of whitewash; the walls of stone or clay are exposed in all their uncouthness to the critical eye of the traveller and his judgment upon the habits of the owner and the inmates is, in consequence, far from complimentary. Now there is no reason why this should be so. There is absolutely no reason why our cottages, inside and outside, should not be homes in which self-respecting men and women could physically live'" (Mathews, *Revival* 142). The image of the ideal home on stage and in magazines stands in sharp contrast to the reality of material conditions exposed in Synge's theatre.

within the isolated Irish home. Dirane's tramp commences outside of the home and paints an image of the house as a shelter in a storm; the audience then moves with the tramp (who is also the witness and the narrator) into the comfortable home. In title, "The Unfaithful Wife" invokes sympathy for the husband, structurally it grants authoritative voice to the tramp-witness and the male homeowner, and symbolically it paints an image of the home as a secure space. Synge employs the conventional staging of the Irish home—"Cottage kitchen; turf fire on the right" (7)—but presents an atmosphere more akin to Joyce's sentiment that "the Irishman's house is his coffin" (Joyce 139) than to nationalist idealizations. The play positions the audience in a claustrophobic environment that is almost coffin-like: "a bed near it against the wall with a body lying on it covered with a sheet. A door is at the other end of the room" (7). The small cottage set "as if for a wake" (7) signals an environment of stale, death-like repose. The cottage, rather than Romantic, is depicted as lonesome and isolated: "the last cottage at the head of a long glen" (7) and its "lady of the house," like the audience, experiences the space as stifling.

Nora Burke's initial presence on the stage and her "settling" of the space illustrate her central role and agency in the home, while her unease immediately indicates problems with her domestic environment. At the play's outset Nora is "settling a few things, and lighting candles on the table, looking now and then at the bed with an uneasy look" (7). Her entrapment in the space is rendered visual as she is rarely allowed to leave the room. Even in voicing her loneliness, Nora illuminates a sense of confinement in her eerie surroundings. Nora's descriptions of her life ensconce her within the home—she explains that she married according

to the idyll that owning land brought about satisfaction, but finds her days limited to "looking out from a door the like of that door, and seeing nothing but the mists rolling down the bog, and the mists again, and they rolling up the bog" (29). Nora's perception of and interaction with the outside world is limited, framed, and mediated by the home. Significantly, the door also frames her, as she claims that when she was happy it was as a result of Patch Darcy "look[ing] in here" (15), a curious phrasing that further emphasizes the claustrophobic environment and paints Nora as part of the domestic realm to be gazed upon—part of the scenery, so to speak.

While Dirane's tramp sided with and privileged male ownership and control by claiming the husband was a "fine" provider for an ungrateful wife, Synge's tramp grants Nora an audience to whom she may voice her complaints, and by extension the play grants the female protagonist a voice to dismiss the nationalist ideal. Nora's complaints about her husband and her home shift the sub-textual dynamic of the play from male provision and proprietorship to an exposition of the restraints placed on female agency and realistic evaluation of material conditions. Synge's tramp suggests that the home is menacing: "it's many a lone woman would be afeard of the like of me in the dark night, in a place wouldn't be as lonesome as this place, where there aren't two living souls would see the little light you have shining for the glass" (12). The tramp points up the potential danger of her isolation and suggests that Nora is brave for persevering in such conditions. He notes the rough furnishings and relative poverty of the home as well, in particular the socio-economic inequalities in the marriage. In contrast to the "fine sugar and bread" of Dirane's tale, the only goods in this peasant home

are whisky and tobacco (the husband's luxuries) and a "home-made cake" (12), the products of Nora's labour.

From the moment he appears, the tramp runs interference in the typical domestic space. In addition to giving Nora the opportunity to refute traditional female roles, the tramp also questions the value of nationalist versions of masculinity by problematizing the husband's schemes and motives:

> TRAMP. *Looking closely at the dead man.* It's a queer look is on him for a man that's dead.
>
> NORA. He was always queer, stranger, and I suppose them that's queer and they living men will be queer bodies after.
>
> TRAMP. Isn't it a great wonder you're letting him lie there, and he is not tidied, or laid out itself?
>
> NORA. *Coming to the bed.* I was afeard, stranger, for he put a black curse on me this morning if I'd touch his body the time he'ld die sudden, or let any one touch it except his sister only, and it's ten miles away she lives in the big glen over the hill.
>
> TRAMP. *Looking at her and nodding slowly.*
>
> It's a queer story he wouldn't let his own wife touch him, and he dying quiet in his bed. (9-10)

While Dirane's tramp consistently uses the word "fine" to typify the fake-waked husband, Synge's tramp employs the word "queer" as a descriptor. The tramp's insistence that Dan has a "queer look on him" reveals the trick by drawing attention to the unconvincing performance of the "dead" man. The tramp asks audiences to pay attention to the details of the actor's performance so that even

viewers unfamiliar with the original tale and the tradition of the wake as a site of potential "re-awakening" are aware that something about the husband is amiss. Asking the audience to train their eyes on the husband offers the potential that they may spy the actor twitch, move, or alter his expression (and it is almost certain that he would over the course of the play), thereby giving away the secret. The tramp's "wonder[ment]" that Dan has not been prepared for a wake and the "queer" cursing of his wife should she touch him after his death casts suspicions on the husband's behaviour and, at the very least, illuminates the coincidental proclamation of such a curse only hours before his entirely unexpected death. The tramp's characterization of Dan signals that the husband is an antagonist to tradition, as he has refused the rituals necessary for passing on, and a vindictive, paranoid partner.

As in Dirane's tale, Synge grants the husband and the tramp a moment of revelation, where the husband wakes and divulges his motives for the trick. While meant to establish a tie between the two men, in *In the Shadow* it functions merely to expose the husband's brutality and confirm Nora's earlier complaints. After waking Dan promptly asks for the shillelagh at the far end of the room, claiming: "…it's a long time I'm keeping that stick for I've a bad wife in the house…It's herself, surely, it's a bad wife she is – a bad wife for an old man, and I'm getting old. God help me, though I've an arm to me still" (21-2). The emphasis in Dan's account of the marriage rests on his violence. His immediate desire for the stick and his jocular suggestion that he still has "an arm" illuminate his brutality, while Nora's potential infidelity (the core of the frame tale) is only suggested in the vague comment that she is a "bad wife for an old man." Dan's accusation is not

that Nora is unfaithful, but that she is too young for him. This violent rejoinder to Nora's conduct is hardly in keeping with his accusations. The tramp, rather than agreeing with Dan, eyes him with a "queer look" and seemingly jumps to Nora's defense. The tramp is evidently not Dan's witness-narrator. When the interaction is interrupted by Nora returning with Micheal Dara [sic], Dan barks orders to the tramp that are only half-followed out of fear of physical abuse: [4]

> DAN. Put that stick here in the bed and smooth the sheet the way it was lying. *(He covers himself up hastily.*) Be falling to sleep now and don't let on you know anything, or I'll be having your life. I wouldn't have told you at all but it's destroyed with the drouth I was.
>
> TRAMP. *Covering his head*.
>
> Have no fear, master of the house. What is it I know of the like of you that I'ld be saying a word or putting out my hand to stay you at all?
>
> *He goes back to the fire, sits down on a stool with his back to the bed and goes on stitching his coat.* (21-2)

If the interaction between the husband and tramp was meant to ally the two characters, Synge has undone it. The tramp agrees not to interfere with Dan's scheme, but his reaction seems provoked by fear, as he covers his head in preparation for a blow. Given the tramp's response to Dan's other orders though,

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[4] Michael is misspelled as "Micheal" throughout the play.

"go to sleep" and "cover me," of which he does neither, the audience may assume that the tramp's assurance is disingenuous.

The tramp is meant to act as a witness to the wife's infidelity, but unlike in "The Unfaithful Wife," where the wife returns with a young man and lies with her head on his arm, the audience is given no reason to believe that Nora is having an affair with Micheal. In fact, when Micheal proposes a marriage between them (mostly for the grazing land on her farm), Nora considers the gesture a continuation of her current life and rebuffs him (31-2). What the tramp bears witness to then is the wife's suffering and her husband's unjustified violence. Not only are the husband's schemes to unveil her "bad wifery" unnecessary, but they are also revealed in a silly manner. In Dirane's version, the husband rises and goes into a room where the wife and her lover are lying and beats the interloper. Although Dan has every intention of springing out of his bed and attacking Nora and her lover, he "*sneezes violently*" revealing his scheme to uncover Nora's potential infidelity. In this case, Dan's uncontrollable physical reaction (perhaps symbolic of his impulsive possessiveness and aggression) indicates his lack of control over his own body and his inability to control his home rather than his authority. The chaos that follows is a slapstick interaction between suitor and husband that undermines the masculinity of both: "*Micheal tries to get to the door, but before he can do so, Dan jumps out of the bed in queer white clothes, with his stick in his hand, and goes over and puts his back against it*" (33).

In a twist of the usual tale, the interloper is trapped inside the home rather than forced out. Micheal responds to Dan's threats by begging Nora to save him

(33), showing who really controls the space: Nora. Micheal claims that Dan always does what Nora bids further undercutting Dan's authority. Dan in his "queer clothes" and with his uncontrollable reactions appears foolish, crazed, and ultimately unmanly. The husband is disallowed the opportunity to secure and protect his home from the interloper through violence and it is not the suitor who is asked to leave, but Nora, the only person capable of bringing life to the home through her youthful energy, productive labours, and potential for motherhood. Dan says, "You'll walk out now from that door, Nora Burke, and it's not to-morrow, or the next day, or any day of your life, that you'll put in your foot through it again" (34). Nora's exile suggests that maintaining the secure, sealed off home is privileged over maintaining relations and creating a future. The husband does not succeed in creating the parable of the reified home and attaining the retribution he seeks, instead he casts out the home's main caretaker and the potential for a productive future, making the home even more stale and death-like.

The exilic moment for Nora marks a significant transition. If for most the play she felt trapped within the home, looking out through the door, she is finally presented with a chance to cross the threshold and commence a more rewarding life. It is, unsurprisingly, the tramp that has granted her an audience and a voice that opens this space for her. The tramp, appalled by Dan's and Micheal's treatment of Nora, decides to leave and bring her along:

> TRAMP. *Going over to Nora.*
>
> We'll be going now, lady of the house – the rain is falling, but the air is kind and maybe it'll be a grand morning by the grace of God. (37)

The tramp offers Nora the perambulatory, transient lifestyle of figures like Patch Darcy whom she had so admired, all the while referring to her as the "lady of the house," signalling her authority in the home. On the other side of the door, the

tramp insists: "…you'll not be sitting up on a wet ditch, the way you're after sitting in this place, making yourself old with looking on each day, and it passing you by" (37). Nora escapes the parochial regionalism of her home and the oppression of her role therein, regaining a sense of self in her disenfranchisement and placelessness.

To represent the peasant home as economically unstable, as difficult to maintain and marriage as loveless, or little more than indentured servitude, was blasphemous enough, but to present a woman willing to take to the road with a tramp was the final blow to nationalists. The tramp who runs domestic interference and traffics in the same freeing connections to the outside world as Darcy did before him (it seems Nora has been given the choice of freedom, global relations, fluid identity before and chose property and class), has no identifiable Irishness, connection to property, or stable "native" identity. For Nora to forsake both her identity and her husband's seems to be the most damning aspect of the tale.

The Playboy of the Western World

After the agitated response to *In The Shadow of the Glen,* Synge swore to W. G. Fay: "the next play I write I will make sure I annoy them" and he did. Fay recalled "as soon as I cast eyes over the script of *The Playboy of the Western World* I knew we were in for serious trouble" (qtd. in Levitas 115). The riots provoked by *The Playboy* marked a historical moment on the Irish stage—the political sentiments couched in upholding a patricidal tramp as a hero prompted such outrage that even Padraic Pearse deigned to comment, calling the play a "brutal glorification of violence, and grossness, and the flesh" (Pearse 7; qtd. in Kiberd, *Irish Language* 253). In 1913, though, Pearse rescinded his remarks and illuminated the root of the disturbance the play caused: "When a man like Synge, in whose sad heart there glowed a true love of Ireland, one of the two or three

men who have in our time made Ireland considerable in the eyes of the world, uses strange symbols which we do not understand, we cry out that he has blasphemed and we proceed to crucify him" (Pearse qtd. in Grene, "Synge in Performance" 3). Pearse's suggestion that the riots against *The Playboy* and the condemnation of its author were the result of misunderstanding Synge's "strange symbols" illuminates the playwright's awkward position in the Irish canon.

On the cusp of Revivalist preservation and Modernist insurrection, the "strange symbols" Pearse points up indicate Synge's ironic use of nationalist propaganda. Synge's dramaturgy operates within (and plays with) the generic conventions of the Revival while expressing that the nationalist movement and the image of ideal peasant farmer and his home was at least as limiting as the English stage-Irishman. For Synge, both the Stage Irishman and the Abbey's anti-Stage Irishman were sealed and restrictive identities—a sentiment he held so dearly that he wrote in support of Frank Hugh O'Donnell's denunciation of the Abbey, "The Stage Irishman of Pseudo-Celtic Drama," despite his position on the theatre's board (Schleifer 47-8). Synge's comments and theatrical modes evoke a very early post-colonial argument along the lines of Eagleton's claim in Field Day's *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature* that an oppressed group is "not reducible to innate characteristics, but is not independent of them either" (30). In the text, Eagleton, along with Said and Jameson, considers representations of national character in Ireland and conclude that depictions of nationality in colonial contexts are always already based on the colonizer's rigid depiction as they are remapped and redefined in response to them. For Eagleton, the only escape from the binary opposition of such stereotypes is to demonstrate ironically that the "native" traits were in fact fictions. It is Synge's use of irony that seems to have confused his audiences the most. While irony is present in *In the Shadow*, the effect is intensified in *Playboy.* Synge layers several ironic methods: the creation

of a peasant play set and reception, the inversion of a popular nationalist play, and the presentation of a "Playboy"—a peasant whose personal narrative, heritage, and even physical representation are fabricated and controlled, and then alternately lauded and abhorred, by an audience who require a particular type of story.

Rather than simply addressing the image of the ideal peasant and his home, Synge assails the heady nationalist atmosphere fostered in the peasant play auditoria and directly probes the audience's manner of reading stage peasants. Heightening the annoyance of his audience and making evident that *The Playboy* is a critique of national stereotypes and staged nativeness, Synge produced an unsettlingly, discordant viewing experience. While *In the Shadow of the Glen* simply relied on the Naturalist, nationalist image of the cottage on stage to function as a generic red herring, Synge produced an entire atmosphere that fostered an emotional peasant play response before *Playboy* by having it double-billed with *Riders to the Sea*—a play much more in keeping with the Abbey repertoire. *Playboy* took place in the same set and for the same audience as *Riders;* thus the plays produced a stark generic contrast where audiences' expectations were fulfilled in the first part of the evening and dashed in the second. As Cairns and Richards elucidate, "while *Riders to the Sea* with its anthropologically exact properties and set was listened to 'attentively' and brought 'long and appreciative applause', *The Playboy* was registered by the Abbey's 'barometer' of public reaction—Joseph Holloway—as 'not a truthful or just picture of the Irish peasants...'" (229).

In particular, the doubled use of the cottage set—first to uphold and then to mock the peasant ideal—calls attention to the slippery semiotic function of the home as a symbol of security and identity and begs audiences to consider what is "Irish" about *Riders* and what is "stage-Irish" and "not truthful" about *Playboy.*

Riders to the Sea is intensely "placeable" and native. *Riders* is set entirely in the "cottage kitchen, with nets, oil-skins spinning wheel, some new boards standing by the wall, etc" (63). The plot focuses primarily on domestic affairs (the upkeep of the cottage and its regional goods[5]), Maurya's identification of her drowned son through the recognition of her stitching of his socks, and the family's relationship with the land and natural world.[6] The network of familial, domestic, communal, and property links established in *Riders* that audiences might read "as a symbol of their lost identity" (Clarke 94; Richards 5) is rent in *Playboy.* The welcoming of a patricidal tramp into a poor peasant home proves a direct challenge to audiences seeking an idyllic nationalist tale. Rather than offering the organized national identity of a peasant hero in a stable home, Synge's protagonist, Christy, is in self-imposed exile "on the highway of the road" (81) as a result of domestic violence, generational conflict, and (attempted) patricide. In essence, Christy commits a symbolic murder of his links to home, family, and past. He has no land of his own and no legacy, as his father's land was obtained through squatting or without legal title. As a tramp from a "windy corner of high,

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[5] The nativeness of the goods in the home, most of which are local and handcrafted, gestures towards the cultural import and the caché of other placeable Irish products like the Aran sweater or Donegal wool.

[6] The final lines of the play evoke a peace and semi-spiritual acceptance of the environment that has claimed the sons' lives: "Michael has a clean burial in the far north, by the grace of Almighty God. Bartley will have a fine coffin out of white boards, and a deep grave surely. What more can we want than that? No man can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied" (72).

distant hills" (81), he is the antithesis of the stable community and peasant proprietorship (138) in all of its senses—property, proper names, and proper conduct.[7] Christy's homelessness and his father's squatting indicate that the home is a temporary refuge and, since the peasant home was the staged emblem of the homeland, denotes national instability. Significantly, Synge's portrayal of Christy as a dispossessed tramp lacking a mythic ancestry denies the audience's desire to read the peasant as symbol of their national identity and forces them to consider the play, and more broadly, the manner in which the nation was staged, through a critical rather than emotional lens.

The plot of *The Playboy of the Western World* too, censures emotional responses to "stories of old Ireland…that would have the old women shedding down tears about their feet" (75)—a practice that both the audience within the play and Synge's own audience deeply desire. Like *In the Shadow of the Glen, Playboy* is an inversion a common tale about maintaining property and proper relations. Douglas Hyde's immensely popular Irish language play, *Casadh an tSúgáin* (*The Twisting of the Rope*) centers on the removal of a tramp-poet from a peasant community. In brief, a stranger arrives in a community and woos a young

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[7] As Stephen Scobie suggests: "Our society's conventional notion of the proper name, especially the family surname, ties the use of the word 'proper' to the idea of 'property.' The proper name is the signal of inheritance, the name that guarantees the handing down of property from generation to generation—and especially from father to son. But a person's name is thought of as property also in the sense that it is "my own," it belongs to me. It has a unique reference. It names *only* me, it is proper(ty) to me" (82).

girl who is engaged to a local man. When the intended and the lady of the house discover the courtship, they decide to remove the intruder, but as they fear the curse of the poet or storyteller they must trick him into leaving. They devise a ruse to have the tramp twist a length of rope. In order to do so, he must continually move backwards and when he crosses the home's threshold the door is quickly closed behind him. The peasant community's success over the outsider and their ability to safeguard the home and the family's lineage is celebrated. Synge witnessed audiences' responses to this play first-hand, and wrote in his review for *L'Européen* in 1901 that "the enthusiastic nationalist audience reacted with emotional tears to the singing of old Irish songs, and he felt as if 'the soul of a people' had entered the theatre" (qtd. in Richards 4). The central conflict in *Playboy* is an inversion of this plot. The outsider, Christy, disrupts the relationship between intendeds Pegeen and Shawn largely as a result of Pegeen's desire for a savage, storyteller tramp and her subsequent wooing of Christy. Rather than being a poet who is cast out for his persuasive powers, an audience eager for violent tales fabricates Christy's stories for him, and when he leaves of his own volition, Pegeen mourns him.

The cottage setting and familiar frame-tale are easily read as peasant play elements, but the relations between characters become the source of Synge's disruptive irony. Before Christy even appears on stage it is understood that Pegeen laments her father's selection of a "decent man" (77), Shawn Keogh, a weak-willed, intensely religious man, as her intended and wishes for a hero "the like of Daneen Sullivan knocked the eye from a peeler, or Marcus Quin, God rest him, got six months for maiming ewes" who will tell stories of "old Ireland"

(75).[8] Unlike *The Twisting of the Rope* then, *Playboy* establishes that the fiancée laments not having a violent-poet-hero in lieu of a marriage dictated by property to a proper farmer. Fittingly, as Pegeen voices her desires for such a hero Shawn Keogh announces: "I'm after feeling a kind of fellow above in the furzy ditch, groaning wicked like a maddening dog, the way it's good cause you have, maybe, to be fearing now" (75). Significantly, Christy Mahon's entrance into the community and onto the stage then is framed by Pegeen's desire for a particular type of character—a "playboy" or a cipher who will "tell stories of old Ireland" or be cast into such tales. As such, Pegeen's interest in Christy disrupts the power dynamics of melodrama and peasant plots, where women passively acquiesce to marriages that shore up familial and political ties.

Similarly, the peasant community desires a hero onto whom they can encode a narrative of old Irish stories. When they hear of the young man, they immediately begin forging identities for the yet un-met tramp. For instance, Shawn reports that he has heard a man "groaning out, and breaking his heart. It should have been a young man from his words speaking" (17), establishing Christy as a young, romantic hero. Michael characterizes him as a "queer fellow above, going mad or getting his death" (76) and thus dangerous. The tramp, rather than a foreign body to be removed from the home, is at the centre of communal re-imagining of Irish tales and social roles. When Christy appears the peasants commence a line of inquiry that more accurately reflects their fantasies about his

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[8] Shawn Keogh is her cousin and the marriage will maintain the land and the bloodline.

background (and about the state of the nation) than Christy himself. In essence, the characters' use Christy as a mirror onto which they project their stories about "old Ireland" and have them reflected back.[9] Michael's querying begins with a reference to contemporary socio-economic difficulties, which disrupts any reading of the play as idyllic: "Many [are wanting] surely, with the broken harvest and the ended wars. It should be larceny, I'm thinking?" (78). Christy, offended, lies about being "the son of a strong farmer…could have bought up the whole of your house a while since, from the butt of his tailpocket" (79) in an effort to uphold the ideal peasant myth. The peasant audience refuses the idyll that Christy lays claim to though and instead focus on their peasant-tramp as an emblem of dispossession. The conspicuous contrast between his appearance—"tired and frightened and dirty" (78)—and his statement deflates the claim, as well as the nationalist ideal that he references, demonstrating that given the reality of current circumstances such a tale is unlikely, if not impossible. To close the gap between Christy's claim and his appearance, Philly suggests "his father was a farmer a while since, and there's himself now in a poor state. Maybe the land was grabbed from him, and he did what any decent man would do" (79). His reference to the land disputes and evictions further unsettles the image of the Irish peasant and cottage as an emblem of security and identity, suggesting that it may be "grabbed" at any point.

After a discussion of whether he murdered a bailiff, agent, or landlord, the

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[9] The critique of the Abbey stage's role as a "mirror up to the nation," on which it reflects images of mythic heroes and moral, landed peasants is especially poignant in Christy's interactions with his eagerly interpreting audience.

characters press on asking if he "went fighting for the Boers, the like of the man beyond" (79) or "marr[ied] three wives maybe? …[like] the holy Luthers of the preaching north" (79). Following their evocations of "ended wars", the Land Wars (1880-1892), and evictions, the colonial implication that Christy may have been "fighting bloody wars for Kruger and the freedom of the Boers" (79) are particularly marked.[10] The peasant community's knowledge of and attempts to read onto Christy narratives of having done "what any decent man would do," by which they mean murdering a land agent or landlord, or fighting for the freedom of another oppressed group indicate that maintaining one's home and homeland takes the form of violent, "bloody" conflict rather than tales of wealthy, "strong farmers." Christy's actual characteristics: *"a slight young man"* with a "*small voice*," and "*doleful*," "*bashful*" demeanour (78), do little to dissuade the audience's interpretative impulses. Moreover, in crafting their hero the community even reinterprets the tramp's name to fit him into their narrative. While Christy introduces himself as "Christopher Mahon," Michael's immediate response is: "Well, God bless you, Christy" (13). This renaming indicates a familiarity—it signals the placeless tramp's entry into an intimate community—and it stakes an almost possessive claim to the hero-tramp by enacting the authority of naming. Like Pegeen, then, the peasant community upholds the image of the potentially savage, dangerous tramp as more valuable than the "decent

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[10] Paul Kruger, "president of the South African Republic established by Boers, Dutch settlers, and suppressed by the British in the Boer War (1899-1902)" (*The Playboy of the Western World,* n1 79).

man" and willing to create such a hero for themselves.

Synge's portrayal of Christy and his interactions with his new community proffer a critique of Abbey audiences' desire to find a hero in the proper, moral stage peasant and in the propaganda of idyllic, secure homes. For the peasant community, it is precisely his ability to murder his past and escape the home that makes him successful. After the revelation that he committed patricide, which seems unlikely and turns out to be untrue, the other characters praise his efforts and in embellishing and refashioning his identity, develop a mythology around him. Pegeen claims "That'd be a lad with the sense of Solomon" (81) while Philly adds "the peelers is fearing him" and Jimmy chimes in "a lad would kill his father, I'm thinking, would face a foxy divil with a pitchpike on the flags of hell" (81). Despite Christy's attempts to disavow the cult hero status assigned to him by explaining he was "a quiet, simple poor fellow" (83), in Pegeen's imagination Christy is a man people feared and girls admired; a fiery poet "living the like of a king of Norway" (84). Her father forsakes his belief that it is "the will of God that all should rear up lengthy families for the nurture of the earth" (112). Rather, he considers it imperative that Pegeen marry Christy: "It's many would be in dread to bring your like into their house for to end them, maybe, with a sudden end; but I'm a decent man of Ireland, and I liefer face the grave untimely and I seeing a score of grandsons growing up little gallant swearers by the name of God, than go peopling my bedside with puny weeds the like of what you'd breed, I'm thinking, out of Shaneen Keogh" (112). The welcoming of the tramp into the home and lineage overturns the premise of most peasant drama (especially *The Twisting of the Rope)*: that the threat of the

outsider is thwarted. Synge suggests that the stereotypical "decent man" and arranged marriages to maintain the home—through familial lineage and property—does not carry significant promise for future generations. In embracing the tramp, Michael suggests that a new, less "native" or "placeable" influence is required to maintain the home and nation.[11]

The slipperiness of Christy's identity as a result of his itinerant nature and his inability to trace his lineage proves to be an opportunity for the community to imagine his past and to define him. By way of a series of episodes in which the community unsuccessfully cast Christy in stereotypical Irish hero roles (none of which work as a result of his transient position and their divergent reading strategies) Synge articulates the rigidity of "authentic" Irishness as it is figured on English and Irish stages. Christy becomes an actor in a drama concocted by a very eager audience who cannot fix or stabilize his vague, shifting identity. To mitigate the problem of lacking familial and geographical signifiers, Pegeen forges for him a long, princely heritage: "You should have had great people in your family, I'm thinking, with the little small feet you have, and you with a kind of quality name, the like of what you'd find on the great powers and potentates of France and Spain" (82). As neighbours hear of his mysterious arrival they

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[11] Significantly, Pegeen argues "if I'd that lad in the house, I wouldn't be fearing the loosed kharki cut-throats" (81). Her comment signals the post-colonial aspects of the tramp's nature. The presence of the tramp in the home—or the embracing of the new unfixed influence—may potentially lessen the colonial threat posed by the presence of the British military.

present the "curiosity man" (85) with various images of himself that they have created for him. The Widow Quin posits a reading that opposes Pegeen's by representing him as a "little smiling fellow" (32) "fitter to be saying your catechism than slaying your da" (32). Sara, Nelly, and Susan conduct a materialist reading of his boots and garments, not unlike the Abbey audience's practice of reading anthropological clues, and construct him as a wanderer. Notably, Sara is seen "*putting on one of his boots*" and "*running to window with one boot on*" (89), as though she attempts to inhabit his itinerant role. Michael and his friends figure him as an admirably treacherous youth. And when his father eventually arrives he suggests he was "an ugly young streeler," "a dirty, stuttering lout" "the laughing joke of every female" (98-9).

More than simply being interpreted by the community, Christy physically acts out the typically Irish roles they create for him and allows them to costume him. With Pegeen he plays the romantic as she develops countless tales of his conquests, while the local girls insist he play the athlete, for which they costume him as a jockey (101). In an attempt to win Pegeen, and at the behest of Widow Quin, he plays the landed peasant man, for which he wears Shawn Keogh's suit and hat (96). And finally, facing death by hanging, he is disguised as a woman in one of Sara's petticoats (115). Despite the audience's thrill in creating and costuming him (and he seldom speaks of his exploits or dresses himself) none of the illustrations devised for him by the community—roles primarily based on set definitions of Irishness and native traits—is accurate or fits his character.

While he enjoys the benefits of donning the role of cult hero temporarily and retelling his story or acting out the pivotal scene of lowering the loy on his

father's head in pantomime, eventually Christy recognizes his ironic position. His public persona has developed so rapidly that it is almost entirely detached from the reality of the situation. When Christy's father appears the audience's projected roles collapse. In outrage that Christy was not the man they had attempted to mythologize, the community casts him out. When Christy attempts to fulfill their desires by re-murdering his father, his audience is appalled and attempts to hang him, "twist[ing] a hangman's knot" in a rope (115)—perhaps a devious play on the source tale. Pegeen explains the community's ire by claiming, "there's a great gap between a gallous story and a dirty deed" (116). The comment echoes and inverts her early invocations of heroes that would "knock the eye from a peeler" or "maim ewes" and tell old stories and issues a warning of the gap between fiction and actuality. In demonstrating the subjective nature of perception and the manner in which the peasant can be manipulated and contorted by the audience, as well as the inability of such roles to adequately represent the various facets of Christy's identity, Synge troubled the comfortable understanding of peasant drama as a signifier of national identity.

In contrast to peasants before him who were defined by their home and their relation to it, Christy's tramp status affords him a malleable, open identity and the ability to re-define himself. Synge's protagonist, as a result of being more or less free of a network of geographical, cultural, and mythical ties to definitions of Irishness, is able to reject imposed national stereotypes, adopt and shirk the narratives the community creates for him, and don and drop their costumes at will. Christy's homelessness and his itinerant disposition gesture towards the development of a broader conception of national identity—one not rooted in local

culture, parochial nationalism, and peasant-hero roles. By making the play's protagonist a tramp guilty of patricide rather than a farmer in an idyllic cottage, Synge troubled the romantic myth that had been fundamental in creating a unifying cultural heritage, and projecting a national ideal that countered hegemonic colonial representations. While the Abbey stage professed to hold a mirror up to the nation in their ideal peasant drama, Synge's peasant is "a man with a looking-glass held to his back" (90).[12] In effect, Synge presents the

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[12] Christy's interaction with the mirror, like Pegeen's warning of the gap between fiction and reality, points up the discrepancy between the stage peasant and his real counterpart. In his new found role as cult hero, Christy gazes upon himself and exclaims: *"*Didn't I know rightly I was handsome, though it was the divil's own mirror we had beyond, would twist a squint across an angel's brow; and I'll be growing fine from this day, the way I'll have a soft lovely skin on me and won't be the like of the clumsy young fellows do be ploughing all times in the earth and dung" (88). Christy's comments ironically suggest that, now that he is no longer an actual peasant "ploughing all times in the earth" and is an actor-peasant in the narratives his community creates for him, he will "be growing fine" with "a soft lovely skin." The comments, evidently, undermine the contemporary images of ideal, Victorian farmers by indicating the gap between the "clumsy young fellows" on farms and the "playboys" that represent them on stage. The gap between stage and physical reality evinces a more menacing problem—that staging and projecting an ideal, stable home and homeland cultivates a disconnection from the realities of colonial circumstance. This ideal construction,

backside of the peasant; he mocks and flips the Abbey image. Synge stripped the peasant of his primary definitions—home, heritage, and history—probing national representations and projections and proffered a new, unbounded mode of expressing Irishness.

The Plough and the Stars

At the 1926 premiere of *The Plough and the Stars*, Yeats took to the stage to defend Sean O'Casey's rather irreverent and unusual representation of Easter 1916. Yeats proclaimed from the podium: "You have disgraced yourselves again. Is this going to be a recurring celebration of Irish genius? Synge first, and then O'Casey!" (qtd. in Moran 30). Yeats's rebuke though was scarcely heard as theatergoers mounted the stage, smashed the lamps, burned the curtains, and sang nationalist songs (Moran 30). While the play continued its run at the Abbey the riots in the auditoria were quieted by police presence, but a number of attempted kidnappings of the production's lead actors and the row that ensued between Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington (as a leader of the widows and bereaved mothers of 1916) and O'Casey forged the play's definitive status.

Like the *Playboy* riots that Yeats alludes to, the riots provoked by O'Casey's play resulted from his refusal to acquiesce to his audience's horizon of expectations—that the play would be consistent with the nationalist historiography and Revivalist programme of heroic self-sacrifice for an idealized, stable, opulent home and homeland. *The Plough and the Stars* directly challenged

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rather than confronting colonial stereotype, creates an imaginary role that can be an escape from turmoil of Ireland's socio-political circumstances.

nationalist audiences and the mythology developing around the Easter Rising. As Patrick Lonergan suggests, the original performance "reconstituted the role of the national theatre in relation to the newly independent Irish state" and was "an attempt to broaden representations of Irish identity" (*Theatre and Globalization* 62).[13] Perhaps, pushing Lonergan's claim further, more than the role of the national theatre, O'Casey probes the very connection between nation and theatre, exposing the deliberately theatrical underpinnings of political events in twentieth-century Ireland. In his protracted correspondence with Sheehy-Skeffington, O'Casey claimed that the purpose of the play was to separate the "tinsel of sham […] from the body of truth" (*Letters One* 169), referring to the theatricality with which the Rising was conceived, executed, and commemorated. A lexis of visibility and the development of a dramatic narrative of Ireland's history and heroes played a vital role in attracting political allegiance to nationalist factions and establishing their legitimacy. In *Staging the Easter Rising 1916 as Theatre*, James Moran argues, "it was only through the dramaturgy of the deed that they eventually planned to generate a mass base of democratic support" (33). The dramaturgy—the military parades and public addresses, the violence that erupted from the conflict, and the narrative of heroic sacrifice and loss—while it failed to result in political change, sutured individuals to historical memory.[14] The reliance

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[13] Ireland gained independence in 1922.

[14] "Historical memory, then, evoked a call to action. By rooting themselves in an ancient and self-renewing collectivity that had survived countless disasters, a new educated middle class found the confidence that they could overcome a world of

on spectacle and dramatic or literary mythologies involved in the staging of the rebellion is noted in historical accounts of the Rising where the theatricality of the event is almost always addressed. For instance, Tom Garvin characterizes it as "an enactment on stage" (112), and David Fitzpatrick argues "as a dramatic pageant it had been a spectacular success, quickly generating a cult of the dead which politicians would ignore at their peril" (101). It is precisely this aesthetic framing and use of spectacle in politics that is at issue in *The Plough and the Stars*. For O'Casey, the aestheticization of the Rising derealized the violence of the events. A problem that he points up through his protagonists' obsession with a lexis of visibility and their manipulation of theatrical signs in their costuming to indicate their class and political allegiance, and in particular, in their staging of

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revolutionary uncertainty and were inspired to heroic sacrifice. They acquired stature in the modern world through membership in a nation whose heroic age had contributed to the civilisation of humanity. They found their own special mission as a generation who would restore the links in the chain to this great past, thus renewing the historical destiny of their people" (Hutchinson 53). The undergirding themes of historical memory illuminated by Hutchinson are easily glanced in nationalist narratives, such as *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*, the Cuchulainnoid mythology of heroic martyrdom of the Rising (in addition to use of the myth in public speeches and demonstrations, an image of Cuchulain on the Irish ten shilling coin commemorates the event), and the Marian-Christian allegory surrounding Margaret and Padraic Pearse.

the home as a safe, luxurious retreat (Poulain 157). Over the course of the play, O'Casey demonstrates that the characters' privileging of appearance and performance is not only transient and detrimental, but also potentially fatal.

Regarding dramatic interpretations of Easter 1916, Declan Kiberd argues that "the Rising hardly needed to be theatricalized; it simply needed to be transferred from street to stage" (Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland* 223). While most dramatizations of the Rising do focus on heroism and street violence, O'Casey's play enacts a reversal. In a Syngean manner, O'Casey purports to grant his audience's desire—a play about the Rising—but rather than focusing on the action in the streets, he directs the audience's attention instead to the Dublin tenements and their lower-class inhabitants. Throughout the first act, audiences find themselves trapped in the Clitheroes' tenement, "*a fine old Georgian house struggling for its life against the assaults of time, and the more savage assaults of the tenants*" (135), as the protagonists discuss, prepare for, and overhear the spectacle and violence of the Rising. Taking up the "dramaturgy" of nationalist deeds, O'Casey's tenement dwellers spend the majority of the first act costuming themselves and adopting nationalist roles. Fluther, "adornin' himself for th' meeting" (139), spends hours dressing, buckles his sword—a comically large, ornate prop—and puts on his "plumed hat" (153). He reads from his invitation that there will be a "Great Demonstration an' torchlight procession around places in th' city sacred to th' memory of Irish Patriots, to be concluded be a meetin', at which will be taken an oath of fealty to th' Irish Republic" (139). The significance of dressing for the parade, the procession through Dublin streets, the connection to sites of cultural memory and nationalist lore all signal the exceptional import of

appearance and public, performative ritual.[15] The atmosphere of the home then is characterized by preparation, waiting, and stasis, while the dramatic action takes place just outside the home. This provokes a tension for audiences, who are made to feel that they are, like Nora and Jack Clitheroe, "dhribbl[ing] th' time away" (154) in the flat, while somewhere just off-stage "th' dhread dimness o' danger" (159) lurks. The shift of attention from the street to the home forces the audience—especially O'Casey's contemporary audience who have come explicitly to see "Ireland's warriors passin'" (152)—to consider what it is about the violent spectacle that is so alluring.

The tenement thus becomes an instrument for creating a Brechtian Verfremdungseffekt—a method of separating the nationalist narrative and the rhetoric of political figures from the enticing visual spectacle. O'Casey's characters continually comment on the importance of the visual aspect of these performances—they have "to have a look" (152); a look the audience is not granted. From the tenement, audiences only overhear the speeches, cheers, battles, and the characters' descriptions of looting and home fires.[16] The moments of

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[15] The insurrectionist potential of public performance and the role it had played in the Rising, prompted British authorities to "nervously forb[id] any public meeting or procession in Dublin" (Moran 33) on the event's first anniversary.

[16] Nicholas Grene notes in *The Politics of Irish Drama* that "the dramatised events of Easter Monday morning, already by 1926 so famous, including the appearance

emotional appeal that characterized the Rising—the parades and public meetings of the Irish Citizen's Army—are hidden off stage or relegated to the margins and the rousing speeches of Connolly, Clarke, and Pearse are disembodied. Throughout the play a call to arms is heard drifting in and out of open windows:

> It is a glorious thing to see arms in the hands of Irishmen. We must accustom ourselves to the thought of arms, we must accustom ourselves to the sight of arms, we must accustom ourselves to the use of arms…. Bloodshed is a cleansing and sanctifying thing, and the nation that regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood…. There are many things more horrible than bloodshed, and slavery is one of them. (162)

O'Casey goes so far as to omit the names of the rebellion leaders, in this case Pearse, attributing the speech only to "*The Voice of the Man*" (162). The result of this detachment of the language of the speeches from the spectacle of seeing an "Irish warrior" declaim his political position strips away the gravitas and exhibition that the characters (and the audience) are invested in and the possibility of the Andersonian "image of communion," leaving the audience to ponder the piece of propaganda objectively.

The theatrical paradigm evoked in the characters' participation in such political performances signals their awareness of and keenness to participate in a sort of visual dialogue. The social and political identity of O'Casey's tenement

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of the troop of British cavalry, are narrated in the distanced style recommended for Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*" (142).

dwellers is predicated on appearances. While Peter and Willie are comic characters and their dressing is purely theatrical, as Mrs. Gogan suggests: "I don't think I've seen nicer, mind you in a pantomime" (158), their comic "soldier-dandy" (Waterman 44) costuming provides a counterpoint to Jack Clitheroe's more serious and problematic fascination with the visual spectacle of the military.[17] It is posited that Jack's desire to be part of the Irish Citizen Army was based primarily on his desire to don the uniform. An expository conversation between Fluther and Mrs. Gogan demonstrates Jack's concern with appearances:

> FLUTHER. How is it that Clitheroe himself, now, doesn't have anythin' to do with th' Citizen Army? A couple o' months, an' you'd hardly ever see him without his gun, an' th' Red Hand o'Liberty Hall in his hat.

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[17] Cathy Airth reads the costumed mock battles between Peter and the Covey that occur with comically large swords in the home as "analogous to the national conflict" (45). Airth argues that "O'Casey uses the Covey/Peter battle to bring the fight indoors, suggesting that all fighting, including national conflicts, is not but juvenile games of supremacy" (45). However, it seems more likely that in having the Covey and Peter's "national" battle occur within the home, O'Casey indicates that politics and national conflict pervade the home and foreshadows the invasion the tenement at the end of the play. Nora's comment, that they "don't know th' danger of them things" (*Plough* 148), is a rather clear admonishment of the use of weapons in dress and spectacle that distances the implements from their violent purpose.

> MRS. GOGAN. Just because he wasn't made a Captain of. He wasn't goin' to be in anything where he couldn't be conspishuous. He was so cocksure o' being made one that he bought a Sam Browne belt, an' was always puttin' it on an' standin' at th' door showing it off, till th' man came an' put out th' street lamps on him. God, I think he used to bring it to bed with him! (140)

This conversation exposes Jack's predilection for the markers of military importance and heroism. His gun, "th' Red Hand o'Liberty Hall," and the Sam Browne belt are cobbled into a "conspicuous" costume that projects his political identity. The play insists that he fetishizes the objects themselves and is fascinated by his own appearance in this costume as he models in front of the mirror or the doorway "showing it off," but has little knowledge of or interest in the political implications of his accessories. O'Casey overtly demonstrates that Jack's identity is more performance than substance.

If Jack represents the performance of the Irish hero bearing arms to protect the homeland, his counterpart, his wife Nora, represents the other half of this national narrative—the stable, affluent, upwardly mobile domesticity that the Rebellion sought. The home, as it is represented in nationalist propaganda and on the national stage is almost always an idealized inversion of the English colonial stereotype—which means there is an emphasis on ownership, security, affluence, respectability, and morality. In *The Plough and the Stars* the impulse to "keep a home together" (158) is evinced in Nora's performance of class and manners and her attempts to stage her home with the trappings of luxury and stable domesticity. Like Jack, Nora's identity is rooted in a lexis of visibility and she is

defined by her costume. As Mrs. Gogan wanders about the Clitheroe flat, taking stock of the material possessions in the room, she is asked to sign for a hat box that is delivered and comments: "God, she's goin' to th' divil lately for style! That hat, now, cost more than a penny. Such notions of upperosity she's gettin'" (137). Nora's clothing—"a tailor-made costume, and … around her neck a silver fox fur"—gestures towards her class pretensions, or as Mrs. Gogan put it, her "upperosity." As Nora adds pieces of clothing and models her accessories, including the newly arrived hat throughout the first act, the audience ascertains that her costume is elegant, yet incongruous. Like her husband, she creates a mélange of social markers—in this case related to class and her marital, domestic status.

Nora's "overdressin'" is an extension of her larger concern of keeping up appearances and respectability. Her central preoccupation in the first half of the play is creating the appearance of a stable, moral home. The play opens in Nora's flat with a long stage direction that brings into focus her attempts to stage the flat and the play's metatheatrical elements: "The space, originally occupied by folding doors, is now draped with casement cloth of a dark purple, decorated with a design in reddish purple and cream. One of the curtains is pulled aside, giving a glimpse of a front drawing-room, at the end of which can be seen the wide, lofty windows looking out into the street…." (135). The draping of the casement cloth is a symbol of luxury that is repeated throughout the play as this type of adornment is as out of place in the tenements as Nora's costumes, and as Alexandra Poulain observes, the curtains also recall the stage curtains (157). This is a sign of metatheatricality that is easily read, as the audience is presented with a

smaller version of a curtained stage on stage. The curtains control what is seen and unseen, or what the audience will perceive as private and public. The curtains in the Clitheroe home are always open indicating that the home, like Jack and Nora themselves, has been carefully crafted and arranged for public performance and consumption. As the home is such an important symbol of nationalism, this aesthetic framing and image of performativity or deliberate construction is particularly marked.

Nora's efforts to signal affluence are evident in the arrangement of the props: "*The room directly in front of the audience is furnished in a way that suggests an attempt towards a finer expression of domestic life. The large fireplace on right is of wood, painted to look like marble…. Over the clock is hanging a calendar which displays a picture of 'The Sleeping Venus'. In the centre of the breast of the chimney hangs a picture of Robert Emmet. On the right of the entrance to the front drawing-room is a copy of 'The Gleaners', on the opposite a copy of 'The Angelus'…. Near the end of the room, opposite to the fireplace, is a gate-legged table, covered with a cloth. On top of the table a huge cavalry sword is lying*" (135). Nora collects cultural artifacts to evince an identity—the paintings signify an upper-middle class cultural capital, while the photo of Robert Emmet and the sword indicate political allegiances. Most importantly though, the stage directions reveal that the "finer expression" of domesticity is predicated on the manipulation of theatrical signs—the paintings are "copies," the wood painted to look like marble, tables draped with cloth to conceal their rougher bases. The careful arrangement of domestic artifacts is indicative of a desire to maintain a semblance of an ordered and secure home, but

O'Casey's insistence that such emblems are facades suggests that these of shows of opulence and stability have shaky foundations. Nora's performance of class in dress and mannerism puts her at odds with her neighbours who are, for the most part, offended by her pretensions to manners, and her home stands apart from the rest of tenements visually and literally as she has her door secured with a new lock.[18] The presence of the lock and elaborate staging of domesticity, however, are irrelevant when warfare breaks out. The pomp and spectacle of political propaganda that has engendered an appreciation for appearances in Jack and Nora becomes their downfall.

It is Jack's desire for conspicuousness and his inability to part with his costume that results in his death.[19] When Captain Brennan and the other ICA members shed their uniforms in favour of inconspicuous civilian clothing, Jack refuses, as a result of his "*patriotic* fascination with fancy uniforms" (Schrank 11), and his inability to separate the romantic myth and spectacle that preceded the Rising from the reality that ensued. There is a trace of Synge's "Playboy," in Jack Clitheroe—a character continually costumed and playing a part, but where his community casts Christy as a cult-hero, Jack casts himself. His desire for a public role and his focus on heroic visibility, are as Nora predicts his downfall:

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[18] The new lock makes visual the securing the home and nation subtext.

[19] In "Saying 'No' to Politics: Sean O'Casey's *Dublin Trilogy*," Shakir Mustafa observes that "O'Casey's male characters, in particular, show nationalist discourse as a web of futile proclamations and gestures more destructive than these characters would ever suspect" (96).

"Your vanity'll be th' ruin of you an' me yet…That's what's movin' you: because they've made an officer of you, you'll make a glorious cause of what you're doin" (158). While traditionally Irish theatre had stressed the connection between a secure home and a stable homeland, O'Casey's representation of Jack rends the two apart indicating that the private and public ideals of nationalism evinced in propaganda are incompatible.[20] Jack is forced to choose between the domestic and the street, the protection of his home and homeland, his wife and Ireland. His choice provokes Captain Brennan's evidently falsified heroic tale of Jack's death, and fulfills Jack's desire for martyr-like status:

> He took it like a man. His last whisper was to "Tell Nora to be brave; that I'm ready to meet my God, an' that I'm proud to die for Ireland." An' when our General heard it he said that "Commandant Clitheroe's end was a gleam of glory." Mrs. Clitheroe's grief will be a joy when she realizes that she has had a hero for a husband. (244)

But the comment jars savagely with the stage image of Nora Clitheroe. Presented as crazed, she has lost a child after her struggle with Jack and wanders the deconstructed tenement adrift in the illusion that her husband and child are alive. Jack's death for an ideal has not only proven bankrupt, but his abandonment of the home has jeopardized the future of his family.

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[20] This, of course, is true more broadly as well. Fanon stresses the "close connection between the structure of the family and the structure of the nation" (*Black Skin, White Masks* 141).

Nora's theatricality too proves dangerous, as her representations of their home as opulent make her a target for looting and she is forced to move to another flat with her neighbours. Nora ends the play in Bessie Burgess's "*small attic room (the other, used as a bedroom, is to the Left), the ceiling slopes up towards the back, giving to the apartment a look of compressed confinement...There is an unmistakable air of poverty bordering on destitution. Right is an oak coffin standing on two kitchen chairs*" *(200).* The cramped room is permeated with squalor and decay and, as the final act progresses and war rages in the streets outside, the space attracts an ever-growing population of neighbours seeking a room with fewer windows through which they may be shot. As in Synge, the idealized image of the secure Irish home becomes coffin-like—the tenements are "vaults that are hidin' th' dead, instead of homes that are sheltherin' th' livin'" (138). The illusory spectacle and security of the home and homeland is shattered as O'Casey demonstrates the results of the Rising, not only for Ireland's "warriors," but also for its civilians. The homes to which civilians are now confined are stifling and claustrophobic, yet provide no shelter or safety—as we see in Bessie Burgess's case merely looking out the window can result in death. The tenements are penetrated by the street violence of looters, bullets, and finally by English soldiers who set fire to a number of Dublin homes while sardonically singing, "Keep the home fires burning."

O'Casey reintroduces the violence of the Rising to audiences that had been more content with the theatricalization of heroes and the national myth-making that derealized the destruction caused by the events. The gruesome death of "Ireland's warriors" and the disintegration of the home and homeland prompt the

audience to consider the foundations of propagandistic images and rhetoric of the Irish home as an idealized retreat for which continual self-sacrifice is needed.

Juno and the Paycock

O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock,* which premiered on March 3, 1924, like Synge's dramaturgy, "succeeded in 'annoying' the Catholics as well as the nationalists, the two most sensitive and influential moulders of public opinion and behaviour in Ireland" (Krause 65). While there was only "some grumbling in Dublin" (Krause 38), in Cork the play was revised to eliminate references to religion and sex and "dialogue was added to indicate that Bentham had married Mary Boyle before he deserted her" (Krause 39). The alterations show that, as in Synge's work, the "un-Irish" aspect of *Juno* was the disruption of the image of the ideal home and family. With the backdrop of The Anglo-Irish Treaty (1921) and the Irish Civil War (1922-3) though, O'Casey's probing of the efficacy of the emblem of the home and the security of the homeland, had even more overtly political and satiric connotations. In *Theatre and Globalization: Irish Drama in the Celtic Tiger Era*, Patrick Lonergan argues that, in light of the new Irish state, O'Casey, "took nation to be a relatively stable category—one that needed to be challenged, broadened, and subjected to a process of continuous renewal" (62). While Lonergan refers to the controversy of *The Plough and the Stars*, the same mode of evaluation of nationalist rhetoric and imagery is at work in *Juno*. O'Casey presses further than Synge's domestic interferences, and illuminates the central conflict of the home on the Irish stage—the gap between Naturalism and nationalist ideals, reality and illusion. Through the unsuccessful marriage of Juno

and her husband (the paycock), the collapse of the home as a result of reliance on credit, and the disastrous effect that illusion has on the Boyle children, O'Casey signals the perils of performing ideal, secure homes.

O'Casey's focus on the tension between the Abbey's Naturalist homes (as mirrors up to the nation) and the idyllic underpinnings of the symbol is evident even in the play's title. The titular Juno alludes to the Roman goddess of marriage and hearth, and the matriarchal connotations of the name are heightened, as she has adopted it to reflect the events that have shaped the Boyle family. Captain Boyle explains that "Juno was born an' christened in June; I met her in June; we were married in June, an' Johnny was born in June, so wan day I says to her, 'You should ha' been call Juno,' an' the name stuck to her ever since" (27). Thus, the assumed name—a sign of her marriage and maternity—establishes her role as the central force keeping the home together and bringing life into it. O'Casey takes pains to indicate that Juno is not a marker of idyllic domesticity though, as she embodies the family's socio-economic position as well. The stage directions note that she would "*were circumstances favourable…be a handsome, active, and clever woman,*" but "*her face has now assumed that look which ultimately settles down upon the faces of the women of the working-class*" (6). The family's impoverishment is thus part of her corporeality. Enshrouded by the domestic name that "stuck to her," and bearing the mask of the Boyles' economic position, Juno is thoroughly a symbol of realism in the home. Her husband, Captain Boyle, is referred to in the title only by the derogatory moniker, "the Paycock," that she has ascribed to him. The moniker points up his vanity and illusory displays of manliness. In contrast to Juno whose name is domestic and physically embodied,

her husband's name, "Captain Boyle," is a purely public persona (he was never a Captain, and barely a sailor) that he has fabricated to align himself with a national mythology of military heroism. Boyle's quotidian costume, a "*faded seaman's cap*" (10), performative walk, "*a slow, consequential strut*" (10), and his use of Joxer as an audience for his revised autobiography establish him as a theatrical character of his own fashioning. His personal performances continually put him at odds with both his wife and his reality. The title, in separating the two—they are not the Boyles', but Juno and the paycock—denotes the impossibility marrying a realistically represented home with the idealistic, imagined national narratives that the Captain effectuates.

Replicating the fault-lines established in the title, the opening of the play positions Juno as the primary proprietor of an impoverished Dublin tenement.[21] In the first act, Juno manipulates and controls the domestic space—its arrangement, provisions, visitors, and even how inhabitants interact with the room. Inverting the patriarchal ideals of popular myths of peasant men protecting the home, it is the wife who is largely responsible for the sustenance and protection of the Boyle family.[22] In particular, and in a realist vein, Juno is concerned with eliminating

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[21] O'Casey, like Synge, utilizes the Abbey's predisposition to Naturalism to illuminate the impecunious conditions of the working-class rather than to project an ideal of upward-mobility.

[22] In *Black Skin, White Masks,* Fanon contends that "the family structure and the national structure are closely connected. Militarization and a centralized authority in a country automatically result in a resurgence of the father's authority. In

Boyle's self-aggrandizing narratives that often differ so drastically from reality that they are understood as childish exaggerations that undercut his authority.[23] His claims to an ideal stereotype of masculinity and authority are perpetually deflated by Juno's realist barbs: "Everybody callin' you 'Captain', an' you only wanst on the wather, in an oul' collier from here to Liverpool, when anybody, to listen or look at you, ud take you for a second Christo For Columbus!" (14). Boyle's deliberately theatrical roles are incompatible with the realities of his home, where his wife and children easily perceive and articulate the divergence between his costume and posturing and the reality of his lack of experience.

Boyle's performance in the street and the pub, and his relationship with Joxer denote an atmosphere of publically performed masculinity and a jocular appreciation for national hero stereotypes.[24] Joxer, with his habit of repeating

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Europe and in every so-called civilized or civilizing country the family represents a piece of the nation" (120-1). Fanon's observation, while it came several decades after Synge's and O'Casey's ironic plots of patriarchal protection, illustrates the significance of such inversions and the vehement reactions of nationalists.

[23] Ironically, Boyle's fantasies about participating in the control of the homeland undermine his potential role as paterfamilias. On the one hand, his childish development of romances illustrate a superficiality and frivolity that delimits his family's respect for him and on the other, the myths literally remove him from the home—he exorcises his personas by "struttin' about town" (6).

[24] Cathy Airth argues that "Generally, nationalism has, as George Mosse notes in *Nationalism and Sexuality*, adopted an 'ideal manliness and built its national

Boyle's words and breaking into songs of Ireland's history, provides the perfect audience for the Captain's revised autobiography and digressions on the "counthry's …state o' chassis" (35). Joxer easily coaxes Boyle into unrestrained fantasies by playing on his desire to perform a compensatory manliness. For instance, Joxer imagines a history where Boyle is "steppin' the deck of a manly ship, with the win' blowin' a hurricane through the masts, an' the only sound you'd hear was, 'Port you helm!' an' the only answer, 'Port it is, sir!' (23). The references here to a "manly ship," the danger of an expedition, and Boyle's unquestioned authority as a Captain requite his role in the home where he is regarded as a fibbing child. Joxer also sets a theatrical mood and atmosphere for Boyle's illusions and the brief prompt launches an elaborate reverie, where Boyle constructs a narrative of sailing from Mexico to Antarctica (23). In essence, Joxer makes a "playboy" of the Captain and, having given his character parameters to work within, hangs on every word of the tale that develops as Boyle waxes poetic:

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stereotypes around it' (10). This ideal insisted on 'virility and manly bearing' (Mosse, *Nationalism* 10). Boyle's virility, however, is an act, and his performance of it as contrived and comical as the seaman's cap on his head" (43). The impossibility of making this nationalist performance of virility coalesce with the reality of the home and its reservation for a male audience, Joxer, thus indicates a widening gap between the cultural mythology of men protecting the home and the homeland and the realities of the nationalist movement. It also signals that the roles played out on stage, in parades, and in the cultural imaginary have more to do with jocular posturing and posing than politics.

> BOYLE. An', as it blowed an' blowed, I ofen looked up at the sky an' assed meself the question—what is the stars, what is the stars?
>
> VOICE OF COAL VENDOR. Any blocks, coal-blocks; blocks, coal-blocks!
>
> JOXER. Ah, that's the question, that's the question—what is the stars? (23)

Joxer's mirroring expressions encourage Boyle, and demonstrate that he is a rapt audience, perhaps mimicking Abbey audiences' inclination to interact with tales of heroes by adding quips and singing nationalist ballads. Significantly though, the voice of the coal vendor outside penetrates the illusion and undercuts the game. In his refrain, "what is the stars?", Boyle demonstrates that he cannot see beyond gleaming displays and illusions—the reality behind the brightness of the stars is incomprehensible to him. His poetic evocations are answered with realist cries of "coal-blocks," which eliminate the romance and mystery of the image. The coal vendor's interruption reminds Boyle of the mundane realities of his environment, thus deflating the tale. Once realism has intruded upon the fantasy the story cannot be restarted, despite several attempts. With the return to realism marked by the reminder of domestic necessities, comes the return of Juno to the home, which impels Joxer to "*fly[…] out the window*" (24), along with the fantasies he induced.

Like Boyle's fantasies, Joxer, who fosters them, is incompatible with the domestic space. And, as the primary proprietor, Juno has banned the urban tramp from the home. Perpetually afraid of being caught visiting the home, Joxer darts in and out of windows and doors, lingers beneath ledges, and at one point, even

waits on the roof. Visually, the erratic movements of the tramp portray what was typically a serious, politically coded melodrama trope of the stranger in the house in a slapstick style. Further, Joxer's sieges on the home from all possible entrances and angles emphasize the penetrability of the space—it is no longer simply a matter of closing the door on the interloper, as earlier peasant plays like *Casadh an tSúgáin* suggest. The home is entirely permeated by the threads of fantasy and nationalist tales that Joxer helps to weave. Significantly, the problematic interloper is not an un-Irish figure, but an audience that promotes an illusory past. O'Casey collapses the myth of the tramp-storyteller seducing the wife, and runs interference in the marriage by ironically playing on the husband's vanity. Joxer, whose "*eyes have a cunning twinkle*" and whose "*face is invariably ornamented with a grin*" (11), functions as a trickster figure who slyly exploits the conflict between Juno's realism and Boyle's theatricality.[25] His aggravation of the tensions in the Boyle home and the attention he draws to the contrasting ideological positions of the husband and wife frequently take on a political tone. After a long musing on Captainly adventures, Boyle becomes incensed that Juno has banned Joxer and mimics the language of Home Rule in a performative

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[25] In addition to Joxer's being cunning and perpetually bemused (suggesting his deviousness), O'Casey provides an interesting description of him: "*he may be younger than the Captain [who is sixty] but he looks a lot older. His face is like a bundle of crinkled paper*" (11). The references to Joxer looking ancient and having a paper-like face are perhaps a sign of the long, literary tradition of trickster figures he is drawn from.

attempt to reassert control of his space. Speaking to Joxer, Boyle exclaims: "Today, Joxer, there's goin' to be issued a proclamation be me, establishin' an independent Republic, an' Juno'll have to take an oath of allegiance" (24). Referencing both the 1916 Proclamation of Independence and the Anglo-Irish Treaty, which required a pledge of loyalty to the British Crown, Boyle deliberately unites his assumed dominance over the home and the security of the homeland and lays claim to the nationalist ideals of masculine control. The reclamation of his authority though is merely a performance for his devoted audience, Joxer, and at the sound of Juno's voice outside, Boyle rushes to tidy the mess they have created and Joxer flees. Juno's entrance immediately deflates Boyle's bravado. After castigating him for foolishness, she orders him out of his "moleskin trousers" (25)—his man about town costume—undercutting his performance of masculinity and literally stripping him of his illusory role. Like Synge's comic portrayal of Dan Burke's patriarchal assertion of control, the tone here is farcical and inverts the power structure of the Boyle household.[26] Significantly, through the conflation of Boyle's control of the home and the language of Home Rule, O'Casey probes the ideology and language that new Irish state rests on. In having his buffoonish Captain draw upon the storytelling and cult of masculine heroism undergirding nationalist narratives of security and,

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[26] The relationship between Boyle and Joxer, too, is similar to the tone of the relationship between Dan Burke and Micheal [sic] Dara at the end of *In the Shadow of the Glen*, where male camaraderie and storytelling is substituted for Nora's productive labours in the home.

ultimately, fail to control his home, O'Casey signals the ineffectuality of performance in place of action.

While Boyle's playing of the paterfamilias or the Captain throughout the first act is a light-hearted parody of the hero-protector role and a nod to a stage-Irish character, the feckless Captain (Duggan 190), the reliance on appearance and illusion that it reveals becomes increasingly problematic. Intensifying the instability of the home and family, the flat is infiltrated by a second illusion-fostering interloper, Charlie Bentham. Bentham betokens the promise of fortune in the form of a distant relative's will. The financial insecurity of the Boyle household, already reliant on credit, is compounded by the promise of the illusory inheritance as it results in a restaging of the home to comply with their new social class. When the second act of the play opens, the impeccable Naturalist staging of the working-class tenement is notably altered: "*the furniture is more plentiful, and of a vulgar nature. A glaringly upholstered armchair and lounge; cheap pictures and photos everywhere. Every available spot is ornamented with huge vases filled with artificial flowers. Crossed festoons of coloured paper chains stretch from end to end of ceiling…Boyle, in his shirt-sleeves, is voluptuously stretched on the sofa*" (31). The home's new décor is marked by its "vulgar" and "artificial" nature—the replicated photos and cheap paper chains suggest an attempt at staging the home with an eye to upward mobility and pretensions to a middle-class ideal, but also stress the temporary, transient nature of the home's

provisions.[27] The illusory inheritance entices even Juno into ceding some of her realism, as she appears carrying a gramophone purchased on credit (34). The artifice and replicative functions of the gramophone too are illumined when Mary claims it is "destructive of real music" (34). This comment is notable as it suggests that these copies and reproductions are deleterious. In the garishly ornamented space Boyle stretches "voluptuously" smoking a clay pipe, as if part of the scenery, indicating that this is his domain. As if to underscore the home's shift from Juno's realism to Boyle's fantasies, the act opens with Boyle hailing Joxer's entry and his claim: "I'm masther now, an' I'm goin' to remain masther" (31).

The home, staged ideally, but bankrupt and listing between reality and illusion, is both physically ensnaring for the Boyle children (the space itself and their material conditions) and ideologically fatal, as they lose the ability to separate performance from identity, staging from ownership, and appearance from motive. Their education in reading performances and images has shocking and deadly repercussions. Interestingly, both Mary and Johnny are silently present in the home as the curtain rises on the first act, illustrating their ensconcement in the space—they are products of the atmosphere—and both children are forcibly removed from the tenement in the final scene. Read allegorically, O'Casey's

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[27] Michael Kaufman argues that, "O'Casey has calculated every detail to emphasize the aura of unreality about this scene. Suggestive visual details of furnishings and decorations transform the drab tenement into a setting of fantasy" (193).

characterization of and trajectory for the Boyle children seems to suggest that the rigid encodings of the symbol of the home and the insistence on hailing performance as reality afflicts future generations. Mary is a conflicting blend of Juno's matter-of-factness and the paycock's susceptibility to vanity. The stage directions note that as the play opens she "*is arranging her hair before a tiny mirror perched on the table. Beside the mirror is stretched out the morning paper, which she looks at when she isn't gazing into the mirror*" (5). The juxtaposition of the newspaper and the mirror is striking. The newspaper illuminates the gruesome realities of the civil war and its effects on the tenement (the death of their neighbour, Robbie Tancred), while her posing in front of the mirror signals her inheritance of her father's habits of performance and costuming.[28] O'Casey further emphasizes the discordances in her sensibility by indicating that "*two forces are working in her mind—one, through the circumstances of her life, pulling her back; the other, through the influence of books she has read, pushing her forward*" (5).[29]

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[28] Like Christy Mahon's glass gazing this points to the Abbey's Naturalist mode and demonstrates an inversion. Rather than reflecting the nation, the mirror is presented beside it (or beside an account of national events) and Mary has to divide her attention between the two.

[29] Significantly, Boyle castigates Mary for reading "buks only fit for chiselurs" (21). The influence of literature, though it may at first be considered a gesture of illusion and romance, is tempered by the fact that she is interested in European playwrights, and Ibsen in particular, denoting an interest in international theatre

The circumstances of her life and her education in illusions and affected manners result in her inability to read Bentham correctly. Bentham, a conspicuous stage Englishman who traffics in images, is aptly described by Jerry as a "lanky strip of a Micky Dazzler, with a walkin'-stick an' gloves!" (18), and the Boyle family is entirely "dazzled." Even Juno's realism is tempered by her desire to impress the suitor-intruder. Juno is "in a flutter" (35) when he arrives and pre-scripts their evening, explaining before she admits Bentham: "We'll han' the tea round, an' not be clusthered round the table, as if we never seen nothin'" (35). The desire to set the stage for the event evinces her attempt to echo the suitor's seemliness and middle-class customs. Naturally, Boyle takes up a patriarchal, national hero role and speaks of the country's crisis. Mimicking her parents' performances for the interloper, Mary enters "charmingly dressed" (36). The brief relationship between Mary and Bentham is reminiscent of melodramatic plots of an English gentleman marrying an Irish maiden in hopes of securing the land and "marrying" the two countries. In Mary's case, however, the plot is inverted and Bentham utilizes his gentlemanly appearance and ability to act the role of the suitor to take advantage of her physically and to abscond with the family's legacy.

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and a desire for a worldly education, while Boyle would rather she (and everyone for that matter) only read histories of Ireland (33) demonstrating a tendency towards isolation. The reference to Ibsen is also interesting. Like the Abbey's dramaturgy, Ibsen's work is Naturalist, but rather than projecting ideals of propriety and familial relations, Ibsen used the mode to query and critically evaluate his contemporary quality of life and issues of morality.

In *Inventing Ireland*, Declan Kiberd reads Bentham as "rapacious Englishman who leaves a decent Irish girl pregnant" (219) and suggests that the plot "could be read as an allegory of the British withdrawal which seemed to create far more problems than it solved" (219).

Pushing the political implications further, more than indicting the Englishman who has left Mary—now destitute and unable to marry or create a secure, sustainable family—carrying a child into an uncertain future, O'Casey censures the father figure who has been blinded by illusions throughout. Boyle, while he plays the role of fatherly authority, fails to protect the home from the dangerous interloper. Rather, he has invited the intruder into the home and fostered the relationship by performing a role of upward mobility and worldly knowledge that would match the guest's class, education, and interests. Even as he is told of Mary's state, Boyle fails to see through Bentham's dazzling façade, exclaiming, "my God, what'll Bentham say when he hears that?" (61). Boyle refuses his responsibility for inviting the interloper into the home and blames the "tyranny of foreign influence" (to borrow Gonne's words on *In the Shadow*): "Her an' her readin'! That's more o' th' blasted nonsense that has the house fallin' down on top us!" (61). Boyle's attack on foreign literature seems to strike at the very intent of the Abbey—to perform something "Irish" and untouched by foreign hands. By putting this claim in Boyle's mouth and suggesting that foreign literature is the only thing elevating Mary's circumstances, O'Casey suggests that the typical images of Irishness trafficked on stage and the refusal to accept new forms is stifling future potential. It also indicates that Boyle only glances at surfaces, as he refuses to take action or grasp the reality of the situation. The

foreign influence of literature poses no threat to Mary's future; the foreign influence of the English intruder whom Boyle has failed to stop, however, has severely hindered her. Even more damning than not protecting his home though, is Boyle's casting Mary out. Worried that the neighbours will hear of her promiscuity and that Joxer will make a "pretty show" of him (61), he refuses to allow Mary to stay in the home, prompting Juno to claim she will leave with her. The removal of Juno and Mary—the only sources of income, productive labour, futurity (through maternity in Mary's case), and realism (in Juno's case)—indicates an atmosphere akin to the end of Synge's *In the Shadow of the Glen*. The home is claustrophobic and permeated by increasingly unfounded illusions of status.

Significantly, Mary's removal from the home intersects with Johnny's removal by the irregulars. Like Mary, Johnny is presented as a character conflicted about the gaps between illusion and reality. As a member of the IRA he often echoes propagandistic speeches, but his rhetoric is glib and hollow and jars with his temerity and persistent anxiety. When he is presented to Bentham as a national hero he claims he would serve in the Easter Rebellion again "for a principle's a principle" (27), but the realities of the conflict are born on his body. Johnny "*is a thin, delicate fellow, something younger than Mary. He has evidently gone through a rough time. His face is pale and drawn; there is a tremulous look of indefinite fear in his eyes. The left sleeve of his coat is empty, and he walks with a slight halt*" (8). Like Juno's embodiment of the reality of material conditions, Johnny's body is a site of trauma and loss that acts as a physical marker of the nationalist clashes throughout the play. His extreme youth, his physical

impairment, and his look of "indefinite fear" deflate his already shaky and uncertain rhetoric and problematize Boyle's posturing as a hero as well—as Boyle's performative claim to the role, despite his lack of real involvement, appears rather dark when paired with the physical image of Johnny's youth and suffering. It is significant that both children explain their actions by claiming "a principle's a principle"—Mary uses it to explain her allegiance to the Trades Union (8) and to summarize her brother's impairment (9), and Johnny uses it to signal his belief in the nationalist effort (27). The children's glossing of these social and political roles with the simple statement illuminates that they are willing to accept ideological positions based solely on façade. The context, motives, and effects of the principles that they adhere to and the arguments that they repeat are often unquestioned.

Having joined the nationalist movement at a remarkably young age, Johnny becomes increasingly aware of the rift between the political ideals and realities of warfare. In large part, the tension in his character centers on his difficulty reconciling himself to the pledges he made as a "boy scout" (27). In moments of clarity, he functions much like Juno and deflates the family's manner of reading propaganda: "It'll soon be that none of you'll read anythin' that's not about butcherin'!" (6). Johnny's comment demonstrates that he is aware of the cult of the martyred hero and that he fears the spectacle is obscuring the realities of death. However, despite his occasional clarity, he feels the need to play the role for company and demonstrates an attachment to the rhetoric of the nationalist movement. At the center of his wavering between performance and reality is his

recognition that despite ideals of protecting the home and homeland, through his role in the bid for Home Rule, he has lost his ability to dwell in the real nation.

Much of Johnny's unrest is rooted in his involvement in the death of his neighbour, Robbie Tancred. In fear of the irregulars and attempting to avoid retribution for a botched attack, Johnny becomes tramp-like. Juno claims, he is "sleepin' wan night in me sisther's, an' the nex' in your father's brother's—you'll get no rest goin' on that way" (35). In light of his physical danger and emotional turmoil, he mimics his parents' staging of the home to denote comfort and security, and relies on an image of protection—a Marian shrine.[30] In addition to an obsession with keeping a candle burning in front of a picture of the Virgin and a statue of Christ (9, 38, 39, 68), he frequently invokes the saint for protection. After having a vision of Tancred's death he encloses himself in a room, has Juno sit between himself and the door, and exclaims: "Shut the door, shut the door, quick, for God's sake! Great God, have mercy on me! Blessed Mother o' God, shelter me, shelther your son!" (38).

Significantly, Johnny's false security based on the iconic image of the Virgin is bound up with his superficial understanding of his political allegiance—or his initial involvement based on the romanticism of the movement. When

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[30] This has a particularly political import as a result of Padraic Pearse's characterization of his mother as Mary in two poems, "To My Mother" and "A Mother Speaks," written in his jail cell, where he compares her to the mother of god (Moran 41).

Johnny is found by a member of his faction at the end of the second act, a "Hail Mary" is heard in the distance:

> THE YOUNG MAN *(at the door)*. You'd betther come for your own sake—remember your oath.
>
> JOHNNY *(passionately*). I won't go! Haven't I done enough for Ireland! I've lost me arm, an' me hip's desthroyed so that I'll never be able to walk right agen! Good god, haven't I done enough for Ireland!
>
> THE YOUNG MAN. Boyle, no man can do enough for Ireland!
>
> *Faintly in the distance the crowd is heard saying*:
>
> Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with Thee;
>
> Blessed art Thou amongst women, and blessed, etc. (50)

The Irregular reminds Johnny of his earlier creed and enforces upon him the reality that such an oath often results in death—even Johnny's physical suffering and emotional anguish as a result of his efforts are insufficient. His earlier poetic flourish that "Ireland only half free'll never be at peace while she has a son left to pull a trigger" (27) and his suggestion that he would serve in the Rebellion again for his principles is made manifest and the import of such remarks is struck home. The revelation that he has adopted his political principles without adequate consideration is curiously intertwined with his fixation with other forms of iconography and imagery through the prayer. The menacing political intrusion—

despite the burning votive—suggests that Johnny's reliance on the image as his only guarantee of security is decidedly hazardous.[31] In order to emphasize the unreliability of icons as signs of safety, moments before Johnny is dragged off the stage the candle in front of the shrine goes out (68). As he is removed from the home Johnny echoes the "Hail Mary" chanted at the first foreshadowing visit. Johnny's mode of reading images, relying on appearances and shrines as a safeguard, and ascribing to principles simply because they are principles, fostered by Boyle's national performances and the illusory security of his home, are deadly for Johnny Boyle.

The removal of the Boyle children from the home indicates that the emblem as a marriage of realism and idealism, or even as a cohesive emblem of home and homeland, cannot support a future generation and that the methods of reading surfaces and icons promoted by national theatricality are dangerous. The destruction of the family coincides with the literal destruction of the home—the tailor, Needle Nugent, takes Boyle's suit (his costume) purchased on credit (56), Joxer steals the bottle of stout (56), Mrs. Madigan takes the gramophone as repayment of Boyle's debt to her (58), the promise of the inheritance is finally declared bankrupt (63), and the home dismantled by creditors removing all of the furnishings (65). Juno, the voice of realism and the force who "kep' th' home together" (64) leaves with Mary, finally rupturing the symbolic marriage. Boyle is left only with his audience, Joxer, to reflect on the chaos. When the two return in

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[31] The "Hail Mary" also invokes the history of Pearse's national martyrdom and the suffering of his mother after his execution.

an inebriated haze, Boyle seamlessly conflates the deconstruction of the home and the state of the nation: "The counthry'll have to steady itself…it's goin'…to hell…. Where'r all …the chairs…gone to…steady itself, Joxer….Chairs'll…have to…steady themselves…No matther…what any one may…say….Irelan' sober…is Irelan' …free" (72). The bitterly ironic final sequence demonstrates Joxer and Boyle's imposition of narrative and theatricality in place of progress and action and the perils of performing, rather than creating, an ideal home.

Since the declaration of Lady Gregory, Yeats, and Edward Martyn's theatre manifesto, which called for "Celtic and Irish plays" that would represent Ireland as "the home of ancient idealism" (378) in 1897 and the establishment of the Abbey in 1897, theatre in Ireland has been a site rife with the potential of communal meaning-making and national unity. Under the direction of Yeats and Lady Gregory, the Abbey provided a stage where the nation was united through theatre—as Lady Gregory puts it, a "work that is outside all the political questions that divide us" (378). This theatre fostered a shared cultural experience that sutured the individual to an imagined national heritage. The Abbey was a central force in promoting the cultural nationalist programmes of the Gaelic Revival that encouraged a self-conscious Irishness in language and speech, dress, mannerisms, and even purchasing practices as a measure of anti-colonialism.

The Abbey's repertoire, and the Irish theatrical canon more broadly, focused on the construction of nativeness and "placeability" and the development of the peasant cottage as a potent symbol of the homeland. Such traditions offered security to a community by providing a timeless national identity, but idealized and dwelled upon the past. In addition, the consistent focus on thwarting foreign

influence and removing the "strangers in the house" (*Cathleen Ni Houlihan*, 7) became limiting. Seamus Deane has noted both the brilliance of this early reaction to colonialism and its "ultimate failure...to imagine a truly liberating cultural alternative" (4). Deane goes so far as to accuse Yeats's work of "asphyxiating aspects of a regional nativism" (6). In their collected work on the state of Irish Theatre in the 1980s-1990s, *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*, Deane, Eagleton, and Said argue that the only escape from the "asphyxiating" symbol of the peasant home and nativeness fostered by first-wave anti-colonialism is an "ironic self-consciousness" (15). While the dramaturgy of Synge and O'Casey has become canonical, the reactions of their nationalist audiences, a group that Eagleton notes "has never been particularly notable for its self-irony" (27), indicates an ironic use of the symbol of the home.

J. M. Synge's *In the Shadow of the Glen* and *The Playboy of the Western World* invert the figure of the tramp and popular melodrama tropes of protecting the Irish home. For Abbey audiences familiar with typical peasant plays, the tramp was an emblem of un-Irishness as he was unable to lay claim to land or legacy. In making the tramp a hero, Synge upsets their expectations. The tramp, as a result of his ability to free himself from geographic and cultural fixity, functions as a freeing force. Countering nationalist tales of middle-class propriety, Synge presents the Irish cottage as poor, loveless, and confining. In *Shadow,* the tramp, by running interference in the violent husband's plots for retribution, frees Nora Burke from her coffin-like domain. Similarly, Christy Mahon, the playboy, frees

Pegeen from a marriage dictated by birth and heritage.[32] More important than the penetration of the Irish home and the disruption of myths of legacy though, is Synge's exploitation of his audience's generic expectations. His work conforms to the Abbey's "mirror up to the nation" Naturalism and even develops the atmosphere of typical peasant plays, and then renders the beloved ideal peasant landless and ruthless, forcing audiences to consider their emotional reactions to idylls like "The Unfaithful Wife," *Casadh an tSúgáin,* and *Cathleen Ni Houlihan,* and their manner of reading nationalist propaganda.

The "great gap between gallous stor[ies] and a dirty deed[s]" (Playboy 116) that Synge's work illuminates is seized upon by O'Casey, who shakes the "tinsel of sham […] from the body of truth" (*Letters* 169). The dangerous claustrophobia of Synge's homes is translated into the rented, transient nature of O'Casey's Dublin tenements, which are threatened by destitution and the street violence of The Easter Rebellion and the Irish Civil War. The inhabitants become tramps by the end of the plays, but in addition the homes are intruded upon by political violence in the form the Black and Tans in *The Plough and the Stars* and the IRA irregulars in *Juno and the Paycock*. More overtly political than Synge, O'Casey illuminates the problems of performing an ideal home and national identity. O'Casey's characters are frequently lost in illusion and performance. Both plays are set in symbolically staged homes that fetishize images middle-class domesticity and propriety that are deconstructed—as a result of warfare in *Plough*

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[32] While she does not depart with him, she mourns his loss and casts off her intended Shawn Keogh, at the end of the play (118).

and creditors in *Juno.* The imagined, illusory homes are abandoned by O'Casey's male figures, which display an equal fascination with the military uniform and heroic mythology of heroes and perform their roles in the street and pub. O'Casey's sharp admonishment for his audience's acceptance of the performativity of the symbol of the home and political events, echoes Synge's fears of the Abbey audiences' expectations and manner of reading theatrical nationalism.

While the symbol of the peasant and the Irish cottage would remain relatively intact (and attacked by modernists from Joyce onwards), Synge's and O'Casey's ironic deconstructions of the home and disruptions of the Naturalist, nationalist "real Ireland" provided the antecedents of the fragmentation, sardonic humour, and globalization that play an instrumental role in second-wave postcolonial Irish theatre. The parody of Irish stereotypes, alterations of the tramp, and generic reconstructions of the Abbey's "real Ireland" Naturalism as kitsch evinced in the work of contemporary playwrights like Friel, McPherson, and McDonagh find their roots in Synge's and O'Casey's riotous traditions.

Remapping Memory: Scenographies of Home and Homeland in Brian Friel's *Translations*

The establishment of The Field Day Theatre Company in 1980 by Brian Friel and Stephen Rea and the production of their first play, *Translations*, was a watershed moment in Irish theatre history. Friel, from Derry, and Rea, from Belfast, had achieved international renown, but both were frustrated by a lack of community theatre in Northern Ireland that might address the issues of political violence, cultural division, and images of Northern Irish identity circulating in the media and theatre abroad. Together Friel and Rea conceived of a theatre company that would act as a fifth province for Ireland—a creative, imagined space where the modes of constructing national identity could be reconsidered. Their desire to create a new space for the nation mirrors, quite directly and wittingly, the Abbey's national theatre manifesto. Friel himself claimed in an interview "maybe Field Day is some kind of pretentious attempt to imitate what Yeats was striving for" (Friel qtd. in Gray 8). The alignment of Field Day with the Abbey illuminates the commonalities between the two theatres—an understanding of theatre as a political tool and the use of theatre to create a shared community and to counter negative national representations. However, it is significant that when this type of national theatre project emerges for the second time in Ireland, it emerges in the midst of the Troubles in the North. In a landscape characterized by sectarian division and with an audience well-versed in using a lexis of visibility to perform acts of identity and political affiliation—through dress, marches, public demonstrations, murals as sites of cultural memory and visual signifiers of

segregation in cities—the need for a post-colonial praxis and a more flexible understanding of national identity is evident. Field Day's mode thus diverges sharply from the theatrical tradition of the Celtic Revival. Rather than a utopian space "that is outside all the political questions that divide us [Irish citizens]" (Gregory 378), Field Day's fifth province, is a space where the divisive issues of national representation and cultural discourse could be redressed. If the Abbey's auditorium sought an image of communion—a mirror up to "the real Ireland" that fixed national identity, Field Day cracks that mirror to produce a forum for dialogue between divided communities in its auditorium and to investigate the validity of that national ideal. Seamus Deane claims that the company "contribute[s] to the solution of the present crisis by producing analysis of the established opinions, myths and stereotypes which had become both a symptom and a cause of the current situation" (Deane, *Ireland's Field Day* vii-viii). For Deane, the Abbey's "real Ireland" is one of these "established myths" that must be done away with. Rather than a fixed image of the homeland that one must replicate on stage or be labeled "un-Irish", Field Day considers national representation a series of maps—both an image and a mode of interacting with the national landscape. Deane's analysis reveals that the myths and stereotypes of nationality are no longer simply literature or caricature, they have resulted in a socio-political crisis.[1] As the first performance of *Translations* demonstrates, the

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[1] In "Language, Myth, and History in the Later Plays of Brian Friel," F. C. McGrath argues that "in demythologizing some of these images and myths, they [Field Day] hope to alter the cultural foundations that sustain many of the

fixed images of Irishness have become identity maps for individuals, as well as entire communities, and have quite literally re-shaped the landscape to reflect these cultural myths and stereotypes.

It is unsurprising, given their identification with and attempts to distance themselves from the Abbey that Field Day strikes at the central image of communion that the Abbey promoted—the stable home. Like the early domestic disassemblages of Synge and O'Casey, Field Day confronts the nationalist imagery of the home and its narrative of insiders and interlopers by ironically inverting it—rendering the home uncanny and demonstrating the potential of the tramp. The effects of this ironizing of the home are amplified by Northern Ireland's liminal geopolitical position—not entirely part of the Republic of Ireland or Great Britain—the territory is left out of the national programme of Gaelic Ireland in the Republic[2] and Othered in British representations. J. C.

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traditional prejudices that inhibit cultural and political harmony. As they demythologize the old histories and myths, they hope to supplant them (in a cautious and self-conscious manner) with new ones that are free from the colonial perspectives, those of both the colonizer and the colonized, that have encased Ireland's history for the past eight hundred years, free that is, both from the old prejudices and myths handed down through the republican tradition and from the myths of official British history" (535).

[2] As Brian Graham argues in "Ireland and Irishness: Place, Culture and Identity," the construction of the Nationalist version of home "had never accommodated the Protestant, industrialized counties of north-east Ireland. However, Irish-Ireland

Cornell illuminates that "throughout the 1980s representations of Northern Ireland in British television drama impeded the efforts to end the violence by encouraging a form of 'psychological withdrawal' from the North on the part of the British public. By depicting Northern Ireland not only as 'alien' but as in fact antithetical to Britain in every way, these representations complemented a political agenda that sought to deny responsibility both for creating the conflict and for failing to bring it to a swift conclusion" (Cornell 71; qtd. Maguire 5). This representation of the North as alien, other, or not British was intensified by the proliferation of the Northern Irish Terrorist as a stock figure in theatre and film during the period. Representations of Northern Irishness as Other might find a corollary in former projections of Irishmen as un-English, drunken peasants and later savage Celts.

Northern Ireland's simultaneous inclusion in another nation and an exclusion from its cultural maps has resulted in a state of unhomeliness. Seamus Heaney has characterized the experience of living in the North as "liv[ing] in two places at the same time and in two times at the one place" (Heaney,

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provided the cultural ethos of the 1937 Constitution, fulfilling the admonition of one nationalist politician that: 'If Ireland as a nation means what [Eamon] de Valera means by it, then Ulster is not part of that nation' (cited in Bowman 1982: 338). The invented geography of Irish-Ireland thus paralleled other dimensions of nationalism to create an Irishness that empowered and legitimized the new state. It was a powerful and exclusive ideology that–particularly through its Catholic ethos–imposed a startling degree of manipulated cultural homogeneity upon the twenty-six counties" (8).

"Correspondences: Immigrants and Inner Exiles" 22). This makes the tramp, a figure that is neither landed ("placeable" and sutured to the nation) nor exiled (apart from the nation) a particularly apt symbol for Northern Irish identity. As in Synge and O'Casey, the tramp for Field Day is a figure outside of national narratives or maps and as such can navigate fractured, divided geographies and speak to the complexity and heterogeneity of Irish identities. The trope of insiders versus interloper-tramps though, is adapted to the uncanniness of the North and complicated by Field Day: the tramp is not invading a home, but simply being at home. Field Day harnesses this potential of being an interloper at home in practice by becoming a pseudo-national tramp theatre. Field Day is a distinctly Northern Irish theatre that permeates isolated communities by crossing sectarian fault-lines and by hosting performances in ghosted public or political spaces that force audiences to experience the national divisions firsthand. The tramp's concern with geography and the stakes of national representation is played out in Field Day's first event and the plot of their first play, *Translations.* The play restages a moment of national history (the undertaking of the English Ordnance survey) in a manner that focuses less on the loss of Gaelicism and more on the identity conflicts that result from attempting to live in two maps at once—a new colonial/political map and an older cultural map. Friel employs the plot of the intruder in the house in the form of Owen, a character who plays both the colonial servant and the "cultural translator," both the prodigal son returning home and the interloper. Staging this historical moment in still contested colonial spaces, such as the Derry Guildhall, allows the audience the possibility of confronting historical, political, and cultural maps and creating new cultural memories.

From the outset, Friel and Rea demonstrated a desire to permeate communities shut off from the commercial centres along the Belfast-Dublin-Cork axis and to "clear the ground" of sectarian and colonial divisions in order to bring about a province without borders. As Marilynn Richtarik elucidates in her study of Field Day's history, *Acting Between the Lines: The Field Day Theatre Company and Irish Cultural Politics 1980-1984* (2001), many of Field Day's governing members "reached political awareness during the 1960's" (6) in a climate characterized by a heightened sense of how identity maps and stereotypes could result in physical, geographic boundaries:

> Separation, more than confrontation, characterizes relations between Protestants and Catholics in the North. Even in such a small place it is possible to live with almost no contact, except for the most formal kind, with people from the other side. The poet Michael Longley has spoken of the 'invisible apartheid' that held sway in the province until the late 1960s, and, although more widely recognized now as problematic, division between Protestants and Catholics is still a fact of life in much of Northern Ireland. (5)

Throughout the 1960s, this geopolitical separation (or segregation) was contested by the civil rights marches of the nationalist, Catholic minority in the North. The marches sought an end to forced internment, an unfair allocation of jobs and housing, and gerrymandering. The housing situation was of particular importance because, in addition to creating Catholic slums, it allowed for electoral

divisions—Catholic communities were often outside of the city limits—which produced an artificial Protestant majority.[3]

NICRA's marches functioned by laying claim spatially to areas of cities from which the Catholic minority were typically excluded. In "Performance and Potentiality: Violence, Procession, and Space," Jonathan Harden argues that "the potentiality of the simple act of walking where one is not supposed to becomes a weapon used against the space in which it finds itself. This is a confrontation of human and environmental agency, the violence of the individual against the power of architecture, the claim of the outsider to share or wrest a space that is not yet their own. Procession rehearses violence against the control of built environment. It is the embodiment of spatial agency, of claims to rightful habitation of exclusive spaces" (196). Throughout Northern Ireland, procession organizers attempted to wrest the space from Unionist domination by proceeding through Protestant areas. These acts of procession have deeper implications too, as they enact a performance of cultural identity and historical legitimacy: they establish a cultural claim to space in Northern Ireland, as well as a geographical one. This is perhaps most clear in Derry—a walled city that projects itself as a secure seat of Protestant rule for its resistance to Jacobite and Irish sieges in the

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[3] Derry, Armagh, Newry, and Downpatrick, for example, are cities with Catholic majorities in counties with Protestant majorities. In Cookstown and Enniskillen this situation is reversed (Richtarik 4).

17th century.[4] Eamon McCann, an organizer of the Derry civil rights marches "press[ed] for a route which would take the march into the walled city, proceeding through the Protestant areas like Waterside, across the Craigavon Bridge and into the Unionist procession to enter that area" (qtd. in Purdie 138-9; qtd. in Harden 189-90). The march was banned because of the proposed route that would take an act of political and cultural defiance through the "symbolic haven of British unionism" (Harden 190). Disregarding the ban, the marchers continued with their plans, but the protest resulted in violence. While the demonstrations were peaceful through the early 1960s, they turned into violent clashes between Catholic and Protestant communities towards the end of the 1960s precisely because of this claiming space. The start of the Troubles is usually placed at 1968-9, after a series of demonstrations resulted in street warfare.[5] The initial hope of communication and cooperation fostered by the early civil rights movement was dashed by the

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[4] Unionists refer to it as "The Maiden City." Its flag features a tower and a cross to signal allegiance to London and an annual Orange march celebrated the day the siege of 1689 broke (Richtarik 10).

[5] In October of 1967 the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) organized a march in Derry that was banned by the Stormont government. A hundred people were beaten by police, which provoked rioting in the city and mounting unrest. Throughout 1968-9 a series of civil rights walks were attacked by groups of loyalists, which led to retaliatory violence. In August of 1969 the loyalist Apprentice Boys' clubs march through Derry to commemorate Protestant rule of the city led to the Battle of Bogside. (Richtarik 19-22; McDonnell 12-21)

violence and reinforcement of divisions at the end of the decade.[6] The portrayal of the conflict as a clash between two cultures "in a timewarp, out of touch with present-day reality, entrapped in a mythical view of the past which leads to an endless repetition of old tribal conflicts" (Ruane and Todd 29) did much to disguise the role that British occupation played in the cause and continuation of the crisis. The situation was depicted as irresolvable. Throughout the 1970's this perception of the Troubles as insurmountable led to a loss of conviction in political action (Maguire 5-10).

While the civil rights marches failed to attain the changes they sought, it is significant that Field Day's members forged their own political beliefs in relation to these moments of asserting identity spatially. Field Day's travelling or tramp theatre directly draws upon the geographic spatial politics that the civil rights marches enacted. Field Day confronts the markers of division in the North as the company crosses the "peace walls" established to segregate communities, but it also brings a corollary mode of finding a solution to the crisis. The NICRA incursions into protected spaces, in some ways, played out the trope of insiders and outsiders, the binary of Self and Other that is so central to Irish theatre and

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[6] These divisions were enforced culturally through re-inscribed narratives of trauma and dispossession, politically through the development of paramilitary organizations like the IRA (Irish Republican Army) and the UVF (Ulster Volunteer Force), as well as the significant increase in British Military presence, and geographically through the increased number of peace walls created between communities.

performance, and the reactions to the marches reinforced these divisions and identities. In light of a growing frustration with political stasis, it became clear that cultural opinions needed to be altered in order to effect lasting political change. The violence of the 1960s and the manner in which the conflict was presented and mediated in national representations demonstrated that altering the underlying attitudes about Northern Irish identity was necessary if a solution to the crisis was to be found. For Field Day, it is not simply enough to assert an identity and claim space; rather, those identities and spaces need to be reconsidered by questioning cultural values and opinions through art. As Heaney, one of the Field Day board members, states: "poetry [and I would add drama] can eventually make new feelings, or feelings about feelings, happen, and anybody can see that in this country for a long time to come a refinement of feelings will be more urgent than a re-framing of policies or of constitutions" (Heaney, "Editor's Note" 6). Friel and Rea share this understanding of culture as a method of overcoming divisions and hope that by developing a distinctly Northern Irish theatre practice they can foster unity. The central aim of the theatre company then was to create a space where nationalist and unionist communities might meet to negotiate a new cultural discourse.

The notion of a fifth province is not unique to Field Day. As Carmen Szabo illuminates, the term originates in 1977 in Richard Kearney's and Mark Hederman's first issue of *The Crane Bag*, a publication that "is created to supply challenging visions on culture, history, tradition and identity and to fill the gaps between the overused binary oppositions that dominated previous approaches to the cultural discourse of Ireland" (Szabo 1). In order to do this work of imagining

a new cultural narrative that eschews the Self/Other oppositions, the *Crane Bag* editors offer the image of a fifth province—an imagined space or blank slate, untouched by the fray, where these feelings about identity and nationalism could be reconsidered. For the *Crane Bag* editors though, as Szabo suggests, this space is internalized—a place "that each person must discover for *himself* within *himself*" (Kearney, "Editorial 1" 4). Szabo reads the difference between Kearney and Hederman's fifth province and Field Day's version as a distinction between a purely imaginative, personal space and a belief that culture might foster political change. She cites Friel's explanation of the term: "it may well be a province of the mind through which we hope to devise another way of looking at Ireland, or another possible Ireland – an Ireland that first must be articulated, spoken, written, painted, sung but then may be legislated for" (qtd. in Szabo 6). The emphasis on legislation points up the theatre's political position—that theatre will change people's opinions about the conflict so that an emergent cultural unity can be put into practice legally and can dismantle the geographic dividing lines.

To push Szabo's reading further, Field Day makes what was an imagined space real, yet transient and flexible, by opening up the theatre auditorium as a forum for opinions on cultural representation, national and colonial history, and the deconstruction of stereotype. In characterizing itself as a travelling company, Field Day renounced the potential of being cast as a national institution by refusing to be localized. As Deane suggests "the idea of a theatre without a roof over its head is precisely right" ("Heroic Styles" i). Field Day's refusal of a fixed address allowed them to turn sites within the communities into spaces for

communication and reflection.[7] Harden, taking de Certeau's assertion that "There is no place that is not haunted by many different spirits hidden there in silence, spirits one can 'invoke' or not'" (108) as his departure, argues that "in Northern Ireland, this spectral cache has been increased by hundreds of years of political terrorism, and the geographical polarization that resulted. While all phenomena are, of course, temporal, and without a doubt conflict in Northern Ireland is infused with history, it also has a series of geographical dimensions. Here, suggest Shirlow and Murtagh, 'residents transform daily occurrences and emotions into a symbolic system of territorial attachment' [14-18]" (Harden 194). In refusing a utopian, purpose-built theatre Field Day forces audiences to consider their territorial attachments and allows for the formation of new spatial and cultural memories. Architecture that had previously only carried political or ideological weight becomes the site of a communal memory shared across sectarian boundaries. In its practice then Field Day acted as an intervention, creating an auditoria where citizens of various political and religious backgrounds could gather and proving that communication, even agreement, on issues of national representation was possible. In addition to these incursions into isolated

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[7] Friel claimed that "every effort is to be made, through this and future productions, to reach the widest possible audiences" ("World Premiere of Friel Play to be Staged in Derry" 25), and in the Fall of 1980, *Translations* played in a series of rural towns lacking a civic theatre building. The production went up at "the Rainey Endowed School, Magherafelt; the Patrician hall, Carrickmore,; the Technical College, Armagh; and Enniskillen High School" (Richtarik 11).

communities, the first play they staged—*Translations*—calls for a reconstruction of the national home and an inquiry into the identities sutured to it. The theatre company highlighted this theme by distributing critical pamphlets on nationalism and colonialism by theorists, Edward Said, Fredric Jameson, Terry Eagleton, and Seamus Deane. Thus, Field Day achieves spatially what Kearney and Hederman gesture towards discursively.

The company's first production—the world premiere of Friel's *Translations* in Derry—is the quintessential example of how the playwright and Field Day intended their oeuvre to function. The choice of Derry is marked for its location in the Northwest. Although a large city, it shares with remote western areas the problem of unemployment and the feeling of isolation. It is also a border city. As Christopher Morash notes, "looking out the Guildhall's windows during rehearsals, the cast could see the hills of the Inishowen peninsula where the play is set, across the border in the Irish Republic" (234). The experience of cultural isolation and national boundaries is felt with particular intensity in the city. Derry is marked by colonial division and renaming. The city's official name Derry/Londonderry (often simply called stroke city) illuminates its history as a colonial settlement. In addition to these more formal markers of division, the city is frequently considered "the cockpit of the troubles" (Richtarik 11). With a population that is largely Catholic and nationalist ruled by a very small Protestant minority, Derry was the site of some of the most intense clashes of the Troubles—most notably, the Battle of the Bogside and Bloody Sunday. As Stephen Rea argued in the *Derry Journal* "the play has a great deal of political resonance. If we put it on in a place like Dublin's Abbey Theatre, its energy would be contained

within the theatre and its clientele. But its energy is bound to spread much more profoundly through a place like Derry" (qtd. in Morash 238). Rea aptly demonstrates the potential of this tramp/ghosting theatre by comparing the transient and potentially dangerous Derry stage to the Abbey's more placeable locale and oeuvre. To perform a state of the nation play in the midst of a divided, bombed landscape elicits a more immediate affective response than to perform it in a national theatre where the stage image of Gaelic Ireland being remapped might be taken as nostalgic rather than pressing.

The earliest reviews and accounts of attending the original production of *Translations* reflected the circumstances of violent armed struggle, as well as the novelty of a world premiere in the city. Stephen Dixon describes the setting in the *Guardian*: "Derry in the drifting, drenching September mist. Green-uniformed RUC men cluster in doorways. From time to time an Army Land Rover squelches past, with the inevitable man riding machinegun at the rear. The outside of the Derry Guildhall, where Brian Friel is adding the final polish at rehearsals of his new play, *Translations*, is forbidding: a high wire fence all around and a gauntlet to run of locked gates and security men" (qtd. in Richtarik 59). As an audience member, (and the play attracted a significant international audience, especially British critics as Friel had a literary following), one was forced to experience issues of colonial renaming and remapping first hand. The experiences of crossing colonial fault-lines to get to the theatre, perceiving the division and oppression in the community, and being frisked by the English military on the way into the auditorium illuminate the devastating problems that the city and the North faced. Witnessing the effects of the colonial situation in navigating the landscape and

taking in a play about the consequences of colonialism would foster an environment where audience members were willing to consider solutions.

Fig. 2. British troops behind barricade in Derry

In addition to choosing this colonially riven city, Field Day further points up the problems in the North by using the Guildhall as an auditorium. Lisa Fitzpatrick argues that historic theatre spaces in Northern Ireland "were something else before they were interpellated into theatre spaces, and therefore have the potential of 'bleeding through' in the process of reception" (180). What "bleeds through" in the case of the Guildhall is a history of colonial conflict, military control, and social marginalization. The Guildhall—a government building, colloquially referred to as "the mayor's fortress"—had long been a symbol of Protestant rule and a favoured target of the IRA precisely because it symbolized Unionist domination of the city. When *Translations* opened on September 23, 1980, the Guildhall was barricaded against further terrorist attacks

and still covered with the scaffolding used to repair damage done by the last round of bombings. As Fitzpatrick notes, performances that take place in historic sites "gather layers of meaning and create meanings beyond the boundaries of the performance by creating new memories and new embodied experiences of the sites. The spectators have entered the barracks or the gaol, have engaged imaginatively with an enacted story of grief, loss, death, and war, have stood in the cold exercise yard, walked through the cells, and touched the iron bars. In doing so, the spectator changes the site and in turn is changed by it" (183). As audience members entered the Guildhall that symbolized political and social oppression, many for the first time, a post-colonial notion of the liminal or minority members of a society retaking the center is worked out spatially. The spectators' experience of and interaction with the space creates a new "embodied experience" at once allowing the politics of the architecture to inflect their interpretation of the performance, and also building a new image and memory for the space.[8]

Field Day's plays reflect the company's interest in geography and its relationship to Irishness. *Translations* does much of the work of "clearing the ground" of geographic and cultural boundaries by re-staging a historical moment of colonial division in Ireland. Fanon argues "the colonial world is divided into

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[8] In a similar effort to cultivate reconciliation, the company also cast Northern actors, heightened the use of Northern accents, and fostered participation as communities took pride in having a professional play staged in their city or observing local talent on stage.

compartments…if we examine closely this system of compartments, we will at least be able to reveal the lines of force it implies" (37), and Field Day aims to examine this map of compartments. Where previous decolonization and political theatre efforts focused on sections of the landscape untouched by colonialism and ignored the lines of force by retreating into an imagined idyllic cultural landscape (in *Translations*, Hugh points this out in his exposition on Gaelic literature [418-9]), Field Day is concerned with showing the process of creating, contesting, and redrawing those lines. In response to *Translations,* Heaney suggested that the play required audience members to examine "the need we have to create enabling myths of ourselves and the danger we run if we too credulously trust to the sufficiency of these myths" (*The Times Literary Supplement* 1980). What is at stake in the historical moment that Friel chose for his play is not veracity, but the limits of and sometimes extreme disconnection between Ireland's literal political map and cultural, mythic maps.

Translations is centrally concerned with taking apart an enabling myth—the protected Irish home and homeland. Set in a rural hedge-school and home in 1833, Friel's *Translations* is often read as in keeping with the convention of peasant Naturalism as a method of staging "real Irishness." The play almost seems to begin in the place where so many of Synge's and O'Casey's domestic deconstructions end—a hyper-masculine, decaying home: "The room is comfortless and dusty and functional – there is no trace of a woman's hand" (1). The stage image recalls the final moments of *In the Shadow of the Glen* and *Juno and the Paycock*, for instance, where two men drunkenly discuss the state of the home/homeland in a room that has been abruptly divested of the material labours,

domestic comforts, and the potential of futurity promised by the female protagonist. Like Synge and O'Casey, Friel presents the home as poor, rough, static and its inhabitants as impaired, deprived, and exiled. The stage directions display the ironic inversion of peasant roots by indicating an atmosphere of decay: "Along the back wall are the remains of five or six stalls…where cows were once milked and bedded.… Around the room are broken and forgotten implements: a cart-wheel, some lobster-pots, farming tools…." (383). The typical domestic setting, one that had been staged with exacting detail at the Abbey, is a space where Friel shows the mythology of Gaelic Ireland as increasingly incommensurate with the uncertain, fragmented or divided experience of the nation. The space is only "the remains" of an image or narrative of cultural history—the implements that had represented "real Ireland" are "broken or forgotten," and the stage itself is "dusty." The set and Friel's comments about the production directly challenge sentimental readings of the play, he argues that his representation of the peasant community is meant to show how unidyllic the nationalist image of the peasant was. According to Friel, the play is a conscious effort to dismantle the image of "real Ireland": the rural cottage as a marker of identity, in light of the growing issues of national identity and representation during the Troubles.[9] Similarly, the plot too, about the cultural and literal eviction

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[9] In response to audiences who read the play as pastoral elegy, Friel has claimed "several people commented that the opening scenes of the play were a portrait of some sort of idyllic, Forest of Arden life. But this is a complete illusion, since you have on stage the representative of a certain community – one is dumb, one is

of the Ballybeg peasants, disavows the nationalist narrative of having had a secure Gaelic home in the recent past by portraying the idyllic cottage as under attack and unhomely as early as 1833.[10]

The irony of the set was intensified by the stage developed for the first production. As the Derry Guildhall lacked a proper stage one was constructed in the space—the layout of that stage along with the sparse set design resulted in a Brechtian theatrical effect. As Christopher Morash explains:

> Consolata Boyle's design was not a conventional naturalistic box set, in that it lacked side flats, and the stage was a seven-sided thrust with 1:16 rake, lacking the proscenium arch usually associated with naturalism. Along the back of the stage, she built a simple wall of unfinished, vertical wooden boards, angled along the top so as to create a false perspective. In this wall were two unframed doors, one stage right and one opening to a small platform, just left of centre at the set's highest point (rising to about 12 feet (3.6 metres) reached by

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lame and one is alcoholic, a physical maiming which is a public representation of their spiritual deprivation" (Friel qtd. in Pelletier 70). His remarks about the play combined with the decay of the set suggest that the rural community he represents is failing even before the English soldiers arrive.

[10] Abbey peasant drama performed around the turn of the century usually set the idylls in the 1850s to appeal to their Dublin audiences whose families had been rural dwellers or farmers one generation back.

> six stairs. There was almost no stage furniture, apart from a table down left, and a few very low scattered stools, so that the set's most prominent feature was the large, open playing space, projecting out towards the audience…. (Morash 239)

Lacking the flats that would enclose the space and the proscenium arch that would frame the image, the staging conventions departed sharply from earlier efforts to use the stage as a mirror up to the nation. The unfinished and evident construction of the set illuminates that the image of the peasant is itself constructed. The stage, littered with broken signifiers of a narrative of national history, is characterized by its "large, open playing space, projecting out towards the audience," demonstrating an attempt to engage with the audience or to have them address representations of Irishness directly. The openness of the space and its lack of a frame reveal that the environment is more forum than auditorium. In its production aesthetic *Translations* contests the traditional staging and images of the nation and illuminates their constructedness.

The choice of the hedge-school as the locus of action, rather than the peasant cottage, points up Friel's determination to erode the calcified national image of the home.[11] As it is represented in *Translations*, the hedge-school is part

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[11] After the sentimental response to the play, Friel composed and produced a companion to the play that turns the delicate irony of *Translations* into an explicit satire (Boltwood 144-5). *The Communication Cord* features a peasant cottage that is purchased and restored by bourgeois Dubliners. The cottage is rented, loaned, and staged—in essence used a prop for characters to claim a certain Irishness—

domestic dwelling, part educational facility, and part forum for political address (it is a space where Lancey addresses the community and where the residents voice their concerns about the state of the nation: their exilic desires, the Donnelly Twins' activities, the sappers' work, the evictions). As it is both a domestic space and a pseudo-political building where the nation is remapped, at first glance, the hedge-school functions like the peasant cottage—it works as a symbol of home and homeland. Friel keeps the domestic section of the hedge-school out of the audience's view though—it remains private and the audience is denied the emotional reaction they might have to seeing a real home on the stage. The characters retreat to the domestic sphere and return from it, inciting a curiosity in the audience, which indicates that the peasant home as a symbol is still at issue. Friel thus addresses the staging of the peasant home as homeland, but critically (it is distanced and off-stage), rather than emotionally (through the nostalgic image of the cottage). The theatrical tradition of being invited into the home or of making the private national character public is denied; rather the audience is invited into a space of education. The third valence of the set (as a school) signals that the play is more concerned with how understandings of identity and national symbols are fostered and circulate rather than in simply invoking a new national image.

In keeping with the Irish theatrical tradition, this symbol of the home and homeland is under attack by interlopers, but the insider-tramp narrative is altered

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throughout the play and then collapses at the end of the play demonstrating its fictive basis.

to reflect the unhomeliness of the North. The initial interloper in *Translations* is not an Englishman claiming land (as in traditional peasant plays, like *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*) or even a dispossessed or working-class tramp (as in Synge and O'Casey), but rather Owen is a character returning home. Friel's stage directions reveal the complexity of this identity: "*Owen is the younger son, a handsome, attractive young man in his twenties. He is dressed smartly—a city man. His manner is easy and charming: everything he does is invested with consideration and enthusiasm. He now stands framed in the doorway, a travelling bag across his shoulder"* (400). Owen is presented as a series of contradictions and he is not as easily read as previous interlopers in the Irish home. He is the prodigal son whose return brings tears to Hugh's eyes (401) and a much needed and desirable "enthusiasm" to the dusty hedge-school room, but he is also deliberately "framed" on the threshold as a typical traveller—a figure that provoked ire in early Abbey theatre. In his embodiment of both centripetal and centrifugal desires at once, he elucidates a tense relationship to home that reflects the audiences' own experiences of the North—for Republicans being geographically attached to Ireland, but ideologically and culturally exiled, and for Unionists politically and ideologically attached to Britain, but geographically situated in a colony. This liminal, uneasy position is further reflected in the audience's presence in the Guildhall—a space into which they have been welcomed as part of a performance of cultural identity, but from which they are normally excluded.

Within the Ballybeg community, Owen is an insider attempting to reclaim allegiance to the community. Moments after he enters he re-establishes his links to the home-school space: "*As he crosses the room he touches and has a word for*

each person" (401). The touch indicates his familiarity with the pupils, and his words demonstrate his memory of their inside jokes—he asks about the declining quality of Anna na mBreag's poteen (401) and Jimmy's imagined wedding to a goddess (402), and even plays his father's linguistic definition game "*partly to show he has not forgotten it*" (403). In his interaction with Sarah, who is newer to the school, he identifies himself as "placeable" (in an Andersonian sense) in Ballybeg—"I'm Owen—Owen Hugh Mor. From Baile Beag" (403). It is significant that he uses a version of his name that stresses his patrilineal connection to his father and ancestors, rather than his Anglicized surname. In a sense, he uses Hugh as his entry into the community. Owen's attempts to localize himself though are rendered complex by his equally developed outsider status. The stage image, in addition to framing him on the threshold, indicates that he is set apart from the environment by his "smart" dress and his urbanity. Indeed, as he attempts to indicate his belonging to the community through inside jokes, the Ballybeg residents hurl questions at him that emphasize his exoticness—he is asked about the city (Dublin) and the rumours of his success as a merchant. Owen's city-dwelling and purported profession place him in stark contrast to the pastoral Ballybeg community and figure him strongly as symbolic of Northern identity, as one of the principal distinctions between the Northern Irish identity and the cultural map of "real Ireland" in the Republic, is the industrialized, urban image of the North.

Owen, flagged as a geographic and social class outsider, also brings with him political interlopers—the English soldiers carrying out the Ordnance Survey of the colony. Even his introduction of Lancey and Yolland seems ominous as,

after he has re-familiarized himself with the community, he announces: “two friends of mine are waiting outside the door” (402). While he means to act as an intermediary between the two communities, he performs a sort of division, keeping the Englishmen outside until he feels he has sufficiently reintegrated himself. It is only through Owen that the British military officials can address the Ballybeg peasants—literally as he translates for them, and symbolically, as they are only allowed into the home-school when Hugh announces “Your friends are our friends” (403).

Owen is similarly an insider and outsider within this second community—employed by the British military as “a civilian interpreter” (404) to “translate the quaint, archaic tongue you people persist in speaking into the King’s good English” (404). Through his employment he is able to align himself with the English sappers linguistically and to some extent politically, as a colonial servant. He remains though, one of “*these foreign civilians*” (404) with whom Lancey is so uncomfortable. Significantly, his name, Owen, is unpronounceable to the English soldiers with whom he works and he is referred to as Roland—a name that linguistically resembles Yolland, the English soldier with whom he is paired. This linguistic slippage that translates or Anglicizes him results in a new identity that shuts him off from his previous identity and community. At best the new name incites laughter in the pupils, at worst it angers his more nationalist leaning countrymen, including his brother, Manus. Owen’s simultaneous belonging to and exclusion from both communities articulates and acts out the tensions of Northern Irish identity, and the experience of being caught between two places, as Heaney puts it.

These tensions between cultural identities are not resolved because they are embodied in one character rather they are felt more keenly. Owen's employment requires that he translate a cultural map of his country (of place names based on memory and lore) into a political, colonial map that is "standardized" (408): readable to the colonizer both geographically ("to a scale of six inches to the English mile" [406]) and linguistically (Anglicized [408]). Rather than being able to interpret between cultures or to produce a map that contains facets of both cultures, he finds himself torn between the two maps (or two understandings of national identity). The divergence between these maps of the nation is demonstrated in the spectrum of mapping activities that all of the characters in the play engage in. As the hedge-school is a space where relations to home and homeland converge it becomes a locus where maps are continually imposed upon one another and renegotiated. Hugh's pupils learn how the maps that suture them to the actual, mythic, and personal Irish landscape function (as do Friel's audience members). At opposing ends of the spectrum on the import of national representations are the colonial view epitomized in Lancey's declaration that a map is a picture on paper (entirely detached from the culture) and the cultural map of the nation represented by Jimmy Jack's mythic epics that create an illusory sense of wholeness (entirely detached from the real landscape). All of the characters in the play struggle to balance, reconcile, and live in both of these national representations. By using the symbol of the map, Friel demonstrates that the national and colonial narratives are no longer simply caricature or projected images of identity, rather they are maps for how people experience the nation and how communities divide along cultural, sectarian lines. The detriment of these

identity maps in *Translations* is that they seal people off from other communities and from relating even to their fellows.

Captain Lancey, "the cartographer in charge of this whole area" (402), is as Yolland puts it, "the perfect colonial servant" (414)—a "*crisp officer, expert in his field as cartographer but uneasy with people—especially civilians, especially these foreign civilians"* (404). Lancey draws the colonial "lines of force" (Fanon 37) through his presence and military control of the area while drawing the actual lines of force on the political map. Given that his position requires him to re-map or re-present the nation, his unease with civilians speaks to his desire to see the landscape as devoid of the cultural memories and "placeable" identities that he must displace in order to render the landscape a colony. In his address, Lancey claims that "a map is a representation on paper—a picture—you understand picture?—a paper picture—showing, representing this country—yes?—showing your country in miniature—a scaled drawing on paper of—of—of—" (406). Lancey's description of the map betrays his colonial logic that lands are blank spaces before they are ordered, sectioned, recorded, and brought into accordance with standard English names and measurements. The landscape for Lancey has "sections" rather than communities, "selected areas" rather than "townlands" (439): it is a "system of compartments" (Fanon 37). He is concerned with an appearance of seemliness and order rather than the political undercurrents or implications of the venture—as Yolland notes later, he is more concerned with the

texture of the paper and neatness of writing than the content of reports (415).[12] His understanding of the nation as a "drawing on paper" evinces his perspective of nations as images rather than lived experiences. Lancey focuses on the importance of the representation of the country: having a detailed, accurate image, and believes the survey is "embarked on so that the military authorities will be equipped with up-to-date and accurate information on every corner of this part of the Empire" (406). His colonial zeal is perfectly encapsulated in a desire for "accurate information of every corner" of the colony, but he avoids the subtext that the mapping activity symbolically stakes a claim to "every corner" of the nation. The charter reads that the survey is meant to end "the violent transfer of property" (406) by producing verifiable borders, but has the opposite effect and the play ends with Lancey's men violently rending the home and homeland from its inhabitants. The denouement of the play proves that what is set out on paper does not work in practice—the ordered image of the colony on paper will result in political and social chaos.

Owen's first task as a cultural interpreter is to explain Lancey's speech to the community. There is nothing unclear about the political implications of the survey, but when Owen translates the address he casts it in terms more compatible with the Irish cultural narrative. He glosses the issue of military presence by suggesting "the job is being done by soldiers because they are skilled in this work" (406). The purpose of the map, the colonial reassessment of land valuation

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[12] "He inspected every single report—even examining the texture of the paper and commenting on the neatness of the handwriting" (415).

to allow standardized taxation and easier military access (Smith 84), is recast as an opportunity to secure ownership "so that from now on you will know exactly what is yours in law" (406). Owen's gross mistranslation displays his ability to speak to the imagined, cultural map of his community, which is predicated on a struggle to maintain land ownership and achieve home rule. The manner in which he completely recasts the terms of the address demonstrates the incompatibility of the two maps. Owen's translation also suggests that his perception of national representation aligns more closely with Lancey's focus on the image of nation on paper. Owen gives little credence to Lancey's words or the effect that the map will have and changes the meaning of the speech almost entirely. This seems to suggest that for Owen the representation of a country is separate from the cultural identity rooted in the landscape of the nation—not because the colony is a blank space, but because personal and cultural identities cannot be altered by changing a name or a symbol.

Jimmy Jack Casey is, evidently, the character most capable of engaging with a private national landscape (and at the opposite end of the spectrum on the cultural impact of mapping from Lancey). As the stage directions note, for him "the world of the gods and the ancient myths is as real and as immediate as everyday life in the townland of Baile Beag" (384). Throughout the play he reads from Greek epics—mythological, national histories that seek to establish (or create) heroic lineages and civic ideals, and to record national character. In particular, Jimmy displays a fascination with tropes of woman as nation (Athena and Grania, especially [386]) and imagines his chances of a marriage to them are real. Jimmy invokes an image of communion with the nation that is at once divine

(a connection to the gods), deeply intimate and experiential as it is sexualized, and material since the imagined marriages would secure property ownership. For Jimmy Jack, the potential of suturing himself to the nation is a possibility. Jimmy's mythic mapping reflects the nationalist Gaelic narrative, but is treated with the same amount of scorn as Lancey's colonial map. For all of the stark difference between their mapping efforts, both Jimmy and Lancey's maps produce the same results: both men are alienated and disconnected from their surroundings and their neighbours. Lancey's colonial view results in his inability to relate to the civilians and even to his own men. Yolland compares Lancey to his father after a revelation of his fractured parental relationship and his inability to communicate with him as a result of his indefatigable pursuit to "order" the colonies (415-6). Jimmy's imagined at-homeness similarly distances him from his environment—he sits alone in the schoolhouse, lives alone, and speaks to himself. He has retreated so far into his cultural map that he is unaware of the realities of his community. When Doalty mentions the new national school that will put an end to the hedge-school, Jimmy gives an utterly confused response "What's that? – What's that?" and is told to "g'way back home to Greece, son" (395). Like Lancey, despite being physically present in Ballybeg, Jimmy lives in another landscape.

In addition to setting them apart from their communities, both Lancey's and Jimmy's perceptions of national maps silence other characters' attempts at self-expression. Lancey's inability to comprehend or speak the civilians' language(s) impedes dialogue and reaffirms colonial caricature. He claims he will "say what [he] has to say…as briefly as possible" (405) before he "*speaks as if he*

were addressing children—a shade too loud and enunciating excessively"(405). Lancey's tone and manner of speech leaves little room for his audience to oppose the legislation or the caricature of the uncivilized, uneducated peasant that he forces onto them in the address.[13] Similarly, in the play's opening scene Jimmy's reveries interrupt Manus's attempt to coax a declaration of identity out of Sarah:

> MANUS. Nobody's listening. Nobody hears you.
>
> JIMMY. '*Ton d'emeibet epeita thea glaukopis Athene…'*
>
> MANUS. Get your tongue and your lips working. 'My name—' Come on. One more try. 'My name—' Good girl.
>
> SARAH. My
>
> MANUS. Great. 'My name—'
>
> SARAH. My…my…
>
> MANUS. Raise your head. Shout it out. Nobody's listening.
>
> JIMMY. '…*alla hekelos estai en Atreidao domois…'*
>
> MANUS. Jimmy, please!... (384)

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[13] The interjections they propose are not understood, even when Jimmy tries in Latin (405)—they literally lack the words to speak back. The only dissent that Lancey comprehends are the "sniggers" that spread around the room as he speaks to them as children (406). Notably this laughter at the foolishness of an authoritarian figure underscores Friel's and Eagleton's understanding of parody and irony as a tool to confront colonial and national stereotype.

Jimmy's readings, which translate as "But the grey-eyed goddess Athene then replied to him" (449) and "…but he sits at ease in the halls of the Sons of Athens…" (449), illuminate his invocation of a civic goddess, his imagined communication and communion with her, and his ease "sitting" in the realm of the mythic. The fact that this narrative intercepts Sarah's speech is marked, as Jimmy inserts an older national epic and woman-as-nation narrative. While Sarah is not silenced altogether, her struggle with the interruptions demonstrate the difficulty of asserting a newer, perhaps less homogeneous or coherent sense of national identity in light of the prevailing "enabling myths." Jimmy's cultural map proves detrimental to others' assertions of national and personal identity.

Translations has very few female figures and, if read as a woman-as-nation, Sarah's muteness illuminates an incommunicable national identity and an internal life that is silenced by nationalist myth, as well as colonial caricature. While Lancey's first speech produces some sniggers of dissent, his final address to the community asserts an enactment of colonial control by a leveling of the landscape and silences Sarah's speech completely.[14] Lancey fumes that he will clear "the entire section" and threatens the residents with his geographic

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[14] Lancey's silencing of Sarah, who may be symbolic of the nation, seems to be the purpose of the mapping and Anglicizing activities. In "Brian Friel's Plays and George Steiner's Linguistics: Translating the Irish," Lojek argues that the "British ordinance team which anglicized the place names of Ireland was part of a deliberate effort to wipe out Irish culture (and therefore Irish cohesiveness and power) by wiping out the Irish language…" (84).

knowledge and spatial control: "*(pointing to Bridget.)* I know you. I know where you live" (440). Despite being able to "place" most of the characters, his geography is confounded by Sarah—perhaps gesturing to that "private core" that is unavailable to the public—and he violently asks: "Who are you? Name!" (440). She is entirely mute in the face of the colonizer: "Sarah's *mouth opens and shuts, opens and shuts. Her face becomes contorted. ... Again* Sarah *tries frantically. ... But* Sarah *cannot. And she knows she cannot. She closes her mouth. Her head goes down*) (440). Unlike preceding woman-as-nation figures, such as Cathleen Ni Houlihan, Sarah, does not assert a distinct, definable identity or a homogeneous understanding of the nation, but rather is silenced—keeping her internal, private map to herself. Sarah's traumatic experience with the colonizer leaves her incapable of expression and isolated from her peers, which parallels the effects of colonial and sectarian violence in Northern Ireland.

Lancey and Jimmy's influences and extreme positions are reflected and mitigated by Owen and Yolland's attempts to forge a new map that speaks to both of their ideologies and backgrounds. Illuminating the complex relationship to home and the Irish landscape that Owen and Yolland share, Jimmy's mythic reveries are paralleled in Yolland's vision of Ireland.[15] Yolland, an Englishman, is

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[15] Friel's displacement of this narrative of ideal Gaelicism onto an English character defuses the potential nationalist zeal and politically charged response it might have elicited if it had been attributed to Jimmy Jack, for instance. In a similar attempt to defuse riotous responses, Elizabeth Butler Cullingford suggests

the cultural counterpart to Lancey's topographical surveying: "*Yolland's official task, which Owen is now doing, is to take each of the Gaelic names – every hill, stream, rock, even every patch of ground which possessed its own distinctive Irish name – and Anglicize it*…" (409). Yolland is meant to replicate Lancey's geographical clearing of every corner of the land in ideological terms. The language here, "to take…every hill, stream, rock…which possessed its own distinctive Irish name" mirrors the colonial effort to provide military authorities with information on every corner of the colony (406), so that the colony is rid of the "foreign civilians" and their cultural claims to the land simultaneously. While Lancey's first address to the community reveals that for him the colony is simply a detailed cartography, Yolland's speech reveals that he perceives the landscape as Edenic.[16] He announces: "I think you countryside is – is – is – is very beautiful. I've fallen in love with it already. I hope we're not too – too crude an intrusion on your lives. And I know that I'm going to be happy, very happy, here" (407). Yolland's understanding of the Irish landscape is steeped in Romanticism and the propaganda of the nationalist movement, and he sees the colonizer's presence as an intrusion on an otherwise idyllic, rural life. For Yolland, Ireland is "heavenly" (414). He openly desires to see the landscape as Jimmy Jack does, claiming:

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that Friel "avoids the mention of the Protestant tradition and evokes the binaries of Carthage and Rome to indict the British destruction of Gaelic culture" (228).

[16] "a general triangulation which will embrace detailed hydrographic and topographic information and which will be executed to a scale of six inches to the English mile" (406)

"when I heard Jimmy Jack and your father swapping stories about Apollo and Cuchulainn and Paris and Ferdia – as if they lived down the road – it was then that I thought – I knew – perhaps I could live here…" (416).

Owen (or Roland) and Yolland are twined in a complementary way, both experiencing the translation of a landscape as a state of in-betweeness. Their employment symbolically positions them in the unhomely, deterritorialized space of the yet unfilled map and literally in the school-house, a space for education about national meta-narratives and maps. Owen's "official function as a translator is to pronounce each name in Irish and then provide the English translation" (409), while Yolland's function is to choose between the offered "approximate English sound[s]" (409). The Irish names nominate a landscape that is disappearing and the English words call into being a landscape that is only "approximate" and will have yet undetermined political, social, and ideological consequences. The stage image in Act II points up the difficulty the men have reconciling their understandings of Ireland to the map and the challenge of finding their places in paper representations:

> *A large map—one of the new blank maps—is spread out on the floor. Owen is on his hands and knees, consulting it. He is totally engrossed in his task which he pursues with great energy and efficiency. Yolland's hesitancy has vanished – he is at home here now. He is sitting on the floor, his long legs stretched out before him, his back resting against a creel, his eyes closed. His mind is elsewhere…. Around them are various reference books, the Name-Book, a bottle of poteen, some cups etc.* (409)

The blank map echoes the colonial attitude embodied by Lancey—that the nation is a blank image without any memories foreign civilians might tie to locations. Owen, the character meant to be at home, is in the process of uprooting his community's attachments to the homeland with the rigor demanded by colonial zeal in an attempt to modernize it. He is uprooting himself as well, as he undoes the very placeableness that he identified with in his first re-acquaintance with the community: he is no longer Owen Hugh Mor from Baile Beag, but Roland O'Donell from Ballybeg (as translated by the English soldiers). Yolland, the interloper, on the other hand *is* "at home," invoking a sort of communion with the place, like Jimmy Jack's, but his at-homeness is purchased solely through fantasy. Yolland is disconnected from his surroundings and from the political map he is meant to be creating—"his eyes closed" to the realities of the task and to the map, and "his mind is elsewhere."[17] The poteen and the cups that litter the floor further underscore the illusory quality of his home—Yolland is drunk on Anna na mBreag's (Anna of lies) poteen. When he attempts to voice the internal cultural map he has been striving to adopt he realizes it is incongruent with his surroundings: he is "*embarrassed*" and reaches for the "lying" poteen (416). Yolland is aware of the impossibility of being able to blend into the cultural map and narrative that he fantasizes about. Eventually, in a moment of sobriety, he asks Owen: "Even if I did speak Irish I'd always be an outsider here, wouldn't I? I

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[17] When Owen attempts to connect Yolland to the landscape he indicates that he is more lost than at home: "Where are we? … I'm lost" (411).

may learn the password but the language of the tribe will always elude me, won't it? The private core will always be…hermetic, wont it?" (416). While Yolland may glean a sense of what the cultural map looks like from conversations with Jimmy and Hugh, the experience of dwelling in it will remain out of reach.

Yolland's inability to access the "private core" of Irishness is reflected in the staging of the play. The domestic sphere is inaccessible and hidden from the view of the Englishmen on stage. Physically, Yolland is unable to perceive the culture with the intimacy, or even ascertain the hospitality, that would allow him to be an insider. This feeling of interloping is paralleled in the frustration of the audience's expectations of Irish theatre—they too are barred from the typical peasant cottage. The domestic space is located in a loft and accessed by a set of stairs that only Hugh, Manus, and Owen use. That the home is left invisible, and very likely unfinished, at the very top of the set seems to suggest that a sort of theoretical or philosophical home space is in the process of being forged in the play. The stairs that link the symbolic home overhead to the school-house where national identities are being remapped are a tricky, transient space. When Manus departs, he warns Owen that "those stairs are dangerous without a banister" (433) and suggests that Hugh may need assistance climbing them when inebriated. Access to the new conception of the Irish home gestating in the play then seems to require both community and clear minds. While Yolland desperately desires a feeling of dwelling, he is shut out of the home and the cultural map of the homeland. The instability his position in Ireland is epitomized by the transient nature of his "home"—his military tent.

Yolland admires Jimmy Jack's connection to the mythic map and comes to understand his potential at-homeness in similar romantic, sexual terms. He considers a relationship as a manner of accessing the private home and the "private core" of the community. Even before he has spoken to Maire in any detail he speaks to Owen of her home:

> YOLLAND. That house immediately above where we're camped –
>
> OWEN. Mm?
>
> YOLLAND. The house where Maire lives.
>
> OWEN. Maire? Oh Maire Chatach.
>
> …
>
> YOLLAND. I hear music coming from that house almost every night.
>
> OWEN. Why don't you drop in?
>
> YOLLAND. Could I? (413-4)

Yolland's continual repetition of "that house" betrays his deep fascination with the Irish domestic space and points up the cultural belonging he hopes to gain through the relationship. Owen's carefree: "drop in," suggests that the domestic sphere is accessible, but Yolland's experience in Baile Beag speaks much more to his interloper status than either of them care to admit. In brief clips, Yolland reveals that "some people here resent us" (413) and that a child spat at him (413). The love triangle plot is, of course, the closest to the Abbey's peasant melodramas and the results similarly illuminate the impossibility of marrying two national representations of Ireland. What figures more strongly in Friel's love-plot though is the basic, unintentional miscommunication between the lovers. In their one scene together, Yolland tells Maire her Gaelic is beautiful to his ears when she

speaks Latin and the stage directions note that: "*each speaks almost to himself/herself"* (429). These speeches to themselves create maps of their shared future life that can never be reconciled—Yolland sees Maire as a way into Ireland, while Maire, who has been desperate to flee Ireland since the opening of the play, sees Yolland as a way out.[18]

The in-between insider and interloper status evinced by Yolland is echoed in Owen's movements back and forth between Lancey's map and Yolland's lore, which is heightened in performance to indicate that he cannot be in both maps at once:

> OWEN. And it's Drimdoo here. What's it called in the registry?
>
> YOLLAND. Do you know the Donnelly twins?
>
> OWEN. Who?
>
> YOLLAND. The Donnelly twins
>
> OWEN. Yes. Best fishermen about here. What about them? (413)

While consulting the jury lists and registry and attempting to connect them to the new political map on floor he forgets who the Donnelly twins are. When he looks

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[18] Like Jimmy Jack, Maire's mapping activities in the school-room are mostly imaginary—she studies the map of America in Act I (394), engages with the maps of England that Yolland draws in the sand in Act II, and eventually in Act III "drops to her hands and knees on the floor—where Owen had his map a few minutes ago—and with her finger traces out an outline map" (437) of Yolland's hometown. What is notable is that her maps are exilic and transient—outlines in the sand.

away from the map and addresses Yolland, he is able to provide anecdotal knowledge about the family and surmise that the Donnellys have "probably stolen somebody's nets" (413), but forgets how they have been changing "Druim." He asks Yolland, "Do you remember – which did we agree on for Druim Luachra?" (413). Throughout the first act Owen managed to shrug off nonchalantly the implications of creating a map of the nation maintaining that names and maps are separate from core identities. In an early private exchange with Manus he glosses military surveying as "standardiz[ing]" and argues that his own name change does not bother him "Owen—Roland—what the hell? It's only a name. It's the same me, isn't it?" (408). Initially, Owen views maps as a factual, modernized "pictures on paper" and dismisses the politics of the endeavour as benign. He sees the political map and the cultural map as separate entities that will remain parallel and have little to no effect on the other. However, in this scene, confronted with the new image of the colony demanded by Lancey and the anecdotal history demanded by Yolland, he experiences a crisis of identity. The back and forth between maps finally crescendos after an exchange where Yolland reveals an insight into the act of map making:

> OWEN. What is happening?
>
> YOLLAND. I'm not sure. But I'm concerned about my part in it. It's an eviction of sorts.
>
> OWEN. We're making a six-inch map of the country. Is there something sinister in that? (420)

Both Owen and Yolland come to the understanding their translations are haunted by "the original name or text…which will not carry over, something that is

untranslatable precisely because it is original" (Deane, "Brian Friel: The Name Game" 107). As they progress towards an understanding that the images of the nation (literal and linguistic) they are creating will affect political and cultural change by possessing a landscape through naming, the future of these original, untranslatable identities and memories becomes pressing. If Lancey and Jimmy are two older, more fixed, opposing poles on the issue of presenting images of the nation, Owen and Yolland suggest the more current crisis of trying to reconcile the two positions—attempting to preserve their cultural identities in a contradictory geography.

Their struggle to reconcile the two maps is interrupted by Hugh who arrives just as Yolland expresses concern about not being able to glean the "private core" of Irishness and his fear of always being an outsider. While Owen, experiencing the same crisis of trying to understand how he fits into the map they are drawing, tries to comfort him by assuring him that he will learn to decode Irish culture, Hugh's very presence indicates otherwise. Part of the "private core" that Yolland cannot access is a tradition of irony with political purpose—especially around narratives of home and exile. In this case, Hugh's donning of Irish caricatures play to Yolland's interest in the "rich[ness] and ornate[ness]" of Gaelic literature (418) which praises heroes and noble peasants. Hugh comes into the second act "*dressed for the road. Today he is physically and mentally jaunty and alert—almost self-consciously jaunty and alert. Indeed, as the scene progresses, one has the sense that he is deliberately parodying himself*" (416-417). Hugh is "self-consciously" putting on a slightly more refined stage Irish persona for the colonizer—he is a lively, funny, drunken peasant dressed as a traveller. While the

stage directions and over-the-top performances of Hugh (especially for Diasporic audiences) suggest that his characteristics are a bit tongue-in-cheek, he seems entirely realistic to Yolland, who "*leaps respectfully to his feet*" (417) when Hugh descends from the home space into the school-house reciting Latin poetry. Yolland fails to question the caricature and perceives Hugh as sincere, even broaching the topic of national literature with him because he assumes that, like Jimmy Jack, Hugh is lost in a mythic landscape. Hugh's costume and "self-parodying" behaviour in this scene require a certain understanding of Irishness, and a certain "insiderness" to grasp. Owen helpfully reveals the more common response to Hugh's normal demeanour: "the children laugh at him" (419). If Hugh's regular antics are fodder for jokes, Yolland's perception of this parodic performance as authentic reveals his marked inability to read the self-parody central to Irish cultural performance.

Hugh's response to Yolland's inquiries about Gaelic literature and the mythic landscape that Jimmy revels in requires a certain amount of critical acumen. Hugh provides Yolland with enough material to confirm his Romantic view with lines like: "A rich language. A rich literature" (418) and "I suppose you could call us a spiritual people" (418), but he also reintroduces reality to myth and issues a sharp indictment of Yolland's politics: "Yes, it is a rich language, Lieutenant, full of the mythologies of fantasy and hope and self-deception – a syntax of opulent with tomorrows. It is our response to mud cabins and a diet of potatoes; our only method of replying to…inevitabilities" (418). Hugh's comment, much like the formal and scenographic aspects of the play itself, demonstrates the sharp divide between national, Gaelic literature that establishes

or stands in for an ideal home and nation and the realities of poverty and colonization. While it is unclear how much Yolland and Owen grasp from Hugh's speech (as Yolland seems to be focused on the superficial details, like the title of Hugh's book, and Owen is lost in the new map) Hugh functions rather obviously as Friel's mouthpiece by revealing the play's central theme—that cultural maps like myth and literature are "methods of replying to…inevitabilities," but they become traps when they fail to respond to changes in the political landscape. Hugh argues that "we like to think we endure around truths immemorially posited" (418) indicating the comfort that individuals and communities attain from "enabling myths," but warns "that a civilization can be imprisoned in a linguistic contour which no longer matches the landscape of…fact" (419). Owen misunderstands Hugh's comment as an obstinate clinging to a past and a refusal to "adjust for survival" (419), but Hugh reveals that, unlike Jimmy, he is aware that nations simply like to create and believe historical narratives of stable homes and homelands, all the while knowing that they are fictional and changeable.

Owen takes a jab at his father by suggesting that he is not prepared for survival in the new colonial map, but his claim is countered by Hugh's composure. Owen "*out of embarrassment*" (418) at Hugh's self-parody asks him to "stop that nonsense" (418) of indulging Yolland's "real Ireland" fantasies. When Hugh continues, Owen interrupts the conversation and attempts to unsettle him geographically—to translate him from the cultural map he is speaking of into the colonial map:

> OWEN. Do you know where the priest lives?
>
> HUGH. At Lis na Muc, over near…

OWEN. No, he doesn't. Lis na Muc, the Fort of Pigs, has become Swinefort. (*Now turning the pages of the Name-Book—a page per name*). And to get to Swinefort you pass through Greencastle and Fair Head and Strandhill and Gorr and Whiteplains. And the new school isn't at Poll na gCaorach—it's at Sheepsrock. Will you be able to find your way?

(*Hugh pours himself another drink. Then:--)*

HUGH. Yes, it is a rich language, Lieutenant… (418)

He is entirely unmoved by Owen's attempts. Hugh's long walks in the community (and of the country more generally) are the subject of some gossip in Ballybeg. His walking is not simply an idyllic engagement with the landscape. Although Yolland attempts to draw a connection between Wordsworth's Romantic wanderings and Hugh's connection to the landscape (417), Hugh understands the act as less idyllic and more political. His first walks in the play bring him into contact with the military officials occupying the community and provide him the opportunity to critique their lack of linguistic facility. At the end of the play he recalls another of his long walks in the Irish countryside as a moment of contesting colonial boundaries: "The road to Sligo. A spring morning. 1798. Going into battle. Do you remember, James? Two young gallants with pikes across their shoulders and the *Aeneid* in their pockets" (445).[19] While Hugh and

[19] The plot of the *Aeneid*, a tramply, wandering that eventually leads to the founding of Rome, poignantly underscores Hugh and Jimmy's walks on this occasion.

Jimmy did not continue on to the battle—deciding to be at home rather than in a rebellion for the homeland—it is clear that Hugh associates the activity of walking through the landscape with the politics of contestation. Even his word choices surrounding walking evince his understanding of the act as an intervention. He refers to his walks with the Latin "expeditios" (49)—"a journey or excursion undertaken for a specific purpose" (Webster's Collegiate 437). The long walks allow Hugh to create physical, personal maps of his landscape—he claims a space in the colonial world by traversing its boundaries and reconfigures the “compartments” into a personal, experiential map of the nation. Friel emphasizes the importance of the words Hugh uses for walking by having the school master ask his students to translate "perambulare" from Latin. While Maire defines the term as "to walk about" (23), it more precise translation is: “to walk through” or “to make an official inspection of (a boundary) on foot” (Webster’s Collegiate 872) heightening the politics of walking through borders.

Hugh's parody of a tramp or "traveller" costume, in contrast to the other characters on stage who are dressed either as soldiers (outsiders) or peasants (insiders), indicates that he is able to cross these boundaries through a sort of ironic play. His performative irony allows him to distance himself from the cultural-national map enough to view it clearly (unlike Jimmy) and to surreptitiously dismantle the colonizer’s supposed superior rationale—the skills that purportedly make them better at mapping and ordering the landscape—since they read his performance as sincere. Hugh's shrewd understanding of the situation and his ability to reconcile the cultural and the political maps eventually signals to Owen that he will be unable to keep the cultural map he identifies with

and the new political map he is aiding to create separate forever.[20]

As Hugh's warning that "words are signals, counters" (419) sinks in, Owen experiences a crisis of identity. Torn between the cultural map his father has just illumined and the colonial changes he feels will modernize the nation, Owen "*drops on his hands and knees and stabs a finger at the map*" (420). For the first time Owen begins to connect the two maps, considering the cultural import or "the signal" that a word on the map sends. He demands that Yolland, who has literally kept his eyes closed to the colonial map, connect with the representation and the cultural narrative as well: "All right! Fine! Fine! Look where we've got to. …We've come to this crossroads. Come here and look at it, man! Look at it!" (420). The uncharacteristic violence that Owen displays illuminates the shift in his understanding that Hugh has sparked. He "stabs" the map, forcefully placing himself, his community, and a cultural narrative onto it. His tone with Yolland forces his counterpart to consider the real implications of his sojourn in Ireland. The language that Owen uses: "we've come to this crossroads," reflects the colonial situation in the play, as Yolland and Owen are deciding how they will represent the Irish nation on the English map (and whether to uphold a cultural narrative that haunts the landscape or replace it). Simultaneously, the moment

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[20] In "Carrying Across into Silence: Brian Friel's *Translations*," Suzy Clarkson Holstein illuminates that "Owen comes to discover that relinquishing the power to denominate himself reverberates in the problematic undertaking he champions. The answer to the question he poses ('[I]t's the same me, isn't it') becomes, I think, 'probably not'" (1).

alludes to the contemporary crisis in Northern Ireland. As Tom Maguire notes:

> …in a televised broadcast on 9 December 1968, the then Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, Captain Terence O'Neill, announced that 'Ulster is at the crossroads'...asking directly: 'What kind of Ulster do you want? A happy and respected province, in good standing with the rest of the United Kingdom? Or a place continually torn apart by riots and demonstrations, regarded by the rest of Britain as a political outcast? (2)

The rousing speech, like Owen and Yolland's critical decision, asked how to reconcile differing images and maps of Northern Ireland. O'Neill's speech would be remembered by Friel's initial audience who were still at that crossroads in 1980. As Owen and his complex interloper tramp status have been figured strongly as the North, it is significant that it is at this crossroads that he finally reveals his own identity: "OWEN: (*explodes*) George! For God's sake! *My name is not Roland!* (421). In answering the question about whether they "should keep piety with a man long dead, long forgotten, his name 'eroded' beyond recognition" (420), Owen asserts that names and images have more import than simply being "a picture on paper" and that his cultural identity is significant enough to preserve in the face of modernization and colonization.

This moment marks the politicization of Owen and leads to his concerted attempts to recover the cultural map of the home and homeland. When the audience next encounters Owen interacting with the map he is returning locale names to their very earliest meanings:

> OWEN. You know that old limekiln beyond Con Connie Tim's pub,

> the place we call The Murren? – do you know why it's called The Murren? –do you know why it's called The Murren?
>
> *Manus does not answer*.
>
> I've only just discovered: it's a corruption of Saint Muranus. It seems Saint Muranus had a monastery somewhere about there at the beginning of the seventh century…. I think we should go back to the original – Saint Muranus. What do you think? (430-1)

Where previously Owen was perturbed by preserving a name that he felt only he remembered the story behind, in this instance, he retreats so far into the cultural landscape that he is discovering histories that almost everyone has forgotten. His zeal for standardizing the names has dissipated: "he has neither concentration nor interest" (430), and is replaced by an excitement about attachment to the landscape. His new relationship to the home is reflected in his interaction with Manus, who has up to this point, been the sibling most concerned with protecting the home and homeland by literally caring for the home space and Hugh, as well as protecting the homeland by refusing the language of the colonizer and attempting to coax Sarah's speech. When Manus's way of life was encroached upon by the English sappers he planned to move to Inis Meadhon—a last bastion of Gaelicism. However, in this scene he detaches from the cultural narrative of the home and instead seeks exile: "*Manus is now rooting about among the forgotten implements for a piece of rope. He finds a piece. He begins to tie the mouth of the flimsy bag – and it bursts, the contents spilling out on the floor"* (431). As he uproots the image of protecting the home he pours over and dislodges those broken and forgotten implements of the nationalist narrative; Owen gives Manus

his bag, a prop that had characterized him as a tramp-traveller, indicating his desire to stay in the home. In an uncharacteristic turn for Irish theatre, the figure most representative of the “real Ireland” myth is exiled, while the changeable, unstable tramp-interloper remains in the home, signaling the complexity of the image of the home/homeland and need for more transient national narratives.

Lest we fear that Owen’s newfound understanding of the import of his cultural map will become as calcified or detached from the landscape of fact, Hugh reveals a manner of navigating the two maps successfully:

> HUGH. We must learn where we live. We must learn to make them [the English names] our own. We must make them our new home.
>
> *Owen finds a sack and throws it across his shoulders.*
>
> OWEN. I know where I live.
>
> HUGH. James thinks he knows, too. I look at James and three thoughts occur to me: A—that it is not the literal past, the 'facts' of history, that shape us, but images of the past embodied in language. James has ceased to make that discrimination.
>
> OWEN. Don't lecture me, Father.
>
> HUGH. B— we must never cease renewing those images; because once we do, we fossilise. (444-5)

Aware that his political map is changing, Hugh attempts to make the new map "home" by learning the English names and expectations. This does not mean acquiescence though, as the stress lays on making it "our new home." Hugh bluntly reveals that it is not Lancey's accurate, factual literal representation of the country that will shape the experience of the nation, but rather the images or

narratives of the past that are preserved culturally. Hugh renews a cultural narrative by adapting a traditional figure—the traveller-tramp—to the new political map by making it ironic, self-aware, and contestational. With Manus, the traditionally focused, nationalist son who was concerned with protecting the domestic sphere taken to the road south towards urban centres and Owen, the trampish son returned home, it seems Hugh has not only employed the image of the tramp ironically in his self-parody, but has also instilled new mapping abilities in his sons. The image of the home as a closed, homogeneous space concomitant with a particular narrative of Gaelic culture is entirely dismantled.

His sons are not the only characters who have benefited from Hugh's remarkable understanding of identity maps and concept of ironically renovating stereotype. As a school-master in a space that acts as a locus of various mapping activities in the play, it seems that the most important lesson Hugh instills in his students is this use of parody. Hugh, Doalty, and Bridget are the only characters in the play that are able to live in both maps and they are all adept at parodic performance. Like Friel's revelation that Hugh is self-parodying, the stage directions for Doalty and Bridget hint at irony and an awareness of staged performance: "DOALTY…*is an open-hearted, generous and slightly thick young man.* BRIDGET *is a plump, fresh young girl, ready to laugh, vain, and with a countrywoman's instinctive cunning.* DOALTY *enters doing his imitation of the master* (390). Doalty and Bridget are described as typical colonial caricatures—the Paddy and the Colleen. On the English stage and in the cultural imaginary these types were meant to demonstrate that the Irish were child-like and incapable of maintaining their land.

Despite giving the characters names that recall typical English melodrama characters (Doalty recalling "dolt" and Bridget being almost as popular a character name as Colleen), there is little evidence in the play to substantiate the naïve, child-like characteristics suggested by the didiscalia. What is evident throughout the play is that they are able to don roles to hide their political activities and that they have a shrewd understanding of the national geography. Bridget reveals that her "countrywoman's cunning" grants her an ability to track the actual, cultural, and political landscape. Under the guise of humour and gossip, she provides warnings of the changing climate in Ballybeg to the hedge-school students. Bridget's comments almost always make reference to local geographies, for instance she announces that she spotted Hugh "coming down past Caraig na Ri" (390) illuminating her skills at observing the literal landscape. Through what seem like pseudo-spy activities, she pinpoints the English soldiers' whereabouts, as well as the potential of blight at Cnoc na Mona (394). Like her counterpart, Doalty, she seems to be aware of the Donnelly's hiding places and frequently reveals snippets of their anti-colonial activities: "two of the soldiers' horses were found last night at the foot of the cliffs at Machaire Buidhe" (393). Bridget always names the specific locales of the landscape in Irish as she shares her findings and this is perhaps the most telling sign that she is more politically motivated than simply gossipy. Early in the play she provides a cultural warning about the function of naming by way of the christening—she tells the pupils that Nellie Ruadh's child will carry its father's name, showing that names indicate paternity or ownership (391). Shortly after she illuminates how this linguistic ownership maps onto the actual landscape in what seems like gossip about the

new National (English) schools being built: "And from the very first day you go, you'll not hear one word of Irish spoken. You'll be taught to speak English and every subject will be taught through English and everyone'll end up as cute as the Buncrana people" (396). Bridget's comment about Buncrana reveals a colonial history of possession—the town was colonized very early as the site of the province's first "big houses," and in 1812 the entire town and surrounding lands were purchased by an Englishman, Isaac Todd ("Culture/History"). Her suggestion that linguistic and cultural acquiescence can lead to such radical dispossession, places the possession of the landscape through the Ordnance survey in sharp relief. While Bridget may superficially act the Colleen—the vain, gossipy maiden—Friel reverses the type so that her gossip is secret intelligence and her connection to the land is measured and precise.

Like Bridget, Doalty's renovation of the stage-Irishman acts out physically the politics that Hugh articulates in the school-room. In the first act "Doalty *enters doing his imitation of the master*" (390) and "*brandishing a surveyor's pole*" (389). As a student of Hugh's self-parody, it is significant that Doalty's first parodic performance is of the master himself, illuminating a similar anti-authoritarian logic. What differentiates the two though is Doalty's physicality. Doalty carries the physical emblem of the mapping—the surveyor's pole—into the school, prompting Maire to ask: "what's the weapon?" (390). He thus evinces the material and physical ramifications of the mapping activity—the measuring, prodding, and possessing of land—and brings the issue of colonial presence to the foreground. He acquired the pole in an act that sought to problematize the sapper's supposed superior rationale and modern machinery (similar to Hugh's

belittling of English education) and tells the other pupils: “every time they’d stick one of these poles into the ground and move across the bog, I’d creep up and shift it twenty or thirty paces to the side…. Then they’d come back and stare at it and look at their calculations and stare at it again and scratch their head. And cripes, d’you know what they ended up doing? …. They took the bloody machine apart!” (390-1). As Manus suggests, the act “indicate[s]…a presence” (391)—a gesture that demonstrates that the community is not a blank map. Perhaps even more strikingly, Doalty’s effort forces the military to take apart the machinery of colonization and problematizes the stereotypes of the rational colonizer and the buffoonish Irishman incapable of maintaining his land. Similarly, the casting of the original production upset the typical portrayal the Stage-Irishman. Liam Neeson played the role of Doalty, and while he adopted some clownish mannerisms, his significant height and stage presence made Doalty and his politics more of a focus for the audience (and potentially, a more threatening figure).

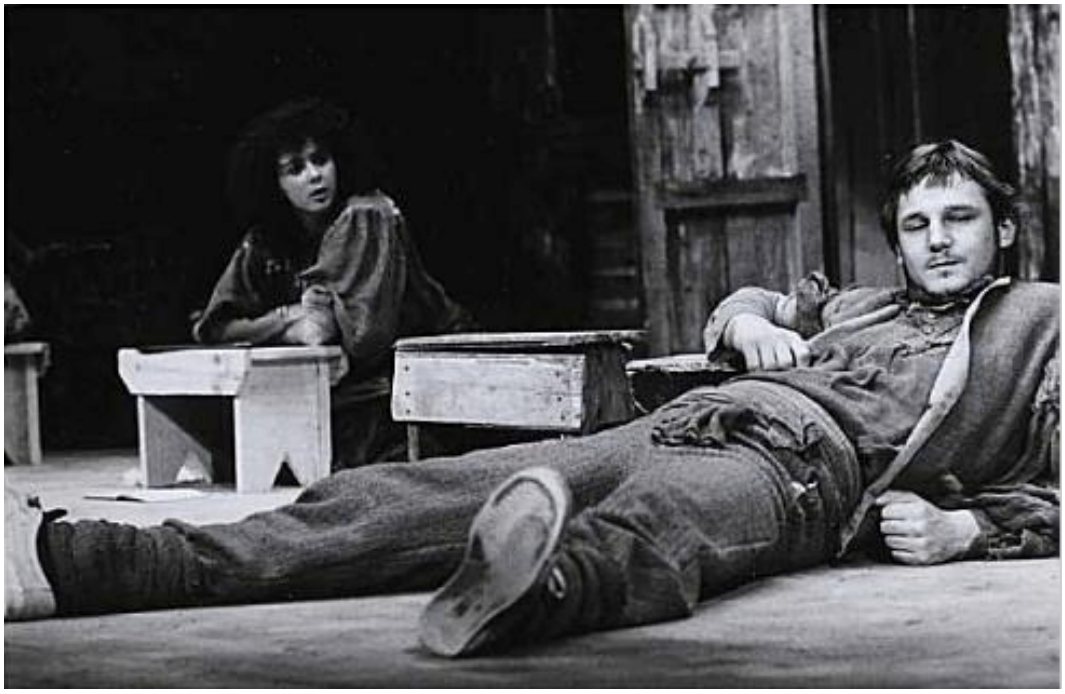

Fig. 3. Liam Neeson as Doalty in *Translations*, Derry Guildhall, 1980.

Like Hugh, Doalty connects the current situation to a history of dispossession and seeks a way to make the map a new home. In a candid moment when he is alone with Owen, Doalty drops his clownish demeanour and claims: "When my grandfather was a boy they did the same thing…. I've damned little to defend but he'll not put me out without a fight. And there'll be others who think the same as me" (441). The "others" that he refers to and that he is questioned about throughout the play, are the Donnelly twins. Doalty is associated with the twins' strikes against the English military and expresses admiration for their attempts to create a counter-map.

Doalty renovates both the stage-Irishman and the Abbey peasant, but his connection to the caricature and to the land is less about irrefutable property rights or mystical connections to the land, and more about tactical cunning. The naïve peasant persona he adopts is used to fool the colonizer, and Yolland tragically

misreads the performance. In Act II, he tells Owen: "I was washing outside my tent this morning and he was passing with a scythe across his shoulder and he came up to me and pointed to the long grass and then cut a pathway round my tent and from the tent down to the road—so that my feet won't get wet with dew. Wasn't that kind of him?" (415). Yolland reads the act as kindness, but given the political undertones of Doalty's other gestures and his connection to the Donnelly twins (who presumably kidnapped Yolland), the moment seems more sinister. Doalty has signalled Yolland's tent as different from the others, and made it visible and more easily accessible from the road. In essence, the landscape around Yolland's tent was carved in a manner that makes him target.

Of course, Yolland's disappearance precipitates the mass evictions in Ballybeg, and just as Doalty introduced the physicality of the map into the school-room in the first act, he summarizes the resultant geographic dispossession in the final scenes. He tells the other pupils that soldiers are "Prodding every inch of ground in front of them with their bayonets and scattering animals and hens in all directions! (434), recalling how the surveyor's poles are stuck into the land for the supposedly benign mapping. And later, upon observing the situation from the school window, he warns: "Cripes, there's millions of them! Cripes, they're levelling the whole land!" (436)—the "complete clearance …of this entire section" (440), proves to be the physical culmination of the blank maps that were renamed and repossessed. In this final scene, as the questions of national and cultural dispossession are made literal with Lancey's orders to "shoot all livestock" (439), "embark on a series of evictions" (439), and "begin evicting and levelling every house" (439), Doalty offers Owen a potential meeting with the

Donelly twins. If Hugh's earlier lecture on cultural memory disrupts Owen's ideology, Doalty provides the possibility of physical action by proffering a meeting with the Donnellys: "Give me a shout when you've finished with Lancey. I might know something then" (442). With this arranged, Owen ascends the stairs to the hidden domestic space, signalling his intention to stay and fight.

The final scene brings together the question of national dispossession, literal evictions, and the unsteady symbol of the home. Hugh and Jimmy Jack enter the school-house, which a just moment before was the site of Lancey's orders to commence evictions, "*wet and drunk*. JIMMY *is very unsteady*. … HUGH *is equally drunk but more experienced in drunkenness: there is a portion of his mind which retains its clarity*" (442). The two men are drunk both on poteen and national myths, Jimmy explains at length that he has final secured a marriage to Athene (443) and Hugh recalls the last time he walked into battle in defense of the nation (445). The scene of two men discussing the state of the nation as they struggle to find balance in an unsteady home space in a homeland under siege recalls many of Synge and O'Casey plays, and particularly, the end of *Juno and the Paycock.*[21] Most surprisingly, Maire is included in the final scene of deconstruction. Synge's and O'Casey's dramaturgy tended to celebrate the female protagonists' tramply freedom from the domestic space and it was often their departure that led to unsteady homes. Characters like Synge's Nora Burke or O'Casey's Juno Boyle embody fruitful, productive labours and carry those

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[21] It is unsurprising that Hugh's final speech is a passage about Juno (the goddess of the hearth) and the destruction of a city that she sought to protect.

qualities with them in their dispossession. Maire is included in the men's drunken concerns about the state of the nation. As Jimmy and Hugh remember the sacking of Sligo and Troy, Maire enters: "I'm back again. I set out for somewhere but I couldn't remember where. So I came back here" (446). Distraught over Yolland's disappearance and confused by the chaos of the soldiers' movements, not only is she displaced from the landscape, but she has ceased to connect her thoughts to the physical space—she is mentally shaken and geographically displaced, and she clings to the hope that Yolland will return. Attempting to maintain a narrative or image of her potential domesticity, she asks Hugh: "what does the English word 'always' mean?" (446), since she has learned the word from Yolland. Hugh's response, "It's a silly word, girl" (446), recalls his earlier speech to Yolland that narratives and images of national, cultural, personal memory must change to accommodate new realities. In this instance, Hugh, as Friel's mouthpiece, reveals that the woman-as-nation trope too is transient and must be revised. While Synge's and O'Casey's plays chart a disintegration of the national image of the home from apparent stability to deconstruction, *Translations* ends where it begins—in the dusty, decaying hedge-school room. The mise-en-scene does not change. The home in *Translations* was never a given, it was always liminal. Over the course of the play, the evicted-interloper identity is extended to the entire community, illuminating the pervasive feeling of unhomeliness.

The Haunted Home: Cultural Memory in Conor McPherson's *The Weir*

Field Day's manifesto and its success at uniting divided communities in the North launched a new wave in Irish theatre and led to an increase in Arts funding for performance, resulting in the development of several new production companies and financial support for a new generation of playwrights. The renewed funding for and public interest in theatre evinced its role as a space for dealing with the trauma of the Troubles. In particular, moving forward meant finding a way to deal with the past—both the very recent past and the political histories that underpinned the conflict. Political think-tanks on reconciliation in the North (and between the North and the Republic) held in the late 1990s, stressed the role of culture in dealing with history and memory: "Strategies for dealing with the past can also include the documentation of victims' stories - in the form of books, archives, poetry, writing, theatre and song - as well as more structured truth-telling processes, ranging from counselling to commemoration through monuments and rituals" (Hamber 84). In the report storytelling is indicated as an important method of commemorating the past while simultaneously releasing it (99). Performative storytelling was a widely recognized tool for communal remembering and release that audiences were familiar with from Seanchai (storytellers who were the history bearers of communities) and wake traditions, which Ray Cashman calls "primary situational contexts for storytelling" (72). The theatre of the 1990s reflected the cathartic role

of storytelling and the monologue became the preferred theatrical mode. In *Theatre and Therapy,* Fintan Walsh suggests that "in the 1990s, particularly in Ireland and the UK, it [the monologue] enjoyed something of a renaissance" as a result of its confessional, therapeutic value (49).

McPherson is one of the staunch advocates of the monologue as a site of community and confession. McPherson, who often writes monologic plays, argues that his storytelling theatre was a direct response to the uncertainty of the period: "Irish drama went 'inside' because our stories were fragile, because everything was changing" (qtd. in Trotter *Modern Irish* 223). The uncertainty that he was responding to was perhaps never more intense than at the moment of the 1997 premiere of *The Weir.* During the height of the Celtic Tiger,[1] a period of rapid economic growth and globalization, and on the eve of the Good Friday Agreement[2] that would lead to peace in the North and the potential for reunification, the nation's cultural identity was drastically remapped. Ireland's membership in global networks, such as the European Union, promoted immigration, trade, and tourism. As a result of Ireland's increasingly urban and international population, the social sphere became more progressive, and with progress being made towards peace in the North, the Constitutional definition of

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[1] The Celtic Tiger lasted from 1995-2001, and recovered after a downturn for a second phase from 2003-2008.

[2] Progress towards peace was made from the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985 to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. The latter agreement contained the right to hold a referendum on reunification.

Irishness was modified. National identity, previously dictated by geographic boundaries, was redefined to indicate that Irish identity may be claimed should citizens so choose. The redefinition also ruptured national borders to include Diaspora, or "people of Irish ancestry living abroad" (*Constitution of Ireland*, Article 3). The revision significantly broke down traditional ethnic and religious identifications and gestured towards the formation of a less restrictive understanding of national identity.

Considering the profound economic, social, and political change that McPherson's monologues respond to, it seems ironic that in *The Weir* he struggles with a very familiar trope and geography—the interloper in the rural cottage. While *The Weir* premiered in London and later travelled to Dublin (metropolitan centres with urban audiences), the poster advertising the play depicted a small cottage beside a mountain stream. The poster (and the mise-en-scene of the play) portrayed a distinctly Western locale, "a region ripe with connections to the 'roots' of Irish identity and nationhood" (Kent 32). The selection of this environment though, is anything but sentimental. Rather, McPherson's rural peasant community, like Friel's Ballybeg, registers the conflict between historical representations of Ireland and contemporary fragmentation through an ironic reconstruction of the traditional home.

There are many interlopers in McPherson's rural community, from Dubliners to international tourists, but the play's most problematic tramps turn up in the form of ghosts—evidence of repressed histories. Rather than being homey retreats for travellers, McPherson's rural cottages are haunted by ghosts of national narratives past. The play takes issue with almost a century of representing

the West as a site of Irish authenticity and parochialism on stage, in nationalist ideology, and in touristic appeals to Diaspora eager to worship at their "heritage's shrine" (Kent 33). *The Weir* suggests that narratives that have used the West (and its homes and land) as an image of communion—Celtic fairy lore, Gaelic peasantry, Catholic Nationalism, and the promise of modernization—have left deep markers in the landscape and a historical residue that haunts contemporary inhabitants. The play negotiates a manner of giving up these historical ghosts.

Set in a rural pub, *The Weir* takes the form of a series of monologues, where everyone in the bar contributes a ghost story, usually about one of the local homes. In performance the scenography is extended to the auditoria—theatregoers seated at small tables share an intimate space with the actors in the bar and participate in the communal storytelling. Overall, the effect of the performance is akin to that of a traditional wake. In *Storytelling on the Northern Irish Border*, Cashman argues that "[e]xchanging anecdotes about the deceased takes part in the wake's overall project of transition by simultaneously evoking the presence of the deceased and bidding the deceased farewell. At the one time, storytelling keeps the deceased alive in narrative during grief and prepares a place for him or her in local collective memory" (86). In *The Weir*, the fixed, historical images of the West that haunt contemporary Ireland, but no longer speak to the state of the nation can be released and reassembled. The importance of this type of theatre-wake is illumined by the fact that the wake acts as a social venue where divided communities meet, since the duty to attend a neighbour's wake and share a story supersedes political, religious, or ethnic divisions (Cashman 77). Given the heightened consideration of the contours of the Irish nation, identity, and history

in the early 1990s, this ability to foster a moment of boundless communal release seems especially necessary.

The play's primary ghost is Western Ireland itself. The region has long been regarded as a source of Irish authenticity as it is both geographically and ideologically the nation's furthest point from England and its colonial influence. As Brad Kent notes, "upon conquering the island [in 1652, Oliver Cromwell] gave the Irish one of history's most famous ultimatums: 'To hell or Connaught,' implying that the natives choose either death or a move to the less fertile lands of the west coast" (31). As a result of the relocation of most of Ireland's Catholic landowners to the West at this early point in colonial history, the area remains the home to a large Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking) population (Johnson 174-5). Furthermore, the West's wild, rural landscape made it untenable even for later colonizers. By the nineteenth-century, the West's anti-colonial history and continued use of Gaelic lent itself to the nation-building movement. During the Revival, the West of Ireland became a site where "a mythic connection between the people, the earth and the Irish nation [was] forged" (Kent 32)—an exclusive place of origin. J. M. Synge's travelogue about the Aran Islands, as well as Lady Gregory and Yeats's interest in accruing plans for cottages and props from the remote West to give their theatre a "real Ireland" authenticity, illuminate the area's role on stage and as an of archive for Irishness that promoted a programme of cultural tourism to "iconic sites of continuity…includ[ing] Celtic monasteries, Iron Age hill forts and megalithic tombs" (Graham, "The Imagining" 197) and, of course, the cottage.

The West, as it was portrayed during the Revival, was such a powerful and stable synecdoche of Irishness that it was utilized to shore up the nation in moments of political turbulence. Brian Graham argues in "The Imagining of Place: Representation and Identity in Contemporary Ireland," that in 1922 "the fledgling Irish Free state derived strength, legitimacy and a unity of purpose from its exploitation of the hegemonic imagery of the West of Ireland as Ireland's cultural heartland" (196). A Gaelic, rural Ireland provided an image of the Republic that marked it as different from the Anglo-Irish, urban North. In the 1920s-30s, the Catholic Church linked itself to this colonial history, shifting the definitive ethos of nationalist Ireland from Gaelic to Catholic (Ó Tuathaigh 63). And it was this rural, Gaelic-speaking, devoutly Catholic version of Ireland that was enshrined in the 1937 Constitution. By the 1990s this idealized Western homeland was "no longer an appropriate expression of collective Irish memory" (Graham 197). Perhaps the most pressing problem of identity in the Republic was that a new, flexible, heterogeneous identity was in the process of being adopted, but this global identity clashed with the older, exclusive nationalism. There was a wide gulf between lived circumstance in the Republic where "hegemonic ideas [were] being renegotiated and refashioned in the multifaceted context of secularization, Europeanness and the seemingly eternal conflict in the North" and "the traditional rendition of identity [perpetuated] in political conservatism, tourism imagery and the folk memories of the diaspora" (Graham 197).

McPherson's representation of the contemporary West epitomizes this struggle between modernity and an antiquity conjured up for tourists. The bar patrons in *The Weir,* commenting on the sudden development of a tourist season,

label all newcomers to the area "The Germans." This label gestures towards the extension of international borders that resulted from entry into the European Union. It would seem that the ease of international travel stirs a breakdown of cultural boundaries, as "The Germans" seek the cultural capital of authentic Ireland. However, the play continually suggests that globalized Irishness is seen as a commodity and the landscape of the West is part of a packaged cultural vacation. The final line of the play "Ah I don't know where the fuck they're from" (72) reflects a sense of being overwhelmed by globalization, and dismisses the trope of Irish hospitality. In an interview with Pamela Renner, McPherson claims that the paradox of representing the Irish West is reflected even in his play's title: "on one side of the Weir it's all very still, on the other there's gushing water. It's really an attempt to let things out" (2). In the play, the weir is a dam erected in "Northwest Leitrim or Sligo" in the 1950s. The building of the dam marks a shift into modernization, but rather than pushing the area into modernity it dams or seals the Western locale as a rural heartland "steeped in old folklore" (14), producing "still" images of Irishness to be consumed by urban Dubliners and tourists alike. The West comes to embody a timeless cultural memory that is out of touch with the rapidly "gushing," changing urban centres.

The set illuminates the playwright's attempt to negotiate between versions of Irishness by layering national narratives onto two loci (Brendan's pub, literally, and the Nealon home figuratively through ghost stories) to suggest a home and homeland that is pluralistic rather than emblematic. The play is set in a dark, rustic pub featuring a stove and a fireplace. By placing the dramatic action in a "bar [that] is part of a house, and the house part of a farm," (1) McPherson

achieves a dual function with the setting. Like Friel's domestic hedge-school, the pub—or the public house—eschews the conventions of "protecting the home" that come with typical cottage-dramas and allows a freedom from the nationalist scripts. However, because it is attached to a home, into which Brendan and Valerie retreat throughout the play, the audience is still concerned with representations of the traditional home in public discourse. Further, the pub has an air of homeliness as regular patrons help themselves to drinks without waiting to be served, place money in the cash register, and replenish the fire with peat when they grow cold. The bar-room, as Nicholas Grene argues, is "at the edge of the modern world, a last dying vestige of an older community" ("Ireland in Two Minds" 304). Grene's stress that the pub is at "the edge*"* of modernity is notable, as the locals are not only aware of their status as "natives" in the nation's heartland, but are continually disgruntled about the imminent summer tourist season. Jack and Brendan suggest that Finbar is bringing Valerie in to "introduce her to the natives" (10), as an extension of his local lore tour—as though Jimmy, Jack, and Brendan are themselves on display as "Irish." Jack laments at the top of the play, that in "another week or two now, you'll be seeing the first of the Germans" (17). The characters' awareness of the West's dependence on tourism suggests that some of the pub's authenticity and antiquity is performed kitsch. As begrudging of the tourists as Brendan is, he takes "the Germans" into account when making changes to the property—not only is he having the washrooms "fixed for the Germans like" (48), but the photographs used to decorate the pub reflect the tourists' cultural interests: "on the wall, back, are some old black-and-white photographs: a ruined abbey; people posing near a newly erected ESB weir;

a town in a cove with mountains around it" (7). These photographs, some taken from spots where "the Germans are trekking up…in the summer" (28) both call back to the tourists' search for postcard vistas and serve to crystallize moments of national history. The ruined abbey, for example, reflects a shift into Catholicism, while the photo of the newly erected weir indicates a movement towards modernity (significantly this modernity has become an old, dusty photograph). The photos, while they are in some ways sincere—they are taken from Brendan's top field or capture the characters' as youths—are also synthetically arranged for touristic consumption.

The play and its set also appeal to theatre audiences as potential tourists. As the play opened in London and toured successfully in North America, the charm and quaintness of the rural pub, and the static moments of nationhood represented in the photos on the back wall traffic in an economy of gift shop Irishness. In fact, the whole plot of the play is occasioned by a tour of Western Ireland. The patrons have gathered at Brendan's (and dressed especially smartly [1]) to greet Valerie, a Dubliner who has purchased an abandoned home in the area. Finbar spent the day giving her a tour of the area by car, and they are scheduled to stop by the pub for the cultural counterpart: a tour of the area's history. The audience is granted the same tour as Valerie. The photographs on the back wall provide the audience with a tour of the physical landscape to mirror Valerie's trip by car. Thus, the audience is invited into the space of the pub to share in the evening of authentic culture and folklore.

At first the set and the storytelling atmosphere seem to replicate the pattern of many pre-packaged tours and cater to audiences' desire for an evening

of "authentic Irishness" from London, Toronto, or New York. However, the play disrupts this tourism as the bar patrons continually undermine the authenticity of the histories they repeat for tourists. When Valerie reveals that Finbar told her about the local history, Jack scoffs:

> JACK. "The history of the place." You were probably making it all up on the spot, were you?
>
> FINBAR. Yeah, I was yeah. That's why all them photographs are fake. I had them done years ago just to fool Valerie tonight.
>
> VALERIE. (*Going to the photographs*): Oh right. That's all around here, is it? (27)

The discussion, while obviously snide, points up the fact that the photographs are meant to accompany tours about "the history of the place" for tourists. The scene plays almost as if Valerie missed her cue to inquire about the photos and Finbar gives her a prompt by drawing attention to that part of the set. As Susan Sontag argues, "photography 'has become one of the principal devices for experiencing something, for giving an appearance of participation'" (10). The Irish West in this case becomes something to be captured and consumed in photographs rather than engaged with authentically. Lojek points out that, as there are seemingly no windows in the pub, the characters on stage only engage with exterior space by describing what they see in the photographs (*Spaces* 41). This indicates a Brechtian distancing effect, as the play is centrally concerned with the wild Irish West and the audience is only granted descriptions of staged tourist images. The design of the pub demonstrates a distinctive atemporality, it encapsulates recognizable images of Irishness in still life, but in referring to Celtic, colonial,

Gaelic, and modern pasts all at once, it also layers versions of national history.[3]

O'Toole notes that McPherson's contemporary, Martin McDonagh, employs a similar technique of overlaying time-periods in his scenic design of Western cottages to ironize the image of the West as static and isolated: "The country in which McDonagh's play is set is pre-modern and post-modern at the same time. The 1950s is laid over the 1990s, giving the play's apparent realism the ghostly, dizzying feel of a superimposed photograph. All the elements that make up the picture are real, but their combined effect is one that questions the very idea of reality" (ix). O'Toole's reading of McDonagh—particularly the notion of superimposed photographs—sheds light on how the images and the scenic design work in *The Weir*. The images on the set, though meant to be static representations, map substantial cultural shifts that bleed through onto and haunt one another. This bleeding through is perhaps best demonstrated by the fact that the characters on set, now significantly older, were once captured in still life in the photographs. Valerie finds Jim, Jack, and Finbar as children, as well as Brendan's father, during the building of the Weir, so that the notion of ghostly, historically superimposed images is realized in the staging of the play. The historical bleeding through that happens in the photographs is extended to the space's potential

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[3] Notably, the cover photograph for the 2008 production of *The Weir* at the Gate Theatre showed "individuals clustered closely against a blank interior wall and clad in ways suggestive of the early twentieth-century. Their images blurred and puzzling" (Lojek 50). This indicates that McPherson is superimposing theatre history and its role in nation-building, as well.

seclusion and antiquity. The pub's fixity stands in contrast to the influx of tourists into the pub every summer, as well as the "old television…mounted up in a corner" and "the radio on a shelf behind the bar" (7), which demonstrate a postmodernity and a connection to international media. Unlike the Abbey's cottages, this Western set is not insular—its "real Irishness" is punctured by global influence.[4]

This tension between a fixed past and a fluid present is worked out in the ghost story form of the play. As the patrons (Jack, Jim, and Finbar) attempt to give Valerie a sense of "the local colour"—to play to the urban tourist—they find themselves lapsing into ghost stories. The characters cannot seem to conjure up a tale about their locale without invoking a haunting spectre of the past. Although the storytelling in the pub begins as an attempt to sum up local history in "a good little story" (30), the "relish" (32) the characters take in portraying the home and homeland as ghostly and psychically unsettled demonstrates a deep-rooted anxiety about historical national narratives. In *A History of the Modern British Ghost Story*, Simon Hay argues: "As a genre, modern ghost stories are concerned with historical trauma, its remembrance and its lingering consequences. In these stories, the ghost is something that returns from the past, something that interrupts the present, disrupting both the present's presumed separateness from the past, as

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[4] One could add here that the Irish pub is a contemporary global phenomenon, and its "authentic" characteristics of rough hewn beams, local Irish photographs, hurley sticks, and Gaelic signage are available in many North American and European cities.

well as its stable inheritance of that past" (227). According to Hay then, the development of the ghost story as a genre arose as a method of destabilizing historical narratives, and as a direct response to the expansion of the British Empire and its project to modernize its colonies. He argues that:

> Parallel with the transition out of feudalism in Europe, the ghost story's second primary concern is empire. ...Even in its earliest versions, the ghost story is already focused on the parts of Britain belatedly making this transition: Scott's Highlanders, Le Fanu's Irish peasants, the still-coherent because still-feudal rural communities of Dickens and Gaskell. Small wonder, then, that the ghost story becomes a key genre for narrating the process by which the further reaches of the British Empire become incorporated into modernity, and that the ghost becomes a key figure later in global subaltern literatures of the twentieth century. (228)

What makes McPherson's ghost story different from the works Sheridan LeFanu's or Bram Stoker's Irish gothic, which evince the effects of colonialism and modernity, is that McPherson seems more concerned with the nationalist responses to these changes. Unlike typical Gothic plots in which characters are concerned with losing land ownership through uncertain inheritances, returning orphans or long-lost heirs, or supernatural squatters (in the case of *Dracula*) (McCormack 831-2), the subjects of McPherson's ghost stories indicate a fear of the spectres of once beloved nationalist images—the Celtic fairy home, the Gaelic, then Catholic peasant home, and finally the contemporary urban home. Moreover, each story pushes the motif of this fear of the home outward

geographically to encompass the house, its lands, the neighbouring farms, the village, the West, and finally even Dublin, which signals that the entire Republic is implicated in this national haunting.

McPherson's ghost stories suggest a prevailing homelessness through their focus on uncanny homes (homes that have turned against us), but also a certain degree of nostalgia or homesickness, as the ghost story genre brings the past back into the present. In particular, the ghost stories in *The Weir* tend to pool around idyllic cottage homes, beginning with the one Valerie has just purchased. The ghost stories suggest that, just as time periods are overlaid in the synthetic bar-room set and its photos, national narratives that characterize those periods are overlaid onto particular Western locales to dizzying effect. If Brendan's pub is the physical loci where these tensions between past and present are worked out, the Nealon home is the figurative loci onto which histories are mapped in the play. The meeting in the pub is occasioned by and centers on the effects of history on this particular Irish home. A feeling of discomfort surrounds the Nealon home from the moment Jack mentions it:

> Finbar's going bananas …talking about the new resident. Who, he says, is a fine girl. Single. Down from Dublin and all this…But he's bringing her in here tonight, the nearest place. To old…Maura's. Bringing her in for a drink. Introduce her to the natives. (10)

Jack experiences some difficulty speaking about the house. In this passage there is a long pause: "To old …Maura's," and just a few lines earlier he refuses even to call it a home, saying: "the, the thing" (10). He is reluctant even to say the words "house" or "home" in relation to the place, first ascribing, then reducing it to a

"thing." Jack's unease describing the home illuminates an anxiety surrounding questions of legacy (actual, cultural, and spectral)—as he still calls the place "Maura's"—and suggests an eerie and unwelcoming atmosphere around the domestic space.

The reason for Jack's uncertainty about the Nealon home is soon revealed. Once Valerie arrives, Finbar, who leads her "authentic" tour of the West, prompts an evening of storytelling by persuading Jack to explain the haunting of the fairy road. The story begins with the promise of the Celtic lore that the German tourists love: it focuses on the oldest and most authentic Irishness embodied in myths of fairies, but the Nealon home happens to be at the centre of the story. In 1910 or 1911, when Maura Nealon was a child:

> There was a soft knocking at the door…And Bridie never moved. And Maura said, "will I get the door Mammy?" And Bridie said, "No, sure, it's only someone playing a joke on us, don't mind them." [There] was a back door and only a little latch on it, you know? And that's where the next knocking was. Very soft, Maura said, and very low down the door. Not like where you'd expect a grown man or woman to be knocking. And then it was at the window. Maura couldn't see anything out in the night, and her mother wouldn't let her go over. But when it was late and the fire went down, Bridie wouldn't get up to get more turf for the fire. Because it was in the shed. So they just sat there until the others came back. (32)

The explanation given for the haunting was that the home was built on a fairy road stretching from a fort on the hill down to the cove where they would bathe.

The knocking at the doors and windows suggests that the fairies wanted to come through the house to continue using their path. Here, McPherson contrasts two versions of "home"; the fairy home is presented as an open, permeable space—a ring of trees at the top of the hill—with a stress on fluidity and access to the water, while the Nealon peasant home is presented as permanent and secure from interlopers. The date given to this haunting is significant: "1910 or 1911" marks the height of the development of a new national narrative of the Gaelic peasantry as "real Ireland"—a narrative that stressed the ousting interlopers—that comes to replace the Celtic fairy and folklore. The Nealon home then acts as a dam both against the fairies' movements, but also against the older version of nationalism. The fairy knocks are still audible though, demonstrating a spectral tramping that disrupts the secure Gaelic home and the continued possibility of communication between the two versions of Ireland.

Eventually Bridie enlists the services of a priest to further protect the home: "One day a priest came and blessed the doors and the windows and there was no more knocking then" (31-2).[5] The peasant home then is completely sealed off from the previous national narrative, as the Catholic blessing of the home's entrances finally puts an end to the Celtic haunting. This of course echoes the

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[5] The initial communication may be explained by the early anti-colonial peasant myths, where peasants had a mystical connection to the land to assert property rights. Eventually, that mystical connection was replaced with Catholicism when the Church sutured itself more directly to national symbolism in Ireland beginning around 1916.

crystallization of the image of the secure Western home as "real Ireland" that occurred when the church took up the image and the ethos of Irish nationalism shifted from Gaelic to Catholic.

Jack's story continues into the 1950s, at the juncture of modernization, after Maura inherits the Nealon home and it is further plagued by supernatural occurrences. Jack recalls that "One time in the fifties when the weir was going up. There was a bit of knocking then she said. And a fierce load of dead birds all in the hedge and all this" (33). The haunting in this instance extends beyond the home to encompass the landscape as the erection of the hydroelectric dam prompted a shift away from "country ways" (33) towards modernization—a shift from uncouthness to urbanity. This change irrevocably altered the peasant idyll and its connection to the land. Rivers too served as a nationalist image; Lojek argues that

> rivers are as tightly linked to Irish national identity as is the rural landscape, appearing as personified keystone representations on Dublin's Customs House, and even represented on the backs of some pre-euro Irish banknotes, so the photograph of the weir, which irrevocably changed the Shannon's flow, has implications for the impact of industrialization on Ireland's national identity. (45)

Replicating the metaphor of the Nealon home blocking the fairy road to the water, the damming of the river signals a stopping of the national myth of the rural peasant that had previously been flowing actively between the West and the nationalist stages of eastern urban centres. As a result, the West becomes a reservoir for Irishness. It is the locus of the myth of the peasant—a past that lurks

under the surface of modern Ireland—and as the pub set indicates, generates its own touristic power from folklore and "Irishness." The Nealon home thus acts a microcosm of the larger haunting at work in Irish culture, where several versions of national history and memory that were meant to be stable images of communion are all superimposed over and haunt one another.

The men's vogue for telling ghost stories in *The Weir* points up an obsession with the past and an inability to get beyond repeating tales of traumatic moments of national change. This sort of traumatic loop is emphasized when Jack's "relish" in talking about the Nealon home prompts all of the characters, save the bar-keep, to come up with ghost stories of their own. While all of the eerie tales have a similar pattern—women in haunted homes—there is a notable difference between the stories about Bridie and Maura Nealon, and the ghost stories that follow. Jack's stories about the Nealons centre on their home as architecturally and religiously secured from interlopers. The hauntings that Bridie and Maura experience in the home illuminate older struggles to affirm national narratives. However, the Nealon story is temporally distant from the characters on stage. The first fairy haunting takes place almost one hundred years before the evening depicted in the play, suggesting that the political currents and representations of the home have shifted considerably. The contemporary tales of haunted homes have changed too; in contrast to Jack's stories about keeping the interloper out, the ghost stories that follow are increasingly personal and stress a desire to communicate across the boundaries of the past.

Finbar's ghost story comes next and is, unsurprisingly, established along the lines of local insiders versus interloper tramps: the Walshes who were "a

crowd of headbangers" (36) who lived in "the nearest place" to Finbar's original home (36). Finbar's haunting occurs during a period when he is contemplating leaving home for the nearby town of Carrick. He explains it was "the year Big Finbar died" and he was deciding "whether to sell it [the land] on, or to farm" (37). Significantly, Finbar's monologue suggests that he was thinking about this very issue of property, inheritance, and patrilineage (he claims that his interest in the Walsh family stemmed from being a bachelor, so there is a suggestion of marriage and carrying on the family name as well) when Mrs. Walsh interrupted him. As we later learn, she requires aid dealing with ghost of an old woman. This particular type of ghost recalls the trope of the Shan Van Vocht. As Shaun Richards and David Cairns, "in plays of the Revival the presentation of 'Ireland' as the 'Poor Old Woman' or 'Shan Van Vocht' had obvious advantages for dramatists, stemming from the popularity of the trope in ballads and Irish language poems, and its familiarity to audiences whose reading of it was unambiguously nationalist" (Cairns and Richards 129). The Shan Van Vocht, perhaps most famously captured in *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*, frequently appears on the eve of such decisions about property and marriage to remind men of their duty to Ireland—ridding her of the "strangers in her house" (colonial interlopers). While the Poor Old Woman is intended to rally young men to carry on the fight to keep interlopers out, for Finbar the effect is much the opposite. As it turns out his haunting experience on this evening fueled his desire to sell the farm and leave the country-side. Finbar's reaction to this haunting thus indicates a changing relationship to history and home. There is a wide gap between Bridie Nealon's efforts to seal the ghosts out versus a desire to abandon the home completely.

The experience of the haunting too is markedly unlike the Nealon home, where the Nealon's are passively haunted and ghostly events occur primarily as a result of the home's architecture and placement. Mrs. Walsh, however, requires assistance because her daughter, Niamh, experiences extreme distress after using a Ouija board: "…she was after being down in a friend of hers' house or this. And they were after doing the …Ouija board. And she phoned her mother to come and collect her. They said they were after getting a spirit or this, you know, and she was scared, saying it was after her" (37). Niamh's use of the Ouija board demonstrates an attempt to communicate with the past. The result is that she is haunted and chased by the spirit she makes contact with. Finbar reveals that Mrs. Walsh collects her daughter "[b]ut on the way back they'd seen something, like the mother had seen it as well. Like a dog on the road, running with the car and running after it" (38). Once inside the Walsh home, the haunting continues with Niamh "going hysterical saying there was something on the stairs. Like, no one else could see it. But she could. And it was a, a woman, looking at her" (38). Finbar's tale of a haunted woman differs from Jack's as it emphasizes both a desire to connect with a history that is outside of one's immediate reach (a nostalgia for the past, rather than a desire to seal it out), but it also demonstrates a transference of haunting from one space to another. We learn that the same night of Niamh's haunting "an aul one who used to mind Niamh and the other sisters when they were young and all this, who was bedridden had been found dead at the bottom of the stairs" (39). The haunting then migrates from the old guardian's stairs, through the Ouija board into the friend's home, down the road, and then to the Walsh's own stairs. This carrying of a haunting from home to home is a

unique feature of McPherson's ghost story. Generally, the genre focuses on one particular home as haunted; the site, the materials or the architecture of the home carry the trauma of history and modernity.[6] In this case, the individual, rather than the home, is affected by the return of the past—especially as it is represented in this "unambiguously Nationalist" (129), Poor Old Woman ghost who confronts Niamh, for whom she had been a mother figure, and then Finbar, who is considering his links to family and property. McPherson thus adapts the form in a manner that indicates something particular to the contemporary Irish setting—that individuals are haunted by and anxious about the past and carry this with them. This indicates the impossibility of moving to a non-haunted home or homeland—the legacy of the past is part of an identity and has to be reckoned with.

These anxieties about the past are easily transferable in the cultural imaginary too it seems. Finbar claims that once Niamh is sedated he returns home but his own haunting begins:

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[6] In *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*, Anthony Vidler suggests that the home is the central emblem of the gothic plot because it "provided an especially favoured site for uncanny disturbances: its apparent domesticity, its residue of family history and nostalgia, its role as the last and most intimate shelter of private comfort sharpened by contrast the terror of invasion by alien spirits" (17). And Hay's history of the genre too stresses that the home is haunted to demonstrate anxieties about an emergent modern, bourgeois class overtaking historical, aristocratic properties.

> But…eh, that night, at home, I was sitting at the fire having a last fag before the sack, and, Jack'd know the house, the stairs come down into the, the main room. And I had my back to it. To the stairs. And it's stupid now, but at the time I couldn't turn around. I couldn't get up to go to bed. Because I thought there was something on the stairs. (*Low laugh*). (39)

The manner in which the haunting follows Finbar suggests that there is something contagious about Niamh's desire to access or converse with the past and then her subsequent fear of the consequences of stirring up that past. Significantly, Finbar's response to this situation recalls Bridie's response to the fairy knocking—paralysis in light of a spectre of history bleeding through into the present: "I just sat there, looking at an empty fireplace. And I sat there until it got bright" (39). Although at the top of the story, he dismisses the event as "a header. Looking for attention" (35), the aftermath of the night resulted in Finbar's giving up smoking and he finally decides upon moving "down into the lights" of the town (40). One of the most important features of Finbar's ghost story is the liminality that it suggests—the spirit is contacted through the Ouija board, which is figured as a threshold of a sort between worlds, and the spirits continually appear on the stairs, a transitory space. This illuminates a sense of curiosity and uncertainty about communing with national history, in this a ghost of Mother Ireland, in a modern moment. McPherson signals that representations of the home have been altered from being under attack to already having interlopers in the transitory space of the stairs. The presence of the ghost reflects a past that commands attention and an audience. It is alluring, but causes temporary

paralysis, suggesting the precarious position between historical moments. Finbar's decision to move away is indicative of his desire to escape the past; however, his continual return to the story (both in remembering and retelling it) demonstrates a continued curiosity about his experience that night. In Finbar's version the interloper is not immediately shut out of the home, but is an unwelcome presence already inside and more psychic than physical.

The liminality that marks Finbar's story as modern is carried through in Jim's haunted tale, which brings forth a troubling critique of historical, national narratives in light of contemporary social crisis. Jim was employed to dig a grave in neighbouring community under strange and secretive circumstances "twenty or more years ago" (45) and the haunting experience that resulted is even more personal and the ghost physically closer than Finbar's, as he himself makes contact with a ghost. Jim recalls:

> And Declan went off to get a tarp to stretch over…the…grave, and I put a big lump of a door over it. And I was just waiting on Declan and having the last drop, under the tree and thinking we might stick the head in somewhere for a quick pint on the way back. You know? (46)

Jim's placement of a "big lump of a door" over the grave he dug to prevent it from filling with water suggests a connection between the idea of a haunted home (or domestic object) and a haunted Western landscape. The door also creates a threshold or mode of transition between past and present in a manner similar to the knocking on Maura's door and the Ouija board. Jim is confronted much more directly though, as immediately after he places the door over the grave a ghost approaches him:

> And then I saw this, fella, come out of the church and he walked straight over to me. He was in a suit so I reckoned he was paying his respects or whatever. And over he comes, through the gravestones. And he was looking around him a bit, like he didn't know the place. And he stood beside me, under the tree, looking at the grave. I didn't know what to say, you know? And he goes, "Is this for so and so?" I forget the name. And I go, "That's right, yeah." And he says, "That's the wrong grave." And I'm like, "No. This is where the priest said, like." And he looked at me, breathing hard through his nose. Like he was holding his temper. And he goes, "Come on, I'll show you."…And he stopped at a grave. Like a new enough one. A white one with a picture of a little girl on it. And he says, "It's this one here." (46-7)

The man who approaches Jim is the man whose grave he has just dug. While previous ghosts seem to have returned because their movements have been blocked or they have been summoned in some way, in this instance the return of the past is much more decisive and menacing. The ghost has specific instructions for how to deal with its remains and it desires to be buried with the little girl, so as to haunt her in the afterlife. There are more sinister connotations though as the ghost "had had a bit of a reputation for em…being a pervert" (48). In Jim's story the ghosts' lives unfold "even after they were gone" (48). What seems most chilling for Jim is that the past continues of its own accord and on its own terms. Here, the ghost does not return to communicate with the present, but has its own desires—desires that are "pervert[ed] (48) and "terrible" (48).

The leitmotif of a young woman in a haunted house (Bridie, Maura, Niamh Walsh, Valerie, Valerie's Niamh) runs through the play. The ghost stories up to this point stress female protagonists as the connection between the ghosts and the present, while men act solely as narrators. Jim's tale is in fact the first where a male figure is the primary contact, but the woman-as-landscape motif also reaches its pinnacle in the story. Although the other female characters seem to exercise some agency over their connections to the spectres of the past and often have some relationship to the ghost, the little girl functions more as emblem than anything else. Her grave indicates an embedding of the woman-as-nation trope into the landscape, making the connections between the virginal maiden and the un-colonized landscape so common to nationalist historiography implicit. The image of the girl on the grave too indicates an enshrinement, which the ghost "sort of touched" when he approached her grave (47). Jim's story renders frightening the common iconography of virginal maiden equated with landscape and, when read alongside all of the other tales, recounts the loss of credibility of religion and priests in Irish society. Lojek claims that the priest's "role diminishes from ouster of fairies to enabler of pedophiles"(56) over the course of the play, referencing the loss of faith in the Catholic church in the 1990s as a result of numerous crimes and scandals. Jim's tale thus takes the audience up to present day and illuminates the gaps between the current ideology and the history and social norms that are being deeply questioned in the public sphere. Jim's more contemporary ghost story thus illumines a number of disturbing possibilities about the role of spectres of the past: that they are lively and have a good measure of control over current circumstance, that old narratives have been significantly corrupted, and most

chillingly, that the landscape is haunted and it may well be impossible to escape such a pervasive ghostliness.

Eamonn Jordan argues that the stories that the men share are meant to frighten Valerie away: "the males may have used the form of the supernatural against [Valerie], both consciously and unconsciously. She is, in a sense, an intruder upon the male preserve, just like the non-nationals" ("Pastoral" 361). While the male characters do all accuse one another of trying to frighten Valerie, it seems that they are genuinely confused about how they got onto their tales in the first place.[7] Jack accuses Finbar of making him tell the tale about the haunted home Valerie has purchased (50), Finbar accuses Jack of making him tell the story about the Walsh girl (50), and Jim's sprang from an anecdote about his friend and fellow grave-digger, Declan. Jim's defense: "I didn't think. I just said it" (50), is applicable to all of the men as their ghost stories flow naturally through conversation. The men, while trying to sum up local history, have rather revealed their own anxieties about the past.

Rather than the tales seeming like they are meant specifically for Valerie, it seems that the men have shared this particular evening of ghost stories many times before. Their stories are told in fluid performances, with little verbal stumbling and without pauses required to recall details. The easy recitation

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[7] It seems the accusations are mostly directed at Finbar and his potential sexual desire for Valerie too. The exchange between Jack and Finbar on page 49 indicates that Jack sees Finbar's ghost stories as a method of making Valerie afraid to stay alone for the evening, rather than to frighten her away.

suggests that the tales have been oft repeated. They are cued by one another, so presumably all of the bar patrons have heard these tales before. All of the men attempt to sum up and seal off history in their stories, as if the monologue form acts as a sort of containing force for historical trauma. The repetition of the ghost stories, oft followed by protestations that it is "old cod," seeks to rationalize or dismiss the frightening aspects: to make them "stories." The men's plots also seal histories into spaces, like the house, the community, or the grave. The nature of the stories the men tell suggests that they are all frozen with fear, like the subjects of their plots (Bridie, Maura, Finbar, and Jim). Their physical paralysis in the face of repressed histories denotes an unhealthy confrontation with the past. When their physical stasis is considered alongside the men's continual repetition of the tales, it indicates that the ghost story is neither successful at containing nor releasing history. Rather the men's stories are a traumatic loop of constant remembrance.

What is new is Valerie's presence and monologue. It is fitting that Valerie is the person who has inspired the release of the stories on this particular evening, as she alters the traditional pub space through her presence—she interrupts the male domain, brings Finbar back to the group (he has not frequented the pub in years), creating a new sense of community, and her behaviour does not follow the typical touristic cues, which means they are freer from their role as "natives." Just as Valerie alters the atmosphere of the pub, she alters the formal constraints of the type of ghost story the men tell. Through Valerie's monologue, McPherson offers a second type of story in the play—one with more cathartic potential. The men's tales are contrasted with the unrestrained, unrehearsed wake story that Valerie

recounts at the end of the play. As Lonergan argues, one of the most common features of the Irish monologue is that it is a masculine form:

> In Ireland, monologue is a form dominated by male writers; it frequently focuses on issues of male inadequacy, both sexual and social; and it tends to involve plotting that is resolved in outbursts of male violence. Writing about McPherson's *Port Authority* and O'Rowe's (naturalistic) *Made in China* (2001), Karen Fricker observes that 'the plays...don't embody women at all... Women however hover over both plays as idealized symbols and possessors of both virtue and agency, in contrast to the impotent, morally impaired males who actually inhabit the plays' (2002: 86). For Fricker, this represents a reinscription of the Revival's idealization of women, with both plays reinforcing stereotypical, conservative images of gender. (*Theatre and Globalization* 177)

Without Valerie's monologue, this would certainly be true of *The Weir.* Valerie is one of McPherson's few female characters (and only one other character, Margaret in *Come on Over* is granted a monologue). The men have all told stories about women in haunted homes and this choice of subject matter, along with how they have framed the tales, reflects the nationalist tropes of the woman in the home and the woman as landscape.[8] In addition, the male storytellers portray the

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[8] Even though they problematize the national narratives, their language reflects the ideological underpinnings around women-as-nation: Jack reveres Bridie and

fears of the chilling tales as "feminine" or sparked by female superstition. The women in the stories are presented, on the one hand, as credible and held in some esteem, and then, when the audience is frightened, dismissed as being tricksters (Bridie), "drinkers" (Maura), "hysterical" "headbangers" (Niamh Walsh), and voiceless (the child). Valerie rectifies the male dominated atmosphere and the passivity of the female figures by insisting on telling her own story. For the first time, she tells Finbar: "No," and continues with the tale despite a protestation that they have "had enough of them old stories" and "won't be able to sleep in [their] beds" (53). This is a definitive moment not only in the play, but on the Irish stage, as a female character is given the longest, scariest, and most rhetorically riveting monologue to speak back to the woman-as-nation trope and she roundly refutes all of the men's attempts to rationalize her experience or to downplay the trauma of her haunting as the product of delirium.

Valerie's insistence on telling her story hinges on a need for public confession: "No, see, something happened to me" (53). This moment signals that the ghostly tales will continue, but in a radically different fashion. Lonergan, Fricker, and Walsh argue that the monologue is the place of *male* confession. Walsh even suggests that: "When the device appears in [McPherson's] drama, typically it is used by troubled male characters to reveal their most private thoughts to the audience. Its function, therefore, seems to be as something of a talking cure for the distressed character, who is given a rare opportunity to speak

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Maura as "old ones," Finbar expresses sexual interest in the Walsh girls, Jim focuses on the innocence of the girl in his story.

directly to an attentive group of people" (49). In *The Weir,* this cathartic potential is given to Valerie rather than the male characters. The men's stories do act as confessions of anxieties about history, but the ghost story form that they utilize to express their fears creates a traumatic loop of tales that cannot be released. Their desire to contain the frightful within the contours of a story and then dismiss it as a "yarn" (36), paired with the plots of the tales that attempt to contain historical ghosts in buildings or graves, evince a desire to seal history off and forget it, more than to confess and experience a release. Valerie's monologue, the most contemporary and personal experience relayed, comes closest to being a talking cure.

Valerie recounts her raw grief at the death of her young daughter, Niamh, in a swimming accident. After the shock and despair of the event, Valerie suffers from depression: "I was more, just I didn't really know what I was doing. Just walking around, wanting to…Sitting in the house, with Daniel's mother, fussing around the place. Just months of this" (56). Valerie's feelings of being both trapped in the home and listless or disconnected from the space, as well as the choppy narrative style of her monologue, indicate a personal fragmentation. The haunting in Valerie's tale begins when she explains that Niamh

> had a problem sleeping at night…. She never wanted you to leave the room. …at night there were people at the window, there were people in the attic, there was someone coming up the stairs. There were children knocking, in the wall. And there was always a man standing across the road who she'd see. ….But I mean, she used to even be scared that when she got up in the morning that Mammy and Daddy

> would have gone away and she'd be in the house on her own. …And all the furniture and carpets and everything would be gone. (54)

After Niamh's death Valerie receives a phone call, "like a crossed line" (56) from her daughter asking her to "come collect her" (56). Valerie's confessional monologue expresses her grief, her anger at her husband's incomprehension, and her relief that men believe in supernatural activity, which mitigates some of her fears about her grip on reality.

Jordan argues that Valerie's tale echoes the details of the men's stories[9]—the knocking in the walls recalls the Nealon story, a child named Niamh needing to be collected parallels Finbar's story, the death of "a little innocent" (60-1) reflects Jim's haunting, and the telephone functions as an updated Ouija board, a technologically advanced manner of communicating with the past. If we consider the ghost stories as haunting national narratives, Valerie's tale (because it bears specific traces of the other stories) synthesizes all of the anxieties about the past expressed in the previous tales. Her monologue is the culmination of all of the hauntings from the turn-of-the-century onward. Valerie's Niamh is intensely uncomfortable in the home. She is afraid of the house being invaded by interlopers—there are people at every entrance: the doors, the windows, across the street. The fear of interlopers in the home reflects the early nationalist plays and

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[9] Jordan reads Valerie's monologue as a potential "confidence trick" (363) or as "aggressively performative" (365)—a manner of asserting herself by producing the most chilling tale to deploy against the men that attempted to use the supernatural against her.

the fairies at the doors and windows of the Nealon home. Niamh also hears children knocking in the walls, suggesting an anxiety about making contact or communicating with the past that is similar to the theme of modern liminality that Finbar explores. That the young girl identifies the knocks as being made by other children demonstrates her identification with those trapped in the walls and elucidates her fear of being trapped in the very materials of the house (a claustrophobia akin to that of Synge's work).

Thus, Valerie's version of the haunted house brings together every possible concern about the haunted home and homeland, but she also brings a new worry into the tale. Niamh is also deeply afraid that "she'd be in the house on her own." The fear of the empty home, without family and furnishings, is reminiscent of O'Casey's domestic deconstructions that served as a warning against the image of the stable middle class home as a marker of national stability. The addition of this element allows Valerie's story to serve as a contemporary exposition on the effects of past images of communion on the current state of the home and homeland. The child is haunted by historical stabilizing narratives, modern anxieties, and contemporary uncertainty—she is at once afraid of the home being invaded, curious about the spectral interlopers in the contemporary space, and she is homeless. Niamh is a character that is, herself, spectral—even her name evokes an in-betweeness as it means queen of Tír na nÓg, the land of eternal youth or heaven.

In many ways, Valerie's monologue functions as a wake story—perhaps waking her daughter Niamh—and her ability to commemorate and release, to combine the traditional past and the uncertain present, is extended to the audience

in the performance of the play. The connection between Valerie and the audience is further emphasized by the details of her character. Lonergan argues that

> A significant feature of the form [monologue] in Ireland is that the audience will rarely share the background of the characters on stage. Many Irish monologues are written in poeticized versions of urban working-class idioms (as in *Howie the Rookie, Disco Pigs,* and McPherson's *The Good Thief*), and feature characters on the social margins, who are generally shown to be involved in activities deemed in some way anti-social, such as drug-use or gangsterism. (*Theatre and Globalization* 183)

Unlike the majority of characters on the Irish stage (and indeed unlike any of the male characters in *The Weir*), Valerie is perfectly representative of the audience's key demographic—a middle-class, urban Dubliner, employed at the city university. The identification that McPherson forges between the audience and the character strips her narrative of any potential distance and expresses the foremost concerns about the past, trauma, and national identity felt by the audience.

In addition to Valerie's poignant mirroring of the audience, the set forms an intimate community of no more than sixty audience members sharing the communal air of a pub. McPherson states an interview with Cassandra Csencsitz, that: "The set was extraordinary. The seating was arranged so that the audience was pretty much in the bar with the characters. It had a rare intimacy" (39). Despite being set in a pub set based on research from a tour of rural Western Irish bars, the environment was also very minimalist: "I don't like sets with walls. I don't like to have a room. I like there to be a lot of darkness around the image, the

idea of the infinite spreading out from the story" (39). The playwright's emphasis is on creating an atmosphere where the audience is encompassed by the playing space and implicated in the narrative. In this case, they are implicated in the tradition of storytelling at wakes, where "exchanging anecdotes about the deceased takes part in the wake's overall project of transition by simultaneously evoking the presence of the deceased and bidding the deceased farewell. At the one time, storytelling keeps the deceased alive in narrative during grief and prepares a place for him or her in local collective memory of past neighbors and relations" (Cashman 86). The stories told over the course of the evening both record a history through anecdotes, but also prepare to bid it farewell. The manner in which the stories have been told on this particular evening—some are believed, some dismissed, some believed only in parts—resist becoming totalizing historical narratives, as they allow the characters and the audience to choose which tales and elements are worth remembering, and ultimately how to rearrange the multiple images of the nation they are exposed to over the course of the evening.

Valerie's monologue also wakes a particular representation of the relationship between mother and daughter, and between women and Mother Ireland more generally. The other tales have stressed a sort of cultural or historical inheritance from mother to child: Maura inherits Bridie's haunted home, Niamh is confronted by her Poor Old Woman guardian at the moment of the latter's death, the "little innocent" functions as emblematic of Ireland as naïve colleen. In the men's stories this depiction of women reflects a national trope that women inherit a certain connection to Ireland that is represented through a spiritual or

supernatural sensitivity. However, the relationships between the female figures and Mother Ireland, is rarely positive. While McPherson's male characters are anxious about the past, the female figures are directly confronted, controlled and frozen by the ghosts. This very unhealthy relationship with history illuminates the degree to which women are bound up in historical, national narratives. Women are frequently used to represent Ireland in national narrative and are relegated to specific spaces (sealed into the home) or symbolically rendered landscape (and therefore lack a control of their bodies and their signification). Despite an increased relationship with Mother Ireland, it seems the female figures cannot dwell or even rest in peace, as Jim's tale of the little girl suggests. In *The Weir* women are always already haunted by what their gender signifies in national and historical narratives.

If, as mentioned at the top, the act of damming in the play creates a still pool, this suggests that images of women as nation have become stagnant and untenable. Given that femininity and fertility are so frequently linked to the imagery of flowing water, it is significant that in *The Weir*, which focuses heavily on women stuck in haunted homes and problematic matrilineal relationships to Ireland, the water has stopped. Bridie's haunting in 1910 results from the peasant home's blocking an unseen path to the water, which notably is when women become typified as nation and relegated to the domestic space in nationalist propaganda. When Bridie has the home blessed by the priest, her domestic space and her gendered role within it are sealed. All of the women's stories carry this relationship to water: Maura is haunted when the dam on the river goes up, Niamh Walsh on a stormy night after she attempts to release a metaphorical dam between

past and present, the grave of little girl in Jim's tale fills with water, Valerie's Niamh drowns, and even Valerie experiences an especially stormy evening. As Niamh is being waked in the play, her drowning combined with the sheer number of ghosts she is haunted by seems to suggest that this relationship between women and nation has become overwhelming.

Valerie's response to her haunting by Niamh, however, is much different than the other female characters' interactions with their Mother Ireland ghosts. Valerie is the only character in the play that is spurred to action by the ghost rather than paralyzed. This action first drives her from her home and then from Dublin to coalesce. In addition to taking action, Valerie also seems the most willing to talk about her experience and to engage with the spirit—Bridie and Maura seal the home, Niamh Walsh and her family move away—and aims to deal with this event in as healthy a manner as possible. Valerie explains that "Daniel's mother got a doctor and I slept for a day or two. But it was…Daniel felt that I…needed to face up to Niamh being gone. But I just thought that he should face up to what happened to me" (57). Following her shock and grief, Valerie is intent on re-assembling the pieces of her own personal narrative, and she brings this work of putting the fragments of her personal life back together into her interactions with the Nealon home and the Western landscape where she similarly re-connects fragments of old stories. Significantly, Valerie's trajectory has all of the connotations of freedom from the domestic space that are so prominent in Synge and O'Casey, but she pushes even further and brings this fluidity into the re-possession of a home that was abandoned and had been the site of damming depictions of relationships between mother, daughters, and Mother Ireland,

denoting a renovation of the nationalist narratives that had characterized the Nealon home.

McPherson's *The Weir* utilizes perhaps the most ubiquitous signifiers of traditional Ireland in order to confront the limitations and rigidity of such images of communion in light of contemporary fragmentation and uncertainty. In performance the play exorcises the ghosts of nation past. Whereas the previous images of communion—as they are painted on the Nealon home—are sealed off from and attempt to replace one another—the contemporary storytelling allows for some of the narratives to be accepted as fact or dismissed as folklore. They can be remembered or forgotten, combined or altered, thus allowing for the formation of a heterogeneous national identity.

Claustrophobic Kitchens: Performing Peasantry in Martin McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*

Since his rapid rise to fame in the 1990s, Martin McDonagh has been tenuously hailed as "the new Synge" by audiences and critics (*The Independent* 14 October 2007). In an attempt to set himself apart from canonical playwrights and to ease the pressure of living up to such comparisons, McDonagh has publicly denied having read or seen any of Synge's plays and feigns ignorance of the Irish canon almost entirely.[1] While McDonagh's prior knowledge of Irish drama is hotly contested, the director credited with "finding" McDonagh and crafting the aesthetic of *The Leenane Trilogy*, Garry Hynes, was an avid fan of Synge. As Lonergan suggests, "questions about the impact of Synge on McDonagh might start with Hynes whose reputation is founded on her productions of *The Playboy of the Western World* (1975, 1977, 1982, 2004-5)" (*Theatre and Films* 198). Perhaps as a result of McDonagh's refutation of and Hynes's familiarity with Synge, echoes between the two playwrights almost always centre on the

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[1] Lonergan notes that, "McDonagh had not read Synge before he wrote the *Leenane* plays; but he had done so before they premiered, as shown when he told an interviewer in April 1997 that 'the darkness of [*the Playboy*] amazed me. I thought it would be one of those classics that you read in order to have read, rather than to enjoy, but it was great'" (*The Theatre and Films* 198).

similarities between their Naturalist, peasant cottage sets—Hynes's domain.[2] What has not come to light in McDonagh criticism is the similitude between the playwrights' misgivings about representations of the Irish home on national and international stages and how it is worked out through performance and character. More specifically, Maureen in McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* seems to function like Synge's satiric "playboy." Maureen, the "beauty queen," is an actor or an artificial stage character that reflects and problematizes the audience's complex relationship to the rural cottage home and Irish roles. Like many of Synge's female characters, she is trapped in a claustrophobic home and eventually suffers personal fragmentation and a loss of identity when audiences (Mag, her rural neighbours, the international community she works with when she travels to England for employment) code Irish stereotypes onto her, in much the same way that Christy's new community attempted to script and dress him as the tramp, the poet, and the athlete. The parricidal acts that Christy and Maureen utilize to rend the links to their homes provide similar warnings to audiences: that the images of stereotypical Irish characters and homes projected on international stages can

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[2] In fact, Hynes, along with several critics, have revealed that the irony with which McDonagh's Naturalist peasant cottage was staged and received provided a new lens through which to consider older Abbey plays. This new perspective eventually led to iconic stagings of Synge's play through the DruidSynge project and a flurry of new readings of the playwright. .

easily become limiting and dangerous. McDonagh does make a significant change to the playboy trope by inverting the gender of the central protagonist and parent. This alteration signals that what is at stake for current audiences and their interaction with images of the nation is the myth of Mother Ireland. By addressing the trope of the motherland, McDonagh includes Irish Diaspora in the question of trafficking national images. *The Beauty Queen* is much more concerned with the psychology of home than its geography.

Although McDonagh feigns a disinterest in the work of previous Irish playwrights, citing television and film as his primary influences, many critics have pointed up the continuities between traditional Irish theatre and McDonagh's Naturalist Western sets. McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* opens in a "living-room/kitchen of a rural cottage in the west of Ireland" and the set is furnished with the trappings of peasant theatre: "a long black range," "a box of turf," "a crucifix," and "a heavy black poker" (3). As Jordan suggests, McDonagh's sets "reproduce the dominant iconography of an old Ireland, that would not have been out of place in any 1950s production at the Abbey Theatre" ("Native Quarter" 223). The similarity in setting is remarked upon by Hynes: "'[p]art of the strategy in staging *The Beauty Queen*,' she explains, 'was to persuade audiences that they were seeing something familiar – something just like earlier Druid productions'" ("Monstrous Children" 159). As with McPherson, one of the significant questions surrounding McDonagh's stagecraft is why employ this signifier of "old Ireland"—the rural Western cottage—during a period of economic and cultural expansion in 1996.

The answer for many critics thus far has been that McDonagh "signalled new ways forward for Irish drama" ("Monstrous Children" 160) by "strategically flip[ing] around" ("Monstrous Children" 159) the Abbey's "real Ireland" conventions to question the iconic (and in the 1990s now touristic) images of Ireland. Hynes elaborates on this by calling McDonagh's set and subject matter "a cheat" ("Monstrous Children" 159):

> The curtain goes up, there is a daughter of forty, there's a possible suitor; and so the audience thinks, "we know where we are," she explained. "They'll think it's a John B. Keane play they haven't seen before. But half an hour later they're watching something completely different." (Lonergan, "Monstrous Children" 159)

According to Hynes, the productions were meant to exploit and subvert the audiences' generic associations with the rural cottage and peasant drama plot in an effort to de-stabilize their expectations of the Irish home on stage. Although they commence feeling safe with the pastoral image of the cottage, presumably, by the end of the play they will no longer "know where they are".

While this effect is certainly achieved by McDonagh's plays, the issue with this reading of his dramaturgy is that it supposes the technique of using the Naturalist set as a "cheat" is new. Furthermore, it suggests that all previous Abbey playwrights were using the Western peasant cottage to achieve the same ends—evoking, rather than troubling, a nationalist sentiment. Thus comparisons of Synge's and McDonagh's choice of location and Naturalist mode, often argue that McDonagh begins with a traditional Syngean image of the nation and inverts it over the course of the play. For instance, in "Classic Realism, Irish Nationalism,

and a New Breed of Angry Young Man in Martin McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane,*" Heath A. Diehl argues that McDonagh's peasant Naturalism is a generic red herring:

> Although there are obvious parallels between *Playboy* and *BQ*, when juxtaposed, the two plays also evidence striking dissimilarities, most notably in terms of narrative structure. Like many of his contemporaries, Synge predominantly worked within the form of classic realism. With its strong pull toward narrative closure, realism provided early nationalist dramatists the means through which to articulate and sustain a stable, coherent sense of Irish identity. From Synge's *Riders to the Sea* (1904) to Lady Gregory's *Spreading the News* (1904) and Sean O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* (1924), realism narrates Irish-ness as a bounded, consistent identity category marked by a distinct and rich folk history. (8)

Diehl examines similarities in *Playboy*'s and *Beauty Queen*'s stagecraft and argues that "BQ appears to reproduce the classic realist form almost obsessively" (99). However, he reads Synge as a nationalist attempting to stage an idyllic, stable, mythic nation, while he considers the ambiguity and violence of McDonagh's work as indicative of new angry young man drama.[3] Problematically

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[3] Diehl understands Angry Young Man drama of the 1950s and 1960s as "a longing for older dramatic forms which gave meaning to the social, and an anger against the dramatic structures which substituted apathy for concern" (108). He thus reads McDonagh's "portrayal of anger and passion for social structures

though, readings of McDonagh as inverting Synge overlook the riots Synge occasioned for exploiting audiences' expectations of the Naturalist, "real Ireland" theatre. Synge's own comment about *The Playboy*, that it was meant to "annoy" (Krause 64), reveals that he was not trying to meet the audience's "horizon of expectations" for classic realism or peasant drama. Diehl argues that *The Playboy of the Western World* is realistic and has a sense of narrative closure, but when considered side-by-side, *The Beauty Queen* seems much more classically realist than *Playboy* (at least as Diehl describes Classic Realism: in terms of realistic scenography, emphasis on the environment's role on character, and narrative closure). McDonagh's play begins in a claustrophobic kitchen and explores how its oppressive atmosphere combined with Mag's cruelty towards her daughter results in revenge. *The Playboy* on the other hand, commences in a stage-like home, a "public house," and follows a fantastical plot: a man who thinks he accidentally murdered his father with a hoe runs away and engages in several days of role-playing and storytelling. After a series of misadventures, and a second

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which no longer provide a means for organizing everyday life" (108) as analogous to the work of John Osbourne, Arnold Wesker, and John Arden. As a result, he perceives *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* as a "longing for rootedness…the sense of fixity, security, and constancy which results from being able to define oneself in relation to home, region, and nation" (108). While this was true of early Abbey drama, the problem for McDonagh (and even Synge) were the limits imposed on identity by that "fixity" and sense of national belonging. It seems McDonagh rails more *against* the "constancy" of nationalism on stage, than at a lack thereof.

attempt at patricide, the play ends with father and son becoming transient nomads. Aside from distinctly lacking a realist narrative framework, *Playboy*'s central issue is the dangers of falling into concrete representations of Irishness and using role-play to disrupt Irish types. Further, the conclusion places the protagonists in extreme uncertainty. *The Playboy* is overtly concerned with the performance of Irishness and escaping the "stable, coherent sense of Irish identity" and "rich folk history" (Diehl 8).

Rather than invert Synge, McDonagh seems to provide a very similar warning about the images of home and Irishness that we accept and use to project Irishness internationally. As Richards argues, McDonagh's choice of the Naturalist peasant cottage as a locus does more than simply copy Syngean stagecraft, but reveals poverty and oppression in Western communities that are revered in myth, but marginalized in reality. According to Richards:

> Both playwrights are then opposed to the sentimentalization of the harsh realities of the life of the West. Synge set himself against what he found to be 'senile and slobbering in the doctrine of the Gaelic League', and in place of their 'gushing, cowardly and maudlin' perceptions of Ireland which rendered a once mighty people fearful of 'any gleam of truth' he wished to revive realities of possibility to counter actualities of fact. McDonagh's target is equally sharply focused on the triumph of the 'maudlin' image of Ireland which gained state-approved funding in Robert Flaherty's *Man of Aran* (1934). ("The Outpouring" 208)

Richards argues that Naturalism is used in both plays to point up the disparity between idyllic images of the nation and grim realities of isolation and unemployment, thus displaying their similar misgivings about staging the nation.

To push Richards's argument further, the use of the Naturalist peasant cottage in Synge and McDonagh critiques a specific effect of the audience's horizon of expectations of idyllic, recognizable images of the nation—that propagating the "maudlin image of Ireland" is not simply inaccurate, but dangerously reduces the potential of forging alternate national and personal identities. The playwrights achieve this not only by portraying the traditional home as impoverished and uninviting, but by suggesting that the idyllic home is a snare. Hynes's suggestion that in a McDonagh play we start somewhere familiar—in the Western cottage—and end in uncertainty is equally true of Synge whose dramaturgy frequently placed characters in claustrophobic cottages and celebrated protagonists who were pushed out of the home and onto the road. The potential danger of the home is taken to the extreme in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, where it is presented as a filthy, threatening locus of violence and oppression.[4] It is not simply meager and claustrophobic as in Synge, politically

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[4] Lonergan argues that "'home' has shifting meanings, from the literal sense to Ray's threatening use of the phrase 'close to home' (46), to the complex use of the word in relation to emigration. …'Home' for the Folan women is a place to be avoided at all costs, a place to be rescued from, a place quite like a prison" (*Theatre and Films* 18).

unstable as in O'Casey and Friel, or even historically haunted as in McPherson, in McDonagh the home is menacing. Almost every domestic object in the space is contaminated with strife—even the kitchen sink is a site of tension and infection, as Mag continues to pour her infected urine down the drain in spite of Maureen's warnings. As O'Toole argues, this infection of the kitchen sink conveys a sort of infection of the Naturalist "kitchen sink" genre: "It is easy to be fooled by the apparently traditional, naturalistic form of the plays. On the surface, they seem to hark back to the kitchen sink Irish realism of the 1950s and to refer to an archaic world of frustrated spinsters, lonely bachelors and spoiled priests. But it is well to remember that, in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, the kitchen sink is the focus for an especially grotesque and pungent running joke" (xii).

Likewise, the most obvious peasant prop: the "heavy black poker," is a portrayed as a weapon rather than an artifact—its weight and potential for violence are frequently referenced in dialogue. In performance, the poker is connected to the kitschy tea towel embroidered with: "May you be half an hour in Heaven afore the Devil knows you're dead," which illuminates the commodification of the Irish home and produces an ominous threat. The latent violence of two these menacing, prominently displayed set pieces is evinced long before the ending of the play. They come into sharp relief when Ray Dooley "*idles around a little, wielding the poker*" and reads the message on tea towel out loud *twice*. Immediately after reading the warning he exclaims: "This is a great oul poker, this is. … Good and heavy and long. A half a dozen coppers you could take out with this poker and barely notice and have not a scratch on it and then clobber them again just for the fun of seeing the blood running out of them.

(*Pause.*) Will you sell it to me?" (55). Ray separates these two elements of the Naturalist peasant cottage from their intended purpose of representing Ireland and connects them instead with senseless cruelty. Ironically, the poker does come to "have sentimental value" (82) to Maureen, but only as a result of its violent potential and as a memory of Mag's murder. Further, the "long black range" and the "electric kettle," and Mag's reaction to them, reveal how Maureen tortures her mother from the outset of the play. Even in the first act, Mag illuminates the threats of these props: "And the hot water too I do be scared of. Scared I may scould meself" after which "MAUREEN *gives her a slight look*" (5). While the violence of the play is only fully enacted in the final moments of the play, the threat is imminent from the moment the play commences.

Not only is the traditional set marked as violent and menacing, but like McPherson, McDonagh punctures the cottage with markers of globalization—a radio, a TV that continually plays Australian soaps, a "framed picture of John and Robert Kennedy" (3), and "a touristy-looking embroidered tea-towel" (3). Contemporary references, like the visiting Americans (25) and the priest having a "babby with a Yank" (15) reflecting the Bishop Eamon Casey scandal, and international commodities—Kimberley biscuits, Complan, and *The Sullivans* episodes—serve to characterize the home as a postmodern pastiche. These markers make visible the competing representations of Irish identity—pastoral versus international, rural versus urban, antique versus progressive and commercial. In addition to displaying the threats to the "real Ireland" iconography, the seemingly random combination of such a range of signifiers creates a deliberately inauthentic set. As Hynes suggests: "It's a complete

creation, and in that sense it's fascinating" (Leeney, "Garry Hynes in Conversation," 204). Like the pub in *The Weir*, the cottage is staged with a false antiquity that draws attention to its function as a tourist venue for theatre audiences. Aside from the props that are explicitly "touristy," in many productions the entire cottage is "placed at a cartoonish ninety-degree angle," highlighting McDonagh's "skewed relation to the historical and literary past" (Cadden 672). The evidently theatrical home, is as Jordan argues, "a space that feeds back in on itself, rather than reaching outwards. It is not a mirror up to nature or culture. In the main it just reflects back on itself, exposing and exploring its dramaturgical conventions, self-reflexively calling attention to itself as a construct, as all notions of a relationship with the real are siphoned indiscreetly away" ("Native Quarter" 238). That is to say, that McDonagh's presentation of the cottage has more to do with critiquing the generic conventions of Irish theatre than capturing the realities of the Irish West. The "authenticity" of the Irish home is presented as inescapably theatrical and campy. The sets are bare, haphazardly furnished with what seem like pieces left over from other peasant plays or toy furnishings, and everything is painted with an overtly artificial patina.

Fig. 4. *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*. Sydney Theatre Company tour production, 2000.

Fig. 5. *The Beauty Queen of Leenane.* Quarry Players Limerick, 2001.

In Brechtian fashion, the walls are left unfinished showing glimpses of backstage areas and the machinery of the theatre—lighting, electrical and sound cables—is revealed. The result of the evident construction and touristy blend of antique and contemporary versions of Irishness in McDonagh's cottage creates an odd Disney-like atmosphere where an audience is being sold a very contrived image and is aware of its falsity. When this effect of blatant staging is combined with the threats of violence, made visible in a few of the key peasant props, the set of *The Beauty Queen* takes on a sort of malevolent fun-house mood. In accord with Sontag's "Notes on 'Camp'," McDonagh's set displays a fascination with "visual décor" (5) and "the love of the exaggerated, the 'off'" (8). Interestingly, the presentation of the setting as "off," is carried into the first production of the play. While *Beauty Queen* premiered in Galway, a Western locale close to Leenane and famous for its postcard vistas as a result of its natural beauty, McDonagh's set denies any glimpse of the actual landscape, using cartoonish paintings or cutouts of mountains in the background to represent the area. The Western landscape, a frequent tourist venue, is rendered campy as well.

While initially the postmodern, self-reflexive, ironic nature of McDonagh's sets appears to differ drastically from Synge's Naturalist cottages, there is some evidence that Synge too aimed to critique Romantic nationalist images by demonstrating how they were fabricated too look campy in performance. For instance, Synge's almost slapstick confrontations between two male suitors or property owners evinced a type of parody that served to reduce popular tropes of landownership and Irish masculinity. These types of parody were often heightened with costume, like Dan's "queer clothes" in *In the Shadow*

of the Glen and Christy's drag disguises in *Playboy*. The employment of camp performance to parody Irish stereotype shared between Synge and McDonagh is perhaps most evident in their use of distorted, exaggerated versions of the Irish accent. Although Synge claimed to replicate the speech patterns he overheard in Wicklow, the accents and colloquial constructions utilized in the performance of *The Playboy* betrayed a deliberate fabrication. Mathews argues that Synge invented a new dialect "by choosing to infuse English with the idioms and syntax of Irish" (*Revival* 137). And while McDonagh claims to employ the accent he overheard as a child on vacation in the West, the hyperbolic Irish accent he utilizes may be the result of his renovating long forgotten expressions and Irish sentence constructions. As Lonergan argues, "the Irish language has a zombie-like presence" in his work (*Theatre and Films* 11)—it is present, but in an eerie, decomposed, artificial way.

Interestingly, contemporaneous audience response to both *The Playboy*'s and *Beauty Queen*'s representations of Ireland belie the plays' investment in hyperbolic, stage constructions of the nation. In addition to being labeled and dismissed as "un-Irish," both Synge and McDonagh faced the charge of concocting images of the Irish home that are "slanderous" to the nation. For instance, audience members claimed that Synge's playboy was a "hideous caricature" (Kilroy 9) and that "the worst specimen of stage Irishman of the past is a refined, acceptable fellow compared with that imagined by Mr. Synge" (Kilroy 9). In "Decolonisation Postponed: Theatre of the Tiger Trash" Vic Merriman excoriates McDonagh for creating "gross caricatures," "the colonised simian reborn" (Merriman 313); a cry that has been taken up by many critics who

question McDonagh's use of stereotype and his Diasporic London-based identity. The terms of the arguments levelled against Synge and McDonagh are almost identical; in both cases the playwright has produced a "caricature" that is detrimental to the nation's efforts to project itself as post-colonial on an international stage, illuminating a similar deliberate parody at work in both plays. These vehement responses on behalf of the nation occurred during two historical moments when concern with controlling images of the nation in the public sphere was heightened. During a bid for home rule in the case of Synge and when Ireland was thrust onto an international stage as a result of increased wealth, global influence, and an intensified connection to a very large Diaspora during the Celtic Tiger, in the case of McDonagh.[5] While McDonagh's sets are certainly more cartoonish, audience response to both playwrights suggests that they deal in stereotype and overtly contrived versions of Irishness as a method of pushing the boundaries of staging Ireland.

In addition to making the audience remarkably uncomfortable with the cottage home as a marker of Ireland, rendering the idyllic home uncanny, both Synge and McDonagh extend their attack on the maudlin image of nation into the plot of their plays. The detrimental qualities of the staging the Irish home as bounded, ideal, secure are evinced in *Playboy* and *Beauty Queen* through the protagonists' sinister relationships to Irish identity and the concept of "home." *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* does begin in a very familiar environment—a

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[5] Perhaps the result of legally extending Irish citizenship to the Diaspora, combined with increased tourism opportunities and Culture Ireland programmes.

woman trapped in an isolated, claustrophobic home. In *The Beauty Queen,* the bitterly repressed Maureen is trapped in the home. She has spent her entire life in the cottage kitchen, gleaning life-experience mostly through images on television and radio broadcasts. The home is presented as Maureen's mother's domain; Mag never leaves the space as a result of her poor health and, when the play opens, she is described as almost part of the set: "MAG FOLAN*, a stoutish woman in her early seventies with short, tightly permed grey hair and a mouth that gapes slightly, is sitting in the rocking-chair, staring off into space. Her left hand is somewhat more shrivelled and red than her right"* (3). The description portrays her as an inanimate object. She sits in the conventional peasant-rocking chair and seems incapable of controlling her own body, as she is unmoving and her mouth gapes. Mag's presence in the kitschy home when the curtain first rises and her role in the play as a force that thwarts her daughter's relationships and access to outside world suggest that she is a Shan Van Vocht or Mother Ireland figure personified. She is tied to the home and essays to keep the home and her daughter secure from outside influence.

Moreover, the political and historical import of Mag's role is signalled as corrupted—Mag has taken the ideological desire to protect the image of the home and homeland so far that it has resulted essentially in the imprisonment of her daughter, who remains naïve, virginal, and unaware of the outside world even at forty years of age. We quickly ascertain that Mag, who is either unable to care for herself or refuses to out of an emotional dependence on her daughter, is the source of Maureen's frustration. Mag's inability to take care of herself and her home indicates that this image of Mother Ireland is just hanging on and needs someone

to maintain it (Klein 199-201). Of course, Mag is fed Complan, a dietary supplement, sometimes forcibly, which shows the cloying, almost unnatural continued presence of this type of Mother Ireland convention. Mag's comment: "I will be hanging on forever!" (24), is apt and frightful. Like many of Synge's heroines, especially Nora Burke, Maureen is presented as the primary caretaker of the domestic space and her relationship to the home suggests domestic servitude more than a pastoral idyll. Maureen's interaction with the cottage displays her frustration with the claustrophobic environment, she "*slams a couple of cupboard doors," "drag[s] the chair back loudly," "bangs an angry finger at the radio's 'on' switch"* (6) and "*swipes angrily at the radio again"* (7). Maureen is explicitly hostile towards the peasant cottage and Mag too bears the signs of her of daughter's anger, as her left hand displays fresh tortures.

More than simply struggling against the domestic space, Maureen also struggles against the identities that Mag reads onto her. In a manner that reflects how tensions between Christy Mahon and his father stemmed from his father's continual attempts to define his son as unappealing, weak, and feminine, Mag codes several negative images onto Maureen's body. [6] Primarily, Maureen is treated as a nursemaid, a role that she is reluctant to hold:

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[6] The psychology of which is so effective that Christy is shocked when he finally sees his reflection unmediated by his parent's criticisms: "Didn't I know rightly I was handsome, though it was the divil's own mirror we had beyond" (88).

MAUREEN. Ah, forget your Complan. I'm expected to do everything else, I suppose that one on top of it won't hurt. Just a…just a blessed fucking skivvy is all I'm thought of!

MAG. You're not, Maureen.

….

MAG. Me porridge, Maureen, I haven't had, will you be getting? (6)

Maureen illuminates how Mag forced her into this role of caretaker and left her with few other defining characteristics, as her mother rarely speaks to her about anything that is not a personal or health-related demand. Mag tries to counter this suggestion, but despite her words of comfort, the very next line is a demand for her porridge that might be spoken to a nurse. Later, despite her knowledge that Maureen is virgin, she scolds her daughter for accepting the invitation to the Dooley's party, exclaiming, "young girls should not be out gallivanting with fellas…!" (22) and labels her a "whore!" (23). And finally, at the end of the play, Mag deflates Maureen's performance of sexual confidence by saying: "You do still have the look of a virgin about you you always have had. (*Without malice.)* You always will" (66). The roles that Mag reads onto her daughter are all extremely stereotypical—nurse, maid, virgin, whore—and leave little room for Maureen to develop her own sense of self. When Maureen does attempt to counter her mother's versions of her, her claims to her own identity are quashed. For instance, although this final stereotype is "without malice," it deliberately counters Maureen's claim to possessing her own body and exercising her own desires.

Bound by her mother's use of guilt and the deflation of her self-esteem or the psychological trauma of being continually unable to identify herself, Maureen has little recourse for escaping to a life outside of Leenane, and thus employs fantasy to free herself from her circumstances. Maureen, like O'Casey's characters, is presented "*reading"* (60) as an escape and often, voices her fantasies of her mother's death as a method of rending her links to the home. In Scene One, Mag recalls a news story: "the fella up and murdered the poor oul woman in Dublin and he didn't even know her" [sic] (10) to which Maureen responds "Sure, that sounds exactly the type of fella I would *like* to meet, and then bring him home to meet you, if he likes murdering oul women" (10). In Scene Two she expands upon this fantasy, telling Mag:

> I have a dream sometimes there of you, dressed all nice and white, in your coffin there, and me all in black looking in on you, and a fella beside me there, comforting me, the smell of aftershave off him, his arm round me waist. And the fella asks me then if I'll be going for a drink at his place after. (23)

The desire for a violent rending of her relationship to the home reflects Maureen's hostility toward the domestic space and her linking of this violence to a potential lover indicate her need to express her own desires and control her own sexual identity and body, as well. Maureen's fantasies of escaping the domestic space and an undesirable relationship through the actions of a violent, murderous man strike a very similar chord to Pegeen's lament at the beginning of Synge's *Playboy.* At the outset of *Playboy*, the young girl trapped in the home and a relationship that will secure the family's property, voices her desire for a violent

hero "the like of Daneen Sullivan knocked the eye from a peeler, or Marcus Quin, God rest him, got six months for maiming ewes" (75).[7] And as in *Playboy*, it would seem that as soon as Maureen wishes for a dangerous tramp to free her from the home, one appears—Pato Dooley.

Maureen fathoms Pato as a sort of *Playboy,* Christy Mahon figure, with whom a relationship will set free her from the confines of claustrophobic domesticity. At first, Pato's visit to Leenane simply provides an excuse for Maureen to leave the home for an evening. While this may seem trivial, it is significant that the potential of Maureen going out for a night prompts Mag to burn the invitation (18), lie about Ray Dooley's visit (21), and start a spat during which she calls her daughter a "whore!" (23). Maureen's foray from the home results in her returning "*slightly drunk*" (27) with Pato. The encounter with Pato grants Maureen a chance to develop a new identity and to exert control over her own life. Maureen characterizes Pato in the same way that Pegeen figures Christy, as an experienced romantic figure who defies convention. As they discuss their feelings about marriage and "settl[ing] down in one place" (32), she chides: "Of course, the rake of women you have stashed all over, you wouldn't need to" (32). Her teasing Pato as a potential lover aligns with a cue for "The Spinning Wheel" by Delia Murphy to play. The song centres on how a young girl sneaks out of her home at night while her grandmother sleeps in order to rendezvous with her lover.

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[7] The tying of Irishness to violence in both cases may also be parodying or exploiting stereotypes of Irishmen as terrorists that were common in England during both Synge and McDonagh's era.

While Maureen agrees with Pato, "it *is* a creepy oul song" (32), she also immediately begins to fantasize herself into the role of the young lover. The Grandmother is asleep, like Mag, releasing the young lover from her caretaker duties. While Pato asks: "Does the grandmother die at the end, now, or is she just sleeping?" (33) (this may foreshadow Mag's horrifying end) and dismisses the song as scary. Maureen continues to recount the plot elements with slight pauses that may indicate how she is imagining the scene, as she imagined Mag's death earlier. She responds:

> MAUREEN. Just sleeping, I think she is.
>
> PATO. Aye…
>
> MAUREEN (*pause*). While the two go hand in hand through the fields.
>
> PATO. Aye.
>
> MAUREEN. Be moonlight. (33)

Pato is, evidently, uninvolved in this unpacking of the song lyrics, but they seem to hold meaning for Maureen, and it is perhaps the result of being able to relate to and place herself in the role of the young romantic heroine that she conjures the courage to ask Pato to "Stay. Just tonight" (35). When Pato asks if her mother is asleep, she answers: "I don't care if she is or she isn't. (*Pause*). Go lower" (35). In this instance she thwarts Mag's control over her and claims authority over her own desires and body.

Although we later discover that their affair is left unconsummated, Maureen still uses the opportunity to play to all of Mag's fears of sexually liberated women. In fact, Maureen creates a deliberate performance to shock Mag.

While Mag commences Scene Four lamenting the "skimpy dress" (36) Maureen wore to the event, she is "*dumbfounded"* (37) when Pato greets her. Although Pato wanted to sneak out in the morning, Maureen sends him to fix Mag's breakfast, and set the stage for her entrance. In a very theatrical moment, "MAUREEN *enters from the hall, wearing only a bra and slip, and goes over to Pato*" (39). She has costumed herself in this attire specifically to upset her mother, as even Pato argues that it is too cold in the home to be dressed in such a way (46). As she saunters into the space she "*sits across* PATO's *lap"* and "*kisses him at length*. MAG *watches in disgust*" (39). Thus, she deliberately performs a coquettish role for an audience. Her actions and her elaboration on their activities the previous night (we later discover that her descriptions are fabricated) leave Pato embarrassed. The result of her performance in this moment though, is that she ascertains a sense of control over her identity and the home: she insists: "I do like going around the house half-naked. It does turn me on, it does" (41).

Perhaps the most obvious echo between Pato and the "playboy," is the radical freedom from the domestic and national idylls that they represent through tramp-ish identities. Pato, a migrant worker familiar with globalized labour and a complicated, tenuous relationship to homeland represents a contemporary version of Synge's and O'Casey's tramp figures. He explains his feelings about settling down to Maureen: "when it's there [England] I am, it's here I wish I was, of course. Who wouldn't? But when it's here I am…it isn't *there* I want to be, of course not. But I know it isn't here I want to be either" (31). This moment foreshadows his later move to the United States. As a tramp-figure, he is free to travel anywhere and escape his links to home and homeland. Pato has the

potential to free Maureen entirely from Mother Ireland. Pato's letter to Maureen invites her to join him in Boston and argues: "…what's to keep you in Ireland? There's your sisters could take care of your mother and why should you have had the burden all these years, don't you deserve a life? And if they say no, isn't there the home in Oughterard isn't ideal but they do take good care of them, my mother before she passed, and don't they have bingo…" [sic] (50). Unsurprisingly, the letter becomes the crux of the drama. Mag burns it, destroying her daughter's chance of freedom and happiness, out of fear of being placed in a "home" and losing control of her space and her daughter. When her actions are revealed she explains: "he won't be putting me into no home!" (67) and attempts to ply Maureen with guilt: "But how could you go with him? You do still have me to look after" (67). Maureen discovers Mag's deception too late, and is left, like Pegeen at the end *Playboy*, keening for the tramp who has escaped to a less bounded, claustrophobic, unhealthy relationship with home and homeland.

To be sure, Maureen experiences a much greater freedom than any of Synge's female characters trapped in homes before her. She demonstrates increasing agency over her body and her space, but she also discovers that her fantasies, performances, and tenuous relationship with the trampish Pato cannot free her of Mag or Mother Ireland. This realization leads to her attempt to free herself from the home without the aid of the tramp and the Grand Guignol moment of the play—her slaying of Mag with the peasant prop poker. In essence, Maureen must become her own "Playboy" and completes the persona by rending the links to Mag and Mother Ireland. The very direct echo of Synge's playboy plot, illuminates the relationship Maureen's character is meant to have with the

audience (as a sort of cipher for the audience's relationship to the image of Ireland) and indicates a much deeper problem than the image of Ireland becoming calcified. Christy could role-play his way out Irish stereotypes without actually having to murder his father. Maureen's only recourse is violence and even that may not prove enough to loosen those ties. As in McPherson, the cultural memory and the effects of this representation of the home cannot simply be escaped. The individual is haunted and thus the real problem in *Beauty Queen* is rooted deep in Maureen's psychology.

As mentioned earlier, Maureen's relationship with role-playing to escape Mag's characterizations parallels Christy's relationship to his father. These performative similarities can be expanded further to consider how Maureen, may in fact simply be a "playgirl" for the audience, who like Christy mirrors the ways in which audience members interact with images of Ireland and the potential limitations of those modes. At the very root of their characters the "playboy" and the "beauty queen" reflect the artifice of the stage and the stereotypes of Irishness that they embody: the tramp and the maiden, and the Western bachelor and bachelorette, respectively. Even their names suggest a sort of stereotypical Irishness that the audience has come to expect. Christy, of course, references Christ (Bretherton 323) and gestures towards ideologies of sacrificial masculinity that would become increasingly pronounced through the speeches and poetry of Pearse. Maureen similarly evinces the trope of Irish maidenhood, with a name that demonstrates the Irish practice of adding a diminutive form "een" to a name or nickname as an indicator of femininity and youth, as in Colleen or Pegeen. The term can be applied generally to girls: girleen(s). As one of the more violent and

sexually liberal characters who appears throughout the *Leenane Trilogy*, is named Girleen*,* it seems McDonagh utilizes this signifier of Irish girlhood in order to disrupt conventional representations of femininity. This disruption of stereotype, especially tropes of maiden and motherhood, are certainly at work in the character of Maureen, who evidently fits into neither group easily and who parodies expectations by taking on a more violent and masculine role towards the end of the play.

Like McDonagh's use of Naturalism, Maureen, as a character, functions as a "cheat" and presents a challenge to conventional representations of women on the Irish stage. We begin the play with a familiar character, and Hynes' comment about the "cheat" even suggests that the plot: "there is a daughter of forty, there's a possible suitor," is part of the deception. As such Maureen appears to be a conventional character and establishes a familiar relationship with the audience. Based on her position in the home, overbearing mother, limited life-experience, and lack of self-confidence we are almost forced into a sympathetic rapport or pity. The generic features of her character too, present her as a sort of cipher or blank slate. Maureen has few unique traits and her primary frustrations seem to result from almost universal circumstances—generational strife and under appreciation—which audiences can immediately recognize and identify with to some extent. In short, she is crafted to create a very specific affective bond of commiseration with the audience. And, perhaps as a result of the hopeful Pato tramp plot, we expect her problems to be resolved with her removal from the home or from Mag.

However, slowly over the course of the play, cracks in Maureen's performance of the daughter trapped in the home arise. For instance, Mag's fear of the stove and kettle illuminate that Maureen is regularly abusive, even before Mag burns the invitation to the Dooleys' party and Pato's letter. Eventually Maureen's violent tendencies are taken to the extreme of murder. Even if the audience accepts or rationalizes Maureen's matricide, the play stresses that Maureen's violence is less controlled or specific. In a tense moment in the final scene she almost murders Ray Dooley as well. Ray expresses frustration at having to repeat a message for Maureen, as he had to for Mag earlier, sneering: "Who's a loon, she says!" (81). Although the comment seems lighthearted, Maureen "*quietly picks up the poker from beside the range and, holding it low at her side, slowly approaches him from behind*" (81). It is only when Ray is "spins around to confront MAUREEN" with the tennis ball she has been hiding from him for years that "MAUREEN *stops in her tracks*" (81). The play gives the distinct impression that she may very well have killed Ray in the same way that she murdered Mag. In this instance, Maureen's brutality seems uncontained and easily provoked. The affective result of perceiving a previously sympathetic character rendered horrifying reveals that we have been tricked by the appearance of the familiar character that she performs throughout the play.

The audience is left in an emotional state akin to that of the rustic community audience portrayed in *Playboy* who read meaning and Irish stereotype onto Christy and were horrified when their imaginings proved false. The meta-audience in *Playboy* portrays a mock-representation of how Abbey theatregoers sought to manipulate characters on stage into typical roles, and it seems that

McDonagh is critiquing contemporary audiences for the same impulse to read Irishness onto the play. In *Beauty Queen* we are given very few details about the protagonist—a peasant cottage, a woman trapped in the home, generational struggle—but those visual and narrative clues have resulted in a feeling of familiarity and as a result we almost immediately forge a sympathetic relationship and an identification with Maureen, and imagine an expected outcome. As Jordan argues:

> The stage scenario relies more on what the spectator offloads or distils as meaning, rather than on what the plays themselves generate as meaning. … In McDonagh's work existential questions are not packaged through the anxieties, self-questioning, or self-recognition of the characters, rather it is the responsibility of an audience to reflect on the minimal cognitive functioning of characters, their instinctive, unfiltered behaviours, and the tokenistic narratives through which they structure their consciousnesses and justify or legitimize their behaviours. ("Native Quarter" 239)

The audience's response to a McDonagh play thus relies a great deal on our previous knowledge and interpretation of "tokenistic" characters and narratives. Thus the audience's understanding of Maureen (and *Beauty Queen*, more generally) acts as a barometer of the general relationship to performing and parodying maudlin images of the nation.

While the remarkable success of *The Leenane Trilogy* suggests that audience members were much more enthusiastic about killing ties to "old Ireland" in 1996 than they were in 1907, this is in part why Mag's death does not suffice to

free Maureen from the home. At a moment when Ireland was beginning to embrace an urban, international identity it is expected that the stage would reflect wanting to be rid of the nostalgic image of the peasant cottage and Mother Ireland once and for all. The fact that the play does not end with Maureen successfully leaving the home for a more fulfilling life with the tramp or on the road, thus suggests, like McPherson's *The Weir*, that the home as a site of cultural memory has become psychological, individual, and inescapable.

Just as Christy's performing body becomes a site onto which versions of Irishness are read, in order to demonstrate how typical Irish roles like the tramp or the poet delimit identity, Maureen experiences the trauma of having an audience redefine her identity as "Irish" when she travels abroad for work. *Beauty Queen* is interleaved with a commentary on the labour conditions of migrant workers (often from former colonies) in England. In a number of revealing moments, apparently based on McDonagh's parents' experience, the play illuminates the colonial politics and stereotypes that inflect workplace relations. Pato, for instance, evinces the dreadful circumstances of his employment as a construction worker in London: "it's more or less cattle I am, and the young fellas cursing over cards and drunk and sick, and the oul digs over there, all pee-stained mattresses and nothing to do but watch the clock…" (31). In addition, Pato suggests a lack of contact with his employers: "the gangerman [foreman] does pop his head in sometimes" (48), which signals the unsupervised, dangerous nature of his work place. Moreover, he indicates his inability to partake in English customs or culture: "I do go out for a pint of a Saturday or a Friday but I don't know nobody and don't speak to anyone" (48). The poor living arrangements that seem to be arranged by

the company he works for and his sense of isolation portray the experience of being a migrant worker as being "cattle" or inhuman: a foreign body to perform manual labour. Although, he argues that such a relationship may be preferable as it reduces psychological bullying: "In England they don't care if you live or die, and it's funny but that isn't altogether a bad thing" (32). Maureen is exposed to the latter form of torment.

In fact, the bullying that Maureen was subject to as an Irish labourer in Leeds resulted in her personal fragmentation and admission into psychiatric care at Difford Hall. She explains the event to Pato:

> In England I was, this happened. Cleaning work. When I was twenty-five. Me first time over. Me only time over. Me sister had just got married, me other sister just about to. Over in Leeds I was, cleaning offices. Bogs. A whole group of us, only them were all English. 'Ya oul backward Paddy fecking…The fecking pig's-backside face on ya.' The first time out of Connemara this was I'd been. 'Get back to that backward fecking pigsty of yours or whatever hole it was you drug yourself out of.' Half of the swearing I didn't even understand. I had to have a black woman explain it to me. Trinidad she was from. They'd have a go at her too, but she'd just laugh. (44)

During Maureen's first experience outside of Ireland she unwittingly performs Irishness on an international stage and for an audience well versed in reading "Irish" characters. The maids, standing in as an international audience for whom Maureen represents Ireland, attempt to deconstruct her sense of self and script colonial stereotypes onto her. First her national identity is redefined with the label

"backward Paddy," then her body is distortedly reflected as having a "pig's backside face," and finally her home is denigrated or denied, as a "backward fecking pigsty" or "hole". In deconstructing Maureen's understanding of her nation, self, and home their psychological attack leaves Maureen no secure image or safe haven for retreat. She is "torn down" and rendered a blank slate. Her description suggests that she was confronted for the first time with an alternate image of herself in a warped colonial mirror and thus began to question her own understanding of her identity. The stereotypes the maids inscribe are facile repetitions of colonial logic. The term Paddy, numerous references to pigs, and repeated use of "backward" recall the Stage Irishmen who were often simply named Paddy and followed by a pig to indicate agrarian uncouthness. The trope the maids read onto Irish labourers is well worn and almost culturally engrained when Maureen encounters them. Primarily, their slurs attempt to connote their cultural superiority even if they share the same occupation as an Irish labourer.

Significantly, Maureen does not even comprehend the slurs and stereotypes used to attack her. There is a very palpable sense of Maureen not being able to understand and speak back to the colonizer. Her confusion illuminates the panic of having her body and identity appropriated by an audience and re-described to her in caricatured fashion. Maureen's only solace during her period in Leeds is a friendship with a woman from Trinidad, who is used to the colonial/racial slurs leveled at her and can explain the language and logic of such stereotypes. The woman's ability to laugh at the English maids' curses indicates her ability to deconstruct the colonial stereotype, or at least keep it at a distance from her own identity, and she grants this possibility to Maureen as well. In

addition to equipping Maureen with the language and knowledge of the ideology being read onto her, the woman from Trinidad also provides a sense of community as they trade stories and images of their homes and homelands. Maureen tells Pato: "And photos of Trinidad she'd show me, and 'What the hell have you left there for' I'd say. 'To come to this place, cleaning shite?' And a calendar with a picture of Connemara I showed her one day, and 'What the hell have you left there for' she said back to me. 'To come to this place…'" (44). Through their relationship, Maureen is still able to express a sense of national identity and to have it affirmed. When the woman from Trinidad moves to London, the English maids' psychological destabilizing quickly leads to a fragmentation of Maureen's identity: "It's true I was in a home there a while, now, after a bit of a breakdown I had" (43).

The event seems to be the root of much of Maureen's violence and confusion, as well as her tension with Mag in the play. That Maureen has to be sent to "a home" is a significant gesture. In this instance, as when Mag fears that Pato will put her in an old age home, the word that usually indicates security, identity, and succour indicates failure and loss. The "home" is portrayed primarily as a place of constraint: Maureen had to wear "buckle-down jackets" (42) and it is described by Mag as "An oul nut-house in England I did have to sign her out of and promise to keep her in me care" (42). From the "home," Difford Hall, Maureen is transferred back to the Western home that she currently inhabits, thus a direct link between the two spaces is fostered. Mag's description suggests that her stay in "the home" and supervision ("care") are simply extended from one home to the other. The unhealthy implications of the English nut-house are carried

into the Western Irish home, especially the issue of containment and binding an identity. Both Difford Hall and the Western peasant cottage are spaces meant as retreats to refortify one's identity, which Maureen succeeds at; however, the identity she fashions is in direct response to her experience in England. Maureen retreats back to Ireland, the West, the home, the mother, all ideologically laden symbols of cultural community, in an attempt to re-establish her links to her national and personal identity.

While Mag carries many of the visual signs of Mother Ireland, Maureen is much more invested in preserving Irishness. In addition to feeling a personal security in her Irish identity, indicated by the fact that leaving Ireland resulted in her having a personal breakdown and her decision to remain in the home and Leenane after her mother's death, Maureen also stresses a general cultural need to secure and define Irish identity. An early conversation between the two about a Gaelic radio programme reveals their discrepant relationships to the nation and its colonial past:

> MAG. It sounds like nonsense to me. Why can't they just speak English like everybody?
>
> MAUREEN. Why should they speak English?
>
> MAG. To know what they're saying. …
>
> MAUREEN. Ireland you're living in!
>
> MAG. *Ireland*.
>
> MAUREEN. So why should you be speaking English in Ireland? …
>
> MAG. (*pause*): Except where would Irish get you going for a job in England? Nowhere.

MAUREEN. Well, isn't that the crux of the matter?

MAG. Is it, Maureen?

MAUREEN. If it wasn't for the English stealing our language, and our land, and our God-knows-what, wouldn't it be we wouldn't need to go over there begging for jobs and for handouts? (8)

Mag not only demonstrates a lack of interest in preserving Gaelic, but calls the language "nonsense," denying the import of its cultural function. Mag's comments are particularly alarming considering their position in the West, where Gaelic is assumed to be preserved, but also because they upset the generational tensions in the play. Mag's insistence that English is a more valuable language that would aid in securing employment in England or America indicates that she is not opposed to emigration and recognizes the potential insecurity of the nation. Maureen on the other hand, perhaps directly reflecting her own experience of having to go abroad to "beg for jobs and handouts" takes the more traditional stance, summarizing an anti-colonial argument, albeit poorly. She maintains that Irish should be one's first language and exposes her interest in staying in the Irish home and homeland. Maureen's comment suggests that she does not want to leave Ireland and equates emigration with "beggary"—or being a tramp.

The enlightening conversation between mother and daughter is not the only signal that Maureen is pressing a programme of shoring up or sealing off the national identity, as she later complains to Ray Dooley about the lack of Irish content on television:

MAUREEN. It's only Australian oul shite they do ever show on that thing.

RAY (*slightly bemused*). Sure, that's why I do like it. Who wants to see Ireland on telly?

MAUREEN. *I* do.

RAY. All you have to do is look out your windows to see Ireland. And it's soon bored you'd be. 'There goes a calf.' (76)

Ray's comment that she need only look out the window to see Ireland indicates that the issue for Maureen is really how Ireland is framed. Ray illuminates that the window onto Ireland, which gestures towards the audience's belief that it is watching "real Ireland" unfold in a Naturalistic box-set through an invisible fourth wall, would be a rather dull affair. What Maureen (and the audience) seeks is an image of Ireland—a relationship with the nation that is mediated, framed, and trafficked in a very particular way. Maureen is not interested in her daily experience of Irishness, and indeed all of her interactions with the signifiers of Ireland continually prove the idyll is debased—the West is remote and lonely, the home is poor and dirty, the mother is more of a burden than a boon. While she demonstrates a desire to form a variety of relationships to Irishness, through radio, newspapers, television, even the calendar image, her interactions with these sources illuminate the dangers of creating iconic images of the nation. In Maureen's case, images are precisely the issue—she cannot speak of or represent Ireland without the aid of a literal picture or well-wrought piece of rhetoric. In essence, the experiences of Irishness that she most enjoys are those presented through a touristic lens.

Maureen's wish for a kitschy, mediated version of Irishness is evident in the arrangement of the home as well, which parallels the audience's own

interactions with iconic images of the nation. Given Maureen's mental state, however, this forced identification with her works as a brutal warning about the effects of our horizon of expectations. Maureen's desire for mediated images reflects her dangerous fantasizing throughout the play. She fantasizes a more ideal version of Ireland in much the same way that she fantasizes a life without Mag—it is a temporary escape from her lived reality. While initially Maureen can tell the difference from her daydreams and reality, that ability seems waver throughout the play. When she speaks of her breakdown with Pato, she indicates that Mag "thinks any accusation she throws at me I won't be any the wise. I won't be able to tell the differ, what's true and what's not/ Well, I *am* able to tell the differ" (45), which suggests that in the past parsing illusion and reality proved difficult. Of course, this proves to be the case by the end of the play as well, where Maureen imagines an entire departure sequence with Pato at the train station: "Almost begged me, Pato did. Almost on his hands and knees, he was, near enough crying. At the station I caught him, not five minutes to spare, thanks to you" (70). Maureen's daydream forms an entire staged scene where her fantasy and the audience's vision align, furthering the viewers' uncomfortable alignment with an increasingly psychotic character. The scene is elaborately detailed, and Maureen cites pieces of their conversation, remembers the sensation of their embrace, and recalls their plans for "living in sin" in Boston. When the following scene opens, a considerable amount of time has passed as Maureen has just returned from her mother's funeral, but Maureen is still preparing for her trip: "*She exits to the hall and returns a moment later with an old suitcase which she lays on the table, brushing off a thick layer of dust. She opens it, considers for a*

second what she needs to pack, then returns to the hall" (73). Maureen is so lost in the detailed fantasy that she created that she is planning to venture to Boston and is only brought back to reality when Ray repeats to her a number of times that Pato left by taxi rather than train.

The effects of Maureen's living in an imagined, more ideal version of reality are portrayed as the result of a state nearing psychosis and as extremely detrimental to her health. The audience's alignment with Maureen's desire for touristic images of Ireland thus comes in for sharp critique. Where horizons of expectations were castigated in *Playboy* for proving limiting, in *Beauty Queen* they are presented as so detached from reality as to be psychologically questionable. Ray's assessment of the situation: "The loons you do get in this house! Only repeating!" (80) proves an apt summary of McDonagh's analysis of the trope of the Western cottage on stage—the house and set is the site of so much repetition that it is proving mentally damaging.

McDonagh's portrayal of the harmful psychological effects of fantasizing an ideal Irish home, homeland, and identity reveals a sort of pathology of the home in Irish theatre. The portrayal of Maureen as a character who cannot parse reality from fiction recalls a number of characters with similar problems of living in two homes or homelands at once—one fictional idyll and one dismal reality. O'Casey's characters, Captain Boyle, Johnny, and the Clitheroes, all live in idealized narratives of Irish homes rather than their present reality. The inability to separate fantasy from fact leads to their impoverishment, death, and insanity, respectively. Similarly, Jimmy Jack Casey in Friel's *Translations* is so consumed by his fantasy of an idealized culture that he vividly imagines his proposal to

Pallas Athena, a moment that will merge him completely with myth and remove him from the national remapping taking place in his literal homeland. Valerie in McPherson's *The Weir* too experiences a personal fragmentation as a result of her desire for a connection to an idealized home, as she experiences—perhaps imaginatively or as auditory hallucination—an ongoing connection with her deceased daughter. These plays thus signal that while the image of the home/homeland on the Irish stage may remain constant and stable, the effect of such an image on citizens is mental collapse. The need to accept the ideal home as an "image of communion" renders inhabitants tragically out of place in their reality—as though they are psychologically exiled from an ideal nation and can never return. Characters who attempt to bridge the gap between fantasy and fiction are almost always mentally unsound—literally between worlds—and often have to perform their identities and connections to home and homeland. O'Casey's characters costume themselves and stage their homes; Jimmy Jack recites epics as a performance; Valerie's monologue, while raw and unrehearsed, is framed as a storytelling performance; Maureen is more consummate performer than complete person.

Maureen's interaction with images and roles of Irishness takes the problem of performing the ideal home to a logical conclusion. While other mentally fragmented characters experience their desire to live in fantasy as a result of circumstance, often political (the Easter Rebellion and Irish Civil War in O'Casey, the Ordnance Survey in Friel, the death of a child in McPherson), the home itself is responsible for Maureen's psychological state. Ray Dooley explicitly states "this house" (80) attracts and creates loons. In this home Maureen

learns the roles that she will perform in relation to her mother, her community, and her national identity, and eventually her personality, arguably, is reduced to a compilation of these performances. The home creates a set of conditions where Maureen can express her identity in a very limited number of ways. As mentioned in the Jordan quotation earlier, McDonagh's characters seem very flat and have "minimal cognitive functioning." Maureen can only understand her identity in limited categories: daughter, Irish labourer, lover, harlot, or murderess. When all of those roles are removed, she is left speechless and stunned, not unlike Mag in the opening of the play, and as a result takes up a performance of her mother—"repeating" that role and personal history. The only moments where the audience is granted an insight into her psychology are the scenes where she is lost an imagined story of meeting Pato at the train station and packing to leave for Boston. Those imaginings too have a performative quality as she recites them to the audience and the narrative she creates of meeting one's lover at the last minute at the train station and waving from the platform are cinematic clichés. In effect, Maureen is only a series of performances and fantasies—she has no core identity. Because she is so emblematically tied to her national identity this suggests that there is no Irishness outside of images, roles, and imagined escapes.

It is significant that both McPherson and McDonagh take issue with the representation of mentally fragmented women and their relationship with Ireland (especially Western Ireland) and motherhood. In "Black Pastoral: 1990s Images of Ireland," Nicholas Grene suggests that the mother figure comes to stand in for Ireland's relationship with its Diaspora. Grene writes:

> In Irish pastoral, the west of Ireland or Ireland as a whole have been conceived as sites of origin, where we as readers/audiences come from, but no longer are. We are separated from that source as the adult is from the child, as the emigrant is from the country of his/her birth. Mothers and motherland thus bear a special burden of significance in this pastoral configuration: the child growing up, the emigrant leaving home, are movements that connect the space of pastoral with the world the audience actually inhabits. (246)

The representation of the Irish mother on international stages thus provides a sort of sustenance for Diaspora as it nourishes a pastoral idyll of Ireland and a sense of having a permanent "home" despite one's exile (perhaps several generations removed). McPherson explored the issue severing bonds between mother and child, and Ireland and international tourist, but the approach was much gentler—mother and child are physically separated, but psychically linked, at least through memory. For McDonagh, though, the links have to be violently rent. He presents the mother as "literally evil and dangerous" (Hynes qtd. in "Monstrous Children" 161), to the extent that we initially attempt to rationalize Maureen's matricide. The act of killing the mother is a final blow to the image of Mother Ireland. An event that challenges the audience's desire for such a representation of Ireland, just as Synge's portrayal of Christy's patricide was aimed precisely at an Irish nationalist audience, and shattered the propagandistic national image of the father-figure protecting the home and homeland by upsetting patriarchal claims to land and lineage through surname. If for Synge and his nationalist audience the issue is owning the home, for McDonagh (part of the Diaspora himself) and his global

audience, the issue seems to be feeling at home. His theatre thus does its very best to make us feel uncomfortable in the Irish home.

The Leenane Trilogy toured extensively in Ireland and abroad, and Druid held workshops and performances in Toronto and Sydney that cast local actors in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane.* These workshops plugged Diasporic bodies into the affective set and relationships of play. Other McDonagh plays, such as *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, were employed by the "Imagine Ireland" programme "one aim of which to was to use the arts to promote Ireland internationally – and to restore the country's tattered reputation after the collapse of its economy in 2008" (Lonergan, "Monstrous Children" 164). The need to market a specific image of the nation to an international audience seems to be the object of McDonagh's critique. The problems caused by the touristic gaze are writ large in the portrayal of Maureen, a character who can only perform and dream of performances, someone who has lost a sense of subjectivity to the pressing need to conform to Irish stereotypes for audiences. The effect of repeating these roles is presented as so dire and horrifying that the warning we get from McDonagh seems to be that we have to get out of the home or it will kill us.

Exporting Kitsch: Ireland and the International Audience

My objective in "Irony and Irishness: Deconstructing the Home on the Contemporary Irish Stage" is to explore Irish theatre's response to two periods of national crisis. The project draws parallels between the early twentieth-century that saw bids for home rule, the Easter Rebellion, and the Irish Civil War and the latter decades of the Troubles and the beginning of the Celtic Tiger when sectarian conflict, a reframing of national policy, and a touristic interest in Ireland altered the cultural landscape. By putting the theatre of these periods of crisis into dialogue, I evince a sustained tradition of challenging the idyllic Irish home and homeland from Abbey dramatists through to contemporary playwrights.

In particular, my scholarship focuses on how socially marginalized characters, such as tramps and women interact with and are affected by the dominant icon of the nationalist movement—the peasant cottage. A focus on the liminal figures reveals a connective tissue of deconstructive staging technique and post-colonial politics in J. M. Synge's and Sean O'Casey's riotous Abbey Theatre productions and contemporary Irish drama by Brian Friel, Conor McPherson, and Martin McDonagh. As a result, the work of Synge and O'Casey is recast as post-colonial and, I argue, provides a model for reprising traditional Irishness to confront national stereotype utilized in later drama. Synge's and O'Casey's ironically horrifying presentations of the Irish home are echoed in postmodern pieces that turn homes into haunted houses or sites of murder. Further, their early focus on granting a voice to marginal characters, excluded from and silenced by

the nationalist project, initiated renovations of Irish types that demonstrated boundless opportunities for self-definition (not simply based on colonial or anti-colonial characteristic). The transnational potential of the tramp and women speaking back to nation remain leitmotifs in Irish drama even today.

Thus far, my argument has considered "real Ireland" and its Irishness as an image of communion, a construct meant to unite the nation. By way of conclusion, I would like to extend the argument about Irishness and Diaspora begun in the final chapter to consider how my analysis may be broadened in future to address issues of globalization and the international reception of Irishness. Marie Jones's *Stones in his Pockets* (1999), like McDonagh's dramaturgy, heavily ironizes the setting of the peasant community as a kitschy fictional construct. Pushing further than McDonagh though, Jones directly suggests that this kitsch is only nominally Irish as it is created by and for Diaspora.

In *Stones in his Pockets*, Jones probes the issue of "real Ireland" as a contemporary film location and questions how the production of cultural Irishness for a global market affects locals. A Hollywood film crew travels to a rural village in Kerry to make an international blockbuster about Ireland. The play follows Jake and Charlie, two local extras working on *The Quiet Valley*, a film about the Irish Land Wars of the nineteenth-century. The subject matter—land ownership—immediately posits the play as an examination of colonial politics. However, the colonial relationship that comes to the fore is not Ireland's relationship to England, but rather to America. The film's title *The Quiet Valley* is an ironic

reference to John Ford's classic film, *The Quiet Man*.[1] In *The Quiet Man,* Sean, an Irish-American played by John Wayne, returns to Ireland to reclaim his family farm. He falls in love with a spirited neighbour who is the sister of an imperious landowner. The landowner, upset that Sean outbids him for the farm, refuses to allow his sister's marriage. The colonial tensions of the Ford film are evident: it presents the colonial melodramatic love triangle with an American rather than a British suitor. The film, largely produced for an American audience, shows that the Diaspora have a geographical claim to Ireland, and through the marriage of Sean and the spirited neighbour, indicates that they are wedded to its culture.

The title of the film-within-a-play, *The Quiet Valley*, significantly reflects the Ford film, but redirects attention from the Irish-American hero (the man) to territorial possession (the valley). Ironically, the use of "quiet" then becomes a veiled comment on the silencing of the locals in what Mark Phelan calls a "neocolonial relationship" (64). As in *The Quiet Man*, American film stars play the Irish leads in *The Quiet Valley*, while the locals are relegated to extra roles as peasants, which denotes a cultural possession of Irishness that calls back to the casting of John Wayne as the Irish-American hero in *The Quiet Man*. The American Actress, Caroline Giovanni, has a personal Diasporic connection to Ireland as well, which makes her a similar type of stand-in for American

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[1] Jones directly engages with the Ford film throughout the play: Mickey, for instance, makes a living as an extra in American films about Ireland and is renowned as "the last surviving extra on *The Quiet Man*" (19).

audiences. She tells the locals, "I'm third generation you know, on my mother's side…I do get a real feeling of belonging here you know that. You people are so simple, uncomplicated, contented" (24). The actress's feeling of belonging stakes a territorial claim to the land that jars with the locals' feeling that "the place is coming down with outsiders" (20) and her understanding of Irishness is predicated on colonial constructs, like the simple savage.

The Quiet Valley's contextual backdrop of the Land Wars—a period of civil unrest that sparked class conflict between the Protestant Ascendancy landowners and Catholic tenant farmers—is resolved with the marriage of Maeve, an Anglo-Irish Ascendancy landowner, and Rory, a native peasant. Following their marriage, the hero and heroine redistribute Maeve's lands to the dispossessed peasant tenants. Unlike the typical melodramatic love triangle where the female lover is represented as weak and in need of protection, however, Maeve has complete control of her lands and tenants—the labouring bodies of the locals. Initially, Maeve's control of her land and her body (in choosing her own suitor), as well as her decision to grant the land to the peasants presents a very idyllic resolution of a colonial love-triangle. However, the film casts an American actress as Maeve (with her egregious "Irish" accent there is little chance of mistaking her nationality in the performance) skewing the woman-as-nation trope to represent a neocolonial relationship: an American-woman-as-Irish nation. Maeve's independence and decision to return the land to the peasants suggests the film is perhaps more about American political ideology (and figurations of independence and democracy) than Irish history.

The Quiet Valley's development of Maeve and her decision regarding her lands interestingly parallels the plot of Yeats's *Countess Cathleen*, in which a generous, kind-hearted member of the Ascendancy sells her soul to the devil to save her tenants from famine. Yeats's play was poorly received by Catholic nationalist audience members as a result of its idealization of the relations between typically absentee landlords and tenants with few legal rights. The representation of the wealthy landowner's self-sacrifice also has the effect of silencing the peasants: in these romantic versions the reality of the Land Wars, an important moment of social unity and collective protest for better working conditions and property rights (as well as violent struggles to defend homes and land) is overlooked. Rather, the peasants are simply saved by the largesse of the estate holder. The focus of the film-within-a-play and Yeats's *Countess* are the American-Irish and Anglo-Irish female leads, painting the peasant farmers into fixed, background roles. As Jake notes: "they'll get a big shot of the Blaskets and the peasants, then Rory comes over the hill behind us like he is walking out of the sea. When he has his line, the lot of us disappear, even the Blasket Islands" (25). The Irish locals act as an "authentic" backdrop, and when the American leads appear in the scene they are meant to fade out.

While the *The Quiet Valley* posits an idyllic democratization of Irishness, the play critiques the facile, romantic interpretation of Ireland and the use of Irish natives for "local colour." *The Quiet Valley* and its lead actress only focus on the locals as emblems of dispossession who are fascinated by the genteel Maeve and the star performing the role. The film and the starlet see Ireland through a touristic, yet narcissistic gaze: more than capturing an accurate image of Ireland,

they are interested in how Ireland sees them. The directions given to the extras sum up the problem of this gaze: they have to "look at her looking at us looking dispossessed" (23). The repetition of the word "look" indicates a severe problem with the gaze and its levels of mediation. The frame of the gaze is doubled here, the peasants in the play are meant to be star-struck by the landowner just as the locals in the film are star-struck by the American actress. The ocular interest in the American woman-as-nation, though, is a directed gaze. The stage directions for the play denote that the actors' are meant to have a starry-eyed, intense interest in the American starlet playing landowner: "*They dig…stop…look up…moving their heads as if watching galloping horses and then stop…then look the other way doing the same action…*(55). Physically, the locals are meant to train their eyes on her every movement and nod their heads to every step her horse takes. In addition to the slapstick comedy that this prompts, the directions to ogle the American film actress are usually followed by a sardonic comment. Charlie sums up a romance scene as the peasants looking at Maeve, who is looking at Rory, who is also looking at Maeve (45) and follows his explanation with: "I love the movies. Unreal man" (45), denoting the fantasy of the peasants' interest in the landowner. Even when the film star's body is not actually present, the local-extras are instructed to make it their focus. Again, Charlie tells Jake, "so it is us lookin' dispossessed at [Aisling's] hand, pretending it's Maeve on a horse lookin' sorry for us…I'm gonna miss all this" (54). The direction of their gaze suggests a necessary self-reflexivity on the part of the Irish extras. The extras are aware of the American actress's gaze upon them and the stereotype of dispossession that she (and the Diaspora audience she stands in for) hold as Irishness, and are forced

to bring their "authentic" Irish performances into accord with the implicit desires of the foreign gaze.

Caroline's tangential relationship to Ireland, her simplistic reduction of its culture, superficial admiration of its landscape, and fake Irish accent are, for the locals, emblematic of how Ireland is understood internationally. In the American film and for the international audience, Ireland is recast and restaged to meet more romantic or kitschy expectations. As Charlie notes Caroline's horrible Irish accent "Doesn't matter…been that many film stars playing Irish leads everybody thinks that's the way we talk now…" (23). After all, Ireland is "only one percent of the market" (21). Any authenticity garnered by using the local actors and local landscape is negated in the film, as the Irish elements are meant to disappear in the "Irish" blockbuster.

The actors must retrain their bodies to present a kitschy version of their identity and their reactions to the director's notes and their costumes illuminate the slippage between "real Ireland" and reality. The historical fantasy of the peasant costumes supplied by film crews is addressed in a flashback where Sean and Fin recall a moment as children when they sought roles in a different film, deciding against it: "We would have to dress up in them stupid clothes, I wouldn't be seen dead" (59). The anecdote points up an interesting trajectory for the Abbey peasant: the national symbol has become simply a fixed, unchanging costume forced onto local extras that provide set dressing for "authentic" Irish films. It becomes a stereotype worn and acted out begrudgingly for financial remuneration.

The Irish landscape that the peasant is tied to is similarly staged. The English director finds the natural Irish elements lacking. In addition to the rain

that constantly disrupts filming, the director has "fresh flowers shipped over from Holland" (63) and Simon blusters: "Clem's not happy with the cows. The cows. He says they're not Irish enough. I don't know. Black fluffy ones, I suppose" (45). With imported goods, flora, and fauna, there is little reason for location shooting, but it seems that simply being shot in Ireland gives the film enough authenticity for the audience. While the film-within-a-play focuses on democratically redistributing Ireland to its native inhabitants, the film crew has the opposite effect. The Kerry village locals are dispossessed of their town—too many "outsiders" in the house—their national history is repossessed and skewed for Diaspora audiences, their language and accent reconfigured by American leads, and their landscape fabricated. The effect is that the overtly fake "real Ireland" is circulated in film and tourism as "authentic," which alters their own performances of Irish identity. The politics of an American company restaging the Irish countryside and producing a stereotype of Irishness refracts the film's topic of the British colonizer remapping the country and forming a hegemonic depiction of Irish identity.

The plot recalls the socio-political context of Synge's work, as well as Friel's ironic restaging of colonial mapping. Jones presentation of attempts to ascertain Irish cultural capital suggests that the current problem of Irishness has more to do with controlling national meaning than controlling the national territory. Further, the necessary restaging of Ireland for a touristic gaze reflects the construction of the pub in McPherson's *The Weir*. Brendan, the owner, indicates that much of the environment and upkeep of his rural Irish pub follows the tourist season and caters to their desires to see Ireland summed up in historical

photographs. Similarly, the overt fabrication of the peasant sets in *Stones in his Pockets*, recalls McDonagh's presentation of the peasant cottage with the faux-patina painted on remnants of a theatre's peasant supply closet, as well as Maureen's debilitating touristic gaze. While Jones's play does not slip into horror, the metatheatrical techniques of the play suggest an equal amount of distance between audience's expectations of "Irish" theatre and reality.

These later works by McPherson, McDonagh, and Jones suggest an unease concerning how Irishness is trafficked globally. All three playwrights achieved international box-office success and unprecedented visibility between 1996-1999. Their rapid rise to fame, as well as the ironic Irish subject matter of their plays seems to demarcate the period as the height of a global fascination with Ireland. Unlike Synge's and O'Casey's work which confronted nationalist representations of Ireland, and Friel's work, which largely addressed the problem of stereotype and divisions in the Northern Irish community, McPherson, McDonagh, and Jones find themselves producing plays for an audience outside of Ireland. Perhaps more than any other generation, the playwrights of the 1990s had an opportunity to reshape understandings of Irishness on the global stage. Thus their choice to return to the traditional Irish emblem of the peasant, the cottage, and very often the West (traditionally a site of Gaelic cultural memory) suggests a conscious effort to engage with the question of Irishness. Within the plays they critique the construction of Ireland as a universal homeland, often by indicating the fantasy of how that home is portrayed. McPherson's "Irish Pub" is staged with the trappings of a tourist venue, McDonagh's evidently fabricated peasant cottages speak to theatre's role in trafficking Irishness, and Jones's exploration of Ireland on film

indicates how Irish identity is reconfigured when foreign bodies act out the national identity.

For McPherson, McDonagh, and Jones the images of Ireland circulating in the global cultural imaginary present fixed, discrete stereotypes of Irishness that are out of Ireland's control. In their 1990s plays Irish characters find themselves forced into playing out stereotypical roles for tourists (the Germans in *The Weir* and the film crew in *Stones*) or for international audiences when they travel abroad (Maureen's fragmentation at the hands of the English maids and Jake's experience in America and with the American actress). Like *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *Stones in his Pocket* shows that the result of commercially exported Irishness can be deadly. Sean, a man from Kerry, commits suicide when he is denied a role in the film, *The Quiet Valley*. Sean, like so many of the characters considered in this dissertation, experiences a devastating disconnection between fantasy and reality—in this case, a fantasy of success in American films about Ireland versus the reality of his community that he wanted to "escape" (58). Sean's fantasy of being a film star and the inability to achieve it are blamed for his drug use and eventual suicide: "I'll tell you what's a terrible tragedy, filling young Sean's head with dreams" (68). Jake makes clear that Sean's death is directly related to the film crew's presence and actions in Ireland and openly criticizes them for "think[ing] that it has nothing to do with them" (68).

All three playwrights accomplish an intervention into those tropes and stereotypes of Irishness circulating internationally and deconstruct them by manipulating the traditional conventions of Naturalist staging—revealing the machinery behind "real Ireland." However, their responses suggest divergent

alternatives for recuperating Irish identity. McDonagh issues a horrifying warning about the Irish peasant cottage as an emblem of Irishness and his dizzying sets seem to level a critique at theatre's role in creating and circulating stereotypical national images. McPherson and Jones, on the other hand, indicate more hopefulness about theatre's potential. McPherson's monologic form and intimate set in *The Weir* utilized storytelling and wake traditions to release and commemorate Irish history, indicating theatre's ability to form a community and to provide space to reflect upon and reforge one's identity. Jones's critique of film in *Stones* suggests the potential of theatre by contrast. *Stones in his Pockets* counters homogeneous representations of Ireland by ironically elucidating the gaps between "authentic" images and lived reality for humorous effect. The fixed Ireland that the filmmakers within the play attempt to capture is countered by Jones's staging—only two actors play all fifteen roles. The actors, who are frequently caught between costumes, signal a fluid identity and a self-irony in performances of Irishness.

Theatre's ability to demonstrate a distance between the actor and the characters they play grants it a unique opportunity to parody stereotypes. As Lonergan argues in *Globalization and Irish Theatre*, "by showing how one body can be used to perform multiple identities, the actors in *Stones* counteract the tendency within mass culture to present homogenized versions of identity as if they are authentic. The play may thus be seen as a reassertion of the value of theatre in a mass-mediatized world" (10). National and gender stereotypes become abstract notions that the actors may adapt and drop as they wish. In this manner, it seems that Jones updates Synge's use of a "Playboy" who dons "Irish"

roles for an audience, by having two actors perform roles that cross national and gender boundaries. The theatre for Jones, as for Synge and O'Casey, allows actors and playwrights to push back against limited, fixed images of Irishness. Further, like McPherson's wake-like performance of *The Weir,* Jones's *Stones* acts as a source of communal release. The title of Jones's play, *Stones in his Pockets*, comes from the extras' decision to acknowledge and commemorate Sean's death in a film of their own, as he drowned himself by filling his pockets with rocks. Thus, the play works both to expose to the exploitation of Irish locals in the filmmaking process *and* to support a grieving community.

This project has largely concerned the home space as an emblem of national unity for Ireland and how playwrights from Synge through McDonagh have sought to allow marginal characters an opportunity to define themselves outside of the rigid confines of the domestic home and homeland. An examination of the home space reveals a return to images of the Irish home at moments of national crisis from the Abbey's attempts to provide a "homing place" for Irish nationalism after Parnell's death, Field Day's use of a fifth province to form a deterritorialized space for Northern Ireland, McDonagh's warning that we must, at some point, release our history, and McPherson's and Jones's attempts to commemorate and mourn a history through theatrical experience. The use of theatre as a space to build a community, wake a history, and contest stagnant national boundaries demonstrates the vitality of theatre in Irish culture. What is perhaps most unique about the playwrights under review is their refusal of idyllic images of the Irish home—or images of communion. The use of (sometimes scathing) irony to reappraise Irish tropes is a theme that is consistent from Synge

to Jones. Despite audiences' occasional riotous responses to their unflattering reflections of the nation, the playwrights' canonical statuses and success indicate that ironic inversion is as much a part of Irish theatre history as the peasant cottage.

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