POSTNATIONALIST SUBVERSION OF THE CONSTITUENTS OF IRISHNESS: LAND, RELIGION AND FAMILY IN THE PLAYS OF MARTIN MCDONAGH AND DERMOT BOLGER

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ABSTRACT

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The social, political and economic changes undergone by the Republic of Ireland since the 1990s resulted in critical changes in the perception of Irish national identity and nationalist ideology. It was a new period characterized by its epithet, *the Celtic Tiger*, a period of rapid economic growth, and the opening up of Irish economy and politics to the world. The Irish society was now characterized by the diversity and complexities as a consequence of its interaction with the globalized world. In this context, nationalism began to give way to postnationalism which promoted plural and complicated definitions of Irishness drawing attention to the diversity and complexities of the Irish society. Changes in the perception of Irishness were reflected in theatre as well. Playwrights writing in the 1990s challenged the concept of a stable and coherent Ireland and Irishness by problematizing the very notion of nation and by celebrating plurality and multiplicity. They attempted to problematize the foundational elements of traditional Irishness, such as land, nationalistic fervor and Catholic religion. The aim of this study is to analyze the plays of Martin McDonagh and Dermot Bolger as plays written in a postnational context, and explore how they treat the constituents of Irishness – land, religion and family - and reconfigure them from a postnationalist perspective.

Keywords: Irish Theatre, Irishness, Nationalism, Postnationalism, the Celtic Tiger Period

ÖZ

İRLANDALILIĞI OLUŞTURAN TEMEL UNSURLARIN POSTMİLLİYETÇİ AÇIDAN ALTÜST EDİLMESİ: MARTIN MCDONAGH VE DERMOT BOLGER'IN OYUNLARINDA TOPRAK, DİN VE AİLE

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İrlanda'nın 1990'lı yıllardan itibaren içinden geçtiği sosyal, politik ve ekonomik değişimler, İrlanda ulusal kimliği ve ulusal ideolojinin algılanışında önemli değişikliklere yol açmıştır. İrlanda'nın *Kelt Kaplanı* adıyla anıldığı bu yeni dönem, hızlı bir ekonomik yükselme ve İrlanda ekonomisinin ve siyasetinin dünyaya açılma dönemi olmuştur. Globalleşen dünya ile yaşadığı etkileşim sonucu, İrlanda toplumu bu dönemde farklılıkların öne çıktığı, karmaşık bir sosyal yapıya dönüşmüştür. Bu bağlamda, milliyetçilik yerini postmilliyetçiliğe bırakmaya başlamıştır ki postmilliyetçilik İrlandalılığın çoğulcu ve karmaşık tanımlamalarını ön plana çıkarmaktadır. İrlandalılığın algılanmasındaki bu değişiklikler tiyatroya da yansımıştır. 1990'lı yıllarda yazan oyun yazarları, ulus kavramını sorunsallaştırarak ve çoğulculuk ve farklılığı ön planda tutarak, durağan ve tutarlı bir İrlanda ve İrlandalılık kavramına karşı çıkmışlardır. Bu çalışmanın amacı Martin Mcdonagh ve Dermot Bolger'in oyunlarını postmilliyetçi bağlamda yazılmış oyunlar olarak analiz etmek ve toprak, din, aile gibi İrlandalılığın oluşturan temel bileşenleri nasıl ele aldıklarını ve onları postmilliyetçi bir açıdan nasıl tekrar kurguladıklarını göstermektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İrlanda Tiyatrosu, İrlandalılık, Milliyetçilik, postmilliyetçilik, Kelt Kaplanı Dönemi

To those who deny and are denied any kinds of affiliation

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Ireland and Irishness occupy a considerable part of the discussions and analyses that cover different generations and phases of Irish drama. As Bruce Arnold argues, unlike theatre elsewhere, in Ireland the essential purposes of theatre were directed at the framing of a program designed to create and define the national spirit (59). Christopher Murray also points to this positioning of Irish drama within a cultural discourse about the nation: "Irish drama is a long energetic dispute with a changing audience over the same basic issues: where we come from, where we are now, and where we are headed" (*Mirror* 224). Irish drama has, then, long been considered as providing and maintaining a ground for the discussion and exploration of issues of national and cultural identity in Ireland.

This study aims to focus on the perception of Irishness by Irish playwrights creating their works from the late 1980s and 90s to the present. The playwrights whose works are included in the scope of the study are Martin McDonagh and Dermot Bolger. The study argues that in their plays McDonagh and Bolger subvert the constitutive elements of Irishness and offer a postnationalist exploration of Irish society. To approach this aim, it would be useful to provide background information concerning the overall argument, by tracing the development of modern Irish drama and its relationship with national identity from the early years of the Irish National Theatre onwards. This is not to suggest that before the establishment of the Irish National Theatre there was no Irish theatre that engaged in the exploration of national issues. On the contrary, theatrical activities in Ireland can be traced back to the twelfth century, and "[s]ince the seventeenth century, theatrical performance in Ireland has served as a

site of social and political contest at home, and a product of cultural export abroad" (Trotter, *Irish Theatre* 7).

Philip Edwards notes that there had been several attempts over the centuries to found an Irish theatre. Thomas Wentworth, the Lord Deputy of Ireland, established the first professional playhouse outside London in Dublin in 1633. The Dublin theatre remained a subsidiary of the London theatre throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Players and musicians were all imported from London, while Irish playwrights worked in London; Ireland bred great dramatists like Oliver Goldsmith and Richard Brinsley Sheridan (197-98). These writers did not openly address Irish issues in their plays. It was Charles Shadwell who first engaged in creating a drama with Irish subjects[1].

In the nineteenth century, a number of Irish melodramas appeared, that were marked by their attempts to challenge the infamous images of Irish people[2] on the British stage. Nicholas Grene identifies Dion Boucicault's *The Shaughraun* (1874) as the starting-point for the self-conscious stage representation of Ireland preceding the Irish national theatre movement (*The Politics* 2). Nineteenth-century Irish melodramas, some of which will be mentioned in the following parts of this chapter, reveal that national issues had already been involved in Irish drama before the activities of the Irish National Theatre, "[b]ut Irish theatre did not fully exploit its propagandist potential until the end of the nineteenth century, when a perfect storm of political and cultural events in Ireland led to tremendous shifts in the aesthetics and the purposes of the form" (Trotter, *Irish Theatre* 7). Thus, the Irish National Theatre became a sort of official site for the discussion of nationalist concerns.

[1]In his *Rotherick O'Connor, King of Connaught, or, The Distressed Princess* (1719), Shadwell worked on the Norman invasion of Ireland in 1167.

[2] These infamous images were largely rooted in the stereotypical depictons of Irish people in the works of some British historians and artists from the earlier centruies. For instance, the works of Anglo-Norman churchman Giraldus Cambrensis in the late 1180s justified the invasion of Ireland on religious grounds, and created a prototype of the Irish as a barbaric, bestial, corrupt, filthy and immoral Other that was to last for centuries (Kuhlig and Keohane 66). English dramatists in later periods also created a drunken, stupid, and violent Stage Irishman; they attempted to indicate Irish inferiority and need for governance by emphasizing those character traits that signaled political incompetence (Cullingford 287).

In their critical works, various Irish theatre critics, anthologists and literary historians have identified some specific phases in the progression of twentieth-century Irish drama. While differing in some respects in their outlines of these phases, they roughly agree upon breaks in thematic content, presentation and dramatic strategies through which these phases are differentiated from each other. In this introductory part, some of these categorizations will be referred to in order to develop the idea that throughout the twentieth century there have been remarkable changes in the perception of the Irish nation and national identity. In this respect, two critics, Fintan O'Toole and Christopher Murray, will be singled out since their works cover a relatively more clear-cut and straightforward categorization than those of others[3].

Fintan O'Toole, a literary editor and drama critic for *The Irish Times*[4], who has published numerous articles as well as survey and analysis books on contemporary Irish drama, refers to "three quite distinct movements" in twentieth-century Irish theatre (*Critical Moments* 48). O'Toole starts his classification from the end of the nineteenth century with the establishment of the Irish Literary Theatre, and extends it to the 1990s. The first movement covers the playwrights of the Celtic Revival represented by W. B. Yeats, Lady Augusta Gregory, John M. Synge and Sean O'Casey. The movement corresponds to the formative years of the Irish theatre which are intimately associated with the Abbey Theatre, and "its preeminent figures were essentially engaged in an exercise in cultural nationalism" ("Shadows" n.pag.). O'Toole elaborates his discussion to include (as his next movement) a second revival in the late 1950s that continued until the 1980s. This period is marked by the works of Tom Murphy, Brian Friel, John B. Keane, Thomas Kilroy and Hugh Leonard, who generally dealt with the "deep conflict between the old traditional society and a new modern one" ("Shadows" n.pag.). O'Toole further notes that (as his third movement) a new generation of playwrights began to dominate Irish theatre in the late 1980s. Unlike the earlier

[3]These critics include: Nicholas Grene (see *The Politics of Irish Drama: Plays in Context from Boucicault to Friel*), Christopher Morash (see *A History of Irish Theatre 1601-2000*), Anthony Roche (see *Contemporary Irish Drama: from Beckett to McGuiness*) and Mary Trotter (see *Modern Irish Theatre*).

[4]An Irish daily newspaper, published since 1859.

generations, they did not assume a nationalist project at all. Nor were they confined to a concern with the confusion between traditional and modern values. "They were interested simply in looking at these peculiar fragments of a dead society" ("Shadows" n.pag.).

Christopher Murray's major work *Twentieth-Century Irish Drama: Mirror up to a Nation* provides an extensive overview of different periods in Irish drama. His analyses in this book end in a classification that corresponds to that of O'Toole, although it does not completely overlap with it. Like O'Toole, he includes in the first generation the founders of the Irish Literary Theatre. Their generation covers a period from 1899 to the early 1960s. He notes that in the 1960s Irish drama enjoyed a second renaissance with the emergence of a new individual dramatic talent that coincided with the sudden and exciting set of economic, social and cultural changes which the country underwent after the mid-1950s (*Mirror* 162). This period is distinguished by playwrights such as Brian Friel, Tom Murphy, John B. Keane and Thomas Kilroy. Murray points out that another noteworthy development in Irish theatre took place in the late 1980s. This period covers playwrights like Paul Mercier, Dermot Bolger, Sebastian Barry, Marina Carr, Tom MacIntyre, Declan Hughes and Billy Roche ("The State of the Play" 13).

Based on O'Toole's and Murray's categorizations, the following part of this section provides a general overview of the course of Irish drama throughout the twentieth century in terms of its relation to the nation and to national issues.

1.1 Before the Abbey

Brian Friel claims that no Irish theater existed prior to 1899 (qtd. in Pilkington, "Theatre History" 27). This harsh statement implies that Irish theatre failed to represent national issues before the establishment of the Literary Theatre. However, Friel ignores the point that even before the establishment of the Literary

Theatre there were some attempts to deal with Irish issues and stand against the stage Irishman[5].

Derogatory and pejorative images of Irish people had been circulated "through 'histories', travel writings, 'scientific' studies of race, cartoons, and plays which suggested the inferiority of the Irish at worst, their infantile dependency at best" (Richards, "Plays" 2). David Hume's portrayal of the Irish in his famous work, *The History of England* (1770) is illustrative of this point: "The Irish from the beginning of time had been buried in the most profound barbarism and ignorance … they continued still in the most rude state of society, and distinguished by those vices alone to which human nature, not tamed by education or restrained by laws, is for ever subject" (464). In the following century, Matthew Arnold made another degrading definition of Irish and other Celtic people: "The Celt, undisciplinable, anarchical, and turbulent by nature … it is just the opposite of the Anglo-Saxon temperament, disciplinable and steadily obedient within certain limits" (qtd. in Fleming 25). Such examples may be multiplied, but as Deborah Fleming points out, the cruelest depictions of all were artistic renderings of the stereotype with porcine and simian features. For example, in the Victorian period, cartoons related to the Irish in *Punch*[6] showed "apelike features that designated animal instincts, slovenly women and drunken men in rebel encampments" (27).

Such notorious definitions when reflected on stage created the stereotypical stage Irishman. Elizabeth Butler Cullingford defines the stage Irishman as belonging to "a well-established theatrical genre that mocked non-English characters as different, dangerous, or ridiculous" (2). MacMorris in Shakespeare's *Henry V* is one of the earlier examples of the stage Irishman. There was also another stereotypical Irish character prevalent on the Victorian stage, *Paddy* "who was more than the cavorting, ridiculous 'stage' Irishman that had been created for English audiences in the nineteenth century. 'Paddy' was by contrast both [sic] fun-loving, careless and hard-drinking and at the same time mercurial, bad-

[5] The Stage Irishman refers to the stereotypical Irish characters represented as low-comic figures or buffoons.

[6] A British weekly comic magazine launched in 1841.

tempered and easily angered" (Fleming 20). Pierce O'Hara, who is a hard drinking Irishman addicted to dueling and women, in Bayle Bernard's *The Irish Attorney* (1840) and Wild Murtogh, the comical villain, in John Buckstone's *The Green Bushes* (1845) are some examples of the stage Irishman in the nineteenth-century British theatre.

The Irish melodramas of the nineteenth century were not indifferent to these kinds of negative representations of Irish people on the British stage. They tried to defy these notorious images, or reverse them in their own ways. Actually, the leaders of the Irish Literary Theatre, Yeats and Lady Gregory, saw the Irish melodramas of the nineteenth century as extremely harmful for the nation since they reinforced the image of the stage Irishman. On the other hand, many recent critics, having revisited those melodramas, argue that Irish melodrama was not so unrelated to the nationalist claims of the Celtic Revival. For instance, Lionel Pilkington claims that "[t]he Irish melodramas of the 19th century functioned as an important counterweight to the misrepresentation of Irish character on the English stage and thus helped to prepare the way for the possibility of a somewhat more independent Irish theater" ("Theatre History" 28). To accept the argument of Yeats and Lady Gregory, there were still characters in these melodramas who showed vestiges of the stage Irishman, but with more positive connotations. For example, Cullingford suggests that Boucicault reinvented the stage Irishman in his several melodramas as still drunken but also clever and charming (1).

Melodramas performed at the Queen's Royal Theatre in Dublin from the 1860s were sympathetic to Irish nationalism. The growing popularity of plays such as Dion Boucicault's *The Colleen Bawn* (1860), *Arrahna Pogue* (1864) and *The Shaughraun* (1874), or J.W. Whitbread's *Lord Edward or '98* (1894) and *Wolfe Tone* (1898) attested to the prestige and currency of an emerging nationalist cultural discourse (Pilkington, "Theatre History" 27-8). They made their most significant contribution by turning to Irish topics. For instance, Whitbread wrote several patriotic melodramas based on Irish history. Boucicault's *Arrahna Pogue*

was set in the Irish rebellion of 1798[7], and he set his famous *Shaughraun* in the period of Fenian activity[8] in the 1860s. Boucicault himself claimed that *Shaughraun*'s significance was its patriotic exposure of English misrepresentations (qtd. in Grene, *The Politics* 8).

1.2 The Abbey: Searching for Irishness

As is seen in the previous part, the nineteenth- century Irish melodramas had already paved the way for the articulation of nationalist ideals well before the establishment of the Irish Literary Theatre. It was, however, not formally regarded as an instrument for the construction of national identity until Yeats, Lady Gregory and Edward Martyn founded the Irish Literary Theatre in 1899. The origins of the Irish Literary Theatre were rooted in the National Literary Society founded by Yeats in 1892. By 1899, the National Literary Society had led to a theatrical initiative in the establishment of the Irish Literary Theatre. The Irish Literary Theatre acquired the Abbey Theatre in 1904, and the Irish dramatic movement was simply referred to as the Abbey from then on. It was also the beginning of the whole succeeding tradition of Irish theatre, represented by names such as J. M. Synge, Sean O'Casey, Hugh Leonard and Brian Friel (Leerssen 51).

The Irish dramatic movement emerged out of a wide-ranging cultural revolution known as the Celtic Revival, or the Celtic Twilight which was closely related to the prevailing cultural nationalism and cultural nationalist activities at the turn of the twentieth century in Ireland. As Trotter explains:

> By the 1890s, cultural nationalist activities had sprung up at both high-art and grassroots levels. Through 'self-help' organizations like the Gaelic League and the Gaelic Athletic Association, Irish nationalists began taking Irish language courses, playing Irish games and consuming art that offered positive images of Irish culture. At the same time, artists and scholars supplied translations of ancient Irish myths and sagas, tracked down and published folk tales and created new work based on Irish themes and motifs,

[7]A massive and bloody uprising against the Britih rule in Ireland. It was initiated by a revolutionary group, United Irishmen, inspired by the ideas of the French Revolution.

[8]This refers to the activities of a fraternal organization to establish an independent Irish democratic republic through a popular insurrection.

> proving that ancient and modern Irish culture were worth serious intellectual inquiry. ("Gregory, Yeats" 88)

All these activities were different reactions to what was thought to be the annihilation of the older Gaelic civilization as a result of British dominance on the island, initiated during the Tudor and Stuart colonization of the island. Cultural Revivalists believed in the necessity of reviving and preserving elements of the Gaelic culture against the "secular materialism" of the age and "Anglo Saxon greed and utilitarianism" which had, they thought, harmful effects on "a creative, distinct, and vital indigenous culture" (McCaffrey, "Components" 14).

The Celtic Twilight, as termed by Yeats, refers to the attempts of artists to contribute to the revival of Irish culture in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth century. The Irish Dramatic movement constituted a significant part of the Revival. The Revivalist movement was particularly associated with the work of the Abbey Theatre. The central notion of the Abbey was that "Ireland needed a distinctive kind of theatre reflecting its own myths and legends and its own contemporary life" (O'Toole "Shadows" n.pag.).

The Irish National Theatre was greatly influenced by nationalist fervor. "It was conceived out of the energy and the ardor of those Irish writers who believed that the Irish nation was awaiting a rebirth as a self-governing people" (Sternlicht 29). The founders of the National Theatre believed enthusiastically in the existence of an innate Irishness that distinguished Irish people from others, and had been repressed for a long time; they set out to unearth this Irishness. They assumed an active part in the nation-building process not only through political action, but also by pursuing the roots of this inward and spiritual Irishness, looking back to Irish history, myth and folklore.

As Shaun Richards argues, the idea of nation, as both theme and setting, haunted the development of Irish theatre, and Irish theatre is marked by the "national appellation and all its implications" ("Plays" 1). The "Manifesto for the Irish Literary Theatre" written by Yeats, Gregory and Martyn in 1898 exposes the relationship between theatre and nationalist causes:

> We propose to have performed in Dublin in the spring of every year certain Celtic and Irish plays, which whatever be their degree of excellence be written with a high ambition, and so build up a Celtic and Irish school of dramatic literature. We hope to find in Ireland an uncorrupted and imaginative audience trained to listen by its passion for oratory, and believe that our desire to bring upon the stage the deeper thoughts and emotions of Ireland will ensure for us a tolerant welcome, and that freedom to experiment which is not found in the theatres of England. We will show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and 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, in carrying out a work that is outside all the political questions that divide us. (qtd. in Gregory 20)

This oft-quoted manifesto shows that the founders of the Abbey were preoccupied with the questions of Irish identity, representation and culture. In this respect, they regarded theatre as a significant tool to affect and shape people's ideas. The Abbey's mission was a cultural project. What made it different from the earlier theatrical activities was that "this was the first time in Irish history that there existed a *self-consciously* Irish theatre institution dealing with Irish subjects for Irish audiences" (Pilkington, "Theatre History" 29 emphasis mine).

The end of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century was a crucial period in the nation-making process of Ireland. Along with the cultural revival, a number of significant political events such as the 1916 Easter Uprising, the formation of the Irish Free State in 1921 and the following civil war, the declaration of Ireland as an independent nation in 1937 and the enactment of the First Programme for Economic Expansion took place in this period. Irish National Theatre developed side by side with these political improvements. Not only artists but also politicians had great expectations from the function and role of the theatre. For instance, the founder of Sinn Fein[9], Arthur Griffith, declared in 1902:

> We look to the Irish National Theatre primarily as a means of regenerating the country. The Theatre is a powerful agent in the

[9] A nationalist party organized in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. It was founded in 1905 as a political organization which struggled for a united Ireland. Today it is the political wing of the Provisional Irish Republican Army.

> building up of a nation. When it is in foreign 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. (qtd. in Richards, "Plays" 2)

Based on the background information provided so far, the first period of Irish drama can be considered as an important element of the nation-building process of Ireland. As Seamus Deane argues "Ireland produced, in the first three decades of this century [the twentieth century], a remarkable literature in which the attempt to overcome and replace the colonial experience by something other, something that would be 'native' and yet not provincial, was a dynamic and central energy" (*Celtic* 3). The playwrights of the Abbey were united in their attempt to define a kind of stable, and unified national identity, and to trace the roots of Irishness.

During the Abbey period, Irish myths and legends gained popularity. Many plays were written and elaborately staged based on these myths and legends. The dominant style of the period was the peasant play which represented an idealized version of life in rural western Ireland. The less popular but still prevalent plays were urban plays examining contemporary social and political issues and their pressures on Irish people (Trotter, "Gregory, Yeats" 88).

Although most literary Revivalists belonged to the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, they were preoccupied with rural life through which, they believed, they would reach the core of Irishness. "What distinguished Irish from English writers was a complex national identity, and in searching for that identity Irish writers turned, as if naturally, to the people they imagined to be most distinctively and authentically Irish: the peasants" (Hirsch 42). Therefore, the peasant play turned into an expression of the search for an "ancient idealism" as articulated in the Manifesto. With the exception of Sean O'Casey, whose work focused on urban life, the playwrights of the Abbey period generally depicted a romanticized and idyllic rural life. Fleming argues that "[t]he literary treatment of the peasant played a crucial … role in the emerging sense of Irish national consciousness in the early twentieth century" (1). Especially Yeats and Synge regarded peasants as descendants of a Celtic tradition, and they tried to bring native Irish culture and folklore to the attention of the urban middle classes (Fleming 2).

The writers of the Irish Revival, including Yeats and Lady Gregory aimed to explore a sense of national unity through themes borrowed from Irish folklore, history and myth. They were Irish nationalists who were deeply convinced that "there is an identifiable and commonly shared racial component - Irishness - which expresses itself in hostility towards the modern world" (Deane, *Celtic* 30). They depended on the notion of Irish national distinctness. While explaining the significance of myths in the nation-making process, Richard Kearney argues that indigenous myths provide a sense of original identity for people of a nation (87). In this context, the Revivalists looked back to a cultural, historic and mythic past and Irish folklore to find the source of true Irishness.

Yeats supposed that national identity could be maintained through the unifying power of national heroic images: "You cannot keep the idea of a nation alive where there are no national institutions to reverence, no national success to admire, without a model of it in the mind of the people" (*The Autobiography* 364). In his *Cuchulain* plays, which are based on the epic story of an Irish mythological hero, Yeats linked the origins of Irishness to the mythic Celtic past. He also drew on Cathleen, a significant nationalist symbol, representing Ireland. Cathleen was a long-standing poetical figure depicted variously as a young woman in distress, importuned and enslaved by wicked men, or as a divine vision embodying the eternal sovereignty of Ireland and predicting liberation from foreign oppression (Leerssen 52). Besides, she was also used by the writers of the Abbey who combined this figure with other themes from Irish myth and folklore to serve their nationalist aims.

Countess Cathleen (1892) by Yeats is a rewriting of an Irish folktale as a verse-play. The play is set in a time of famine when some evil spirits are roaming around Ireland asking people for their souls in return for gold. While peasants are about to sell their souls, the great land-owner Cathleen comes to the help of people. She sells her own soul to buy back the souls of her tenants. At the end, the Countess is also rescued by angels. In this play, Yeats, through the person of Cathleen, offers "the myth of Mother Ireland as a symbolic compensation for the colonial calamities of history" (Kearney 91)

In another Abbey play, *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* (1902) co-written by Yeats and Lady Gregory, Cathleen appears as a poor old woman. The play is set in a cottage in Kilalla, County Mayo on the eve of a battle during the Irish rebellion of 1798. A family is preparing for the marriage of their son, Michael, when an old woman enters the cottage and calls him away to her service. The woman is actually Cathleen in disguise. She wants Michael to sacrifice his life to get back her four green fields which have been stolen by a stranger. Leaving his parents, his farm and his bride, Michael follows after Cathleen as in a dream. At the end of the play, a boy coming into the cottage says there was no old woman on the road, but he saw "a young girl, and she had the walk of a queen" (*Cathleen NiHoulihan* 88). Yeats and Gregory based this play on an Irish folk legend in which a poor old woman calls the men of Ireland to avenge the loss of her four green fields (representing the four provinces of Ireland), which has been stolen by strangers – that is, the English. The Irish man sacrificing his blood for Ireland revives the old woman so that she once again becomes a young beauty (Trotter, "Gregory, Yeats" 89). The transformation of the Old Woman into a young girl can be considered as symbolically dramatizing a kind of renewal of Ireland through patriotic commitment (Pethica 65).

While Yeats and Lady Gregory traced authentic Irishness in the epic national past and Irish myth, and combined this with idealized versions of rural life, Synge took a different path. He attempted to make more realistic depictions of the peasantry. In order to have a deeper insight into the core of Irishness, he made summer visits to the Aran Islands, and Mayo between 1898 and 1902, which influenced his drama. In his introduction to Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*, T. R. Henn states that there is not only a profound love and understanding of nature and the Irish landscape in Synge's work but also a dispassionate realization of its cruelty, loneliness and the menaces of the mountains and the sea (10). In his own preface to the play, Synge said that he owed much to the folk imagination: "A certain number of the phrases I employ I have heard also from herds and fisherman along the coast from Kerry to Mayo or from beggar-women and ballad-singers nearer Dublin" (*Collected Works* 2).

Synge found in the rural life a great resource to appreciate Irishness, and exalted the peasantry; but he evaded idealized depictions of it in his plays. In spite of all his unidealized presentations, Synge believed that authentic and stable Irishness was present in rural Ireland. His difference from the other representatives of the Abbey was that he portrayed the peasants as he saw them and presented the hardships of real rural life. "Through the villagers, Synge mimetically represents a stable, coherent sense of Irish identity, evidenced most clearly in the playwright's use of folk history and peasant dialect" (Diehl 105). He frequently received harsh reactions from a nationalist audience who thought that Synge's representations were degrading of Irishness. For instance, his *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907) caused a week of nightly riots because of the word "shift"[10] used in the play (*The Playboy* 72). What chiefly upset the audience was that Synge cast doubt on the assumed chastity of Irish women.

Although the Literary Revival had never been a homogeneous movement, the leading figures of the Abbey, including Yeats, Lady Gregory and Synge all believed that there was a unique and authentic Irishness, and they tried to identify it in their own peculiar ways. However, it was not an easy task to achieve at all. As Damien Shortt argues, from the outset, the theatre began to produce drama that simultaneously complicated the notion of Irishness and nationalism (119). Conflicting voices began to be heard in the Abbey with the emergence of the generation following that of the founding fathers. Sean O'Casey belonged to the second generation of the Abbey. He started his career in the 1920s. He was different from the leading figures of the Abbey in that he came from a working class family, and focused on the life of the working-class in Dublin. "His point of view was different from that of Yeats and Synge. Instead of adopting the conventional peasant drama he shifted the focus from rural to urban life" (Schulze 81).

In his historic trilogy, O'Casey captured and commented on significant events in Irish history: *The Shadow of a Gunman* focused on the Anglo Irish War between 1919 and 1921, *Juno and Paycock* on the civil war, and *The Plough and*

[10] Women's underwear.

the Stars on the Easter Rising of 1916. His treatment of history was different from that of Yeats. While Yeats exalted heroism, O'Casey "was mocking all these [national heroic] illusions by looking at the brutality of war through the realistic eye of the working class … instead of through the gaze of sentimental patriotism" (Schulze 82). Thus, his plays disturbed the nationalist audience most of the time. As in the case of Synge's *The Playboy*, there were riots following the staging of his *The Plough and the Stars* (1926). This time, female nationalists created the uproar because O'Casey put the national flag in the hands of Rosie, a prostitute, and he portrayed the leading figures of the Easter Rising in an unheroic way (Steinberger 38).

O'Casey avoided the use of symbolism to evoke patriotic feelings. His works were more realistic compared to those of Yeats and Lady Gregory. He believed that he offered a true vision of Ireland by presenting "with uncompromising brutality the suffering of people who in the deprivations of their daily lives found little solace in the nationalistic abstractions" (O'Driscoll 14). Robert O'Driscoll argues that from O'Casey's point of view, if the nationalists were the guardians of national honor, the playwright had to be the guardian of national honesty (126). In other words, according to O'Casey, the duty of the playwright was to represent his or her country as it really was.

The later period of the Abbey was marked by some specific realist plays. In this period, a new group of playwrights called the Cork Realists emerged including Lennox Robinson, T.C. Murray and R.J. Ray who attacked the cultural nationalist ideals. Lennox Robinson admitted that "[w]e young men, a generation later than Yeats … didn't see [Ireland] as a queen, didn't see her all fair in purple and gold, we loved her as truly as Yeats – maybe we loved her more deeply - but just because we loved her so deeply her faults were clear to us …We would write all our terrible words about her out of our love" (qtd. in Frazier 200). This generation might be considered as a transitional period between the first period of Irish drama and the second period based on the classifications of the critics mentioned at the beginning of the chapter.

1.3 The Second Renaissance: A Period of Existential Crisis

The first generation playwrights of the Irish Literary Revival were succeeded by playwrights who wrote predominantly naturalistic plays depicting life in small towns and rural areas. "Naturalism in Ireland was there to convince an urban Irish audience - the playgoers of the Abbey for the most part - that rural life was not just real but super-real, the essence of Irish life, the Real Ireland" (O'Toole, *Critical Moments* 286). These plays can be considered as the extension of the peasant play tradition. They were produced in the stifling regime of the Prime Minister Eamon de Valera who set out to build up a staunchly Catholic and nationalist Republic. Murray notes that "Irish plays of the 1940s and 50s reflect the values, artistic and moral as well as socio-economic and political, of a people struggling to establish contours of identity in a postcolonial phase. […] We are dealing with plays of a particular, transitional but nevertheless formative time in Irish history" (*Mirror* 138)

It was not until the early 1960s that Ireland saw "the stirrings of what would be the first significant shift in sensibility in the Irish theatre since the early days of the Abbey theatre" (Kilroy 1). This was the period in Irish drama that Murray described as the "second renaissance", and it was marked by the works of Tom Murphy, Brian Friel[11], John B. Keane, Thomas Kilroy and Hugh Leonard (*Mirror* 162).

In the 1960s, gradual transformations began to be marked in the interpretation of Irish nationalism. The effects of those changes were straightforwardly seen in the changing atmosphere of Irish drama. The playwrights of the second revival reacted against the restrictive assumptions of nationalism and rejected the peasant play as the Abbey's established dramatic form. "The values of traditional nationalism were not staged unless the subject was treated satirically or, as in Friel and Murphy, as a crisis which was more existential than political" (Richards, "Plays" 14).

[11]Although, Friel is a Northern Irish playwright, he is included in this category because his works reflected effectively the major issues and concerns of the period.

As O'Toole points out, in the theatre of the first revival, there was a substratum of nationalism. Irishness was what defined the cast of characters and Ireland was the oil that made the plot run ("Shadows" n.pag.). On the other hand, in the second period the well-defined and close-knit societies of the first generation began to shatter, and the nationalistic substratum changed accordingly. Friel said that "the generation of Irish writers immediately before mine took their generic purity for granted, and soldiered on. We are more concerned with defining our Irishness than with pursuing it" (21). Along the same line with Friel, Murray argues, "[t]he more problematic and fragmented identity becomes the greater the need for imagery for wholeness" (*Mirror* 246).

The dominant styles and modes of the Abbey had begun to lose their effects. The peasant play failed to meet the artistic aims of the playwrights. As a consequence of economic, social and cultural changes transforming the country, the society resisted definition as a simple and single entity. Therefore, "Irish art no longer attempted to mytho-poeticize an idealistic Irish past, but instead to seek out the directions in which the nation was going" (Trotter, *Irish Theatre* 117).

Plays written in this period, especially those of Friel and Murphy, reflected the playwrights' anxiety and unease in a rapidly changing society. The playwrights mostly focused on the conflicts that resulted from a traditional way of life being exposed to the influences of modernity. Their plays abounded with disintegrated characters who encountered these conflicts. Thomas Kilroy, being one of the famous playwrights of the second wave, described his own generation as a group of playwrights who witnessed and wrote of the transformation of a traditional culture and the accompanying pangs of a changing identity. He further commented that they struggled to connect the past with the present (6).

The playwrights were no longer occupied with exploring the distinctiveness of Irishness and Irish culture since they encountered a "collapse of cultural identity" (Hughes 15). As O'Toole explains from the late 1950s onwards, Ireland as a single and simple notion which might underlie and give formal coherence to a work of theatre began to seep away. The government policy of trying to protect a unified, predominantly rural, Catholic and conservative society went bankrupt

("Irish Theatre" 51). The tension between the old image of Ireland and the new realities ended up in a state of conflict between the traditional and modern values. Therefore, the works of the period generally dramatized "that abrupt, rapid and dizzying transformation, as long-established social practices were broken up by the shock of the new" (Roche, "Contemporary Drama" 478). The task assumed by the second generation writers was to reunite the pieces of a disintegrated Irishness. The playwrights were engaged in a search for the sense of belonging, as it is identified by Diehl, "the sense of fixity, security, constancy which results from being able to define oneself in relation to home, region and nation" (108).

The dominant themes of the second revival period were emigration, exile and return, memory, cultural displacement and self-estrangement; themes which suggest a society in transition. For instance, Tom Murphy's *A Whistle in the Dark* (1961) explores the conflict between the old and new way of life looking at the lives of Irish migrants in England. The play portrays the disintegration of the Carney family who had emigrated from County Mayo, where they had led an impoverished life, to England. What Murphy's play exposes is "the pressure imposed on the individual… unable to create a new sustainable mode of living which incorporates major cultural change" (Murray, *Mirror* 162).

Similarly, in *Philadelphia Here I Come* (1964) Friel deals with the theme of emigration. A young man, Gar, is about to emigrate from a small town, Ballybag to America. Gar has problems with his father and with the suffocatingly conservative social life of his community. As a result of the economic, social and personal pressures on him, Gar splits into a public and a private self. Gar's situation represents the alienation and disintegration of the individual within a rapidly changing society. "What is lamented by Friel's play is both traditional Ireland's failure to adapt quickly enough to the fast pace of a US-dominated international capitalism and the necessity and human cost of this adaptation" (Pilkington, "Reading History" 501).

In the same vein as Friel, in *The Field* (1965) Keane focuses on the struggle to survive in a rapidly changing and industrialized Ireland. The play depicts a competition over a field between "The Bull" McCabe and William Dee. The Bull

wants to use the field for cattle breeding while William wants it for industrial purposes, to build a factory producing blocks of concrete. The competition between them in fact reflects the competition between agricultural and industrial values. Eventually, William offers the higher bid. Although William is killed before he owns the field, the play presents the changing social and economic conditions of the 1960s when industrialization began to sweep over Ireland (Kamm 135). Keane's other plays address similar issues as well. O'Toole describes three important plays of Keane, *Sive* (1959), *The Field* (1965) and *Big Maggie* (1969), as "thoughtful and keenly observed dramatizations of social change … less about a mythic clash of good and evil and more about the human dilemmas that confront ordinary people in times of change ("Introduction" *John B. Keane* 7-8).

When the playwrights of the first and second periods are considered together, it appears that while the previous generation was preoccupied with the question of identity and self-realization, the latter assumed a more critical role for they wanted to redefine Irishness in their own artistic ways. The playwrights of the second revival tried to incorporate past and present without being imprisoned in an envisioned idyllic and idealized past. In the last analysis, both generations sought to enlarge the awareness of what constituted the nation (Murray, *Mirror* 245). This attempt was to be put aside with the arrival of the third generation of playwrights.

1.4 A New Generation: Overcoming Limitations of Nation

The group of established Irish playwrights referred to as the writers of the second revival continued to produce noteworthy plays in the late 1980s and the 1990s. On the other hand, simultaneous with the development of this group, the 1990s saw a dynamic new generation of playwrights come to the fore (Pilny "Home Places" 46). This new generation includes playwrights such as Billy Roche, Sebastian Barry, Marina Carr, Martin McDonagh, Conor McPherson and Dermot Bolger. Though not all, most of the Irish playwrights from the late 1980s onwards have differed from the two earlier generations discussed above. They

have been occupied with destabilizing and subverting the nationalist concerns of the first generation writers, and have explored ways to go beyond the identity crisis afflicting the second generation writers.

Fintan O'Toole notes that at some time in the late 1980s, Irish theatre shifted in unexpected and at first confusing ways. For thirty years, it had been for the most part a theatre of social change and startling conflicts between tradition and modernity, old worlds and new ("Introduction" vii). However, Ireland was now undergoing a drastic change on its new path to becoming an urban culture and being integrated into the global world and the information age. It was a new period characterized by its epithet, the Celtic Tiger. Ireland was now moving from being an emigrant country to receiving an increasing number of immigrants in search of work or as political refugees. The arrival of immigrants of various origins contributed to the transformation of the concept of Irish identity into a multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious identity (Llena, "Glocal Identities" 134). Consequently, the perception of Irishness began to change, and it turned out to be an anachronistic assumption to talk about a stable, unified and coherent Ireland and Irishness.

Changes in the perception of Irishness were reflected in the heatre as well. Playwrights writing from the late 1980s and 1990s onwards needed to redefine what Irishness meant in a recently globalized Ireland of remarkable political demographic and social changes and with a tremendous influx of new immigrants into Ireland from Europe (Trotter, *Irish Theatre* 176-77). Therefore, the plays of the period represent the playwrights' reactions to a new society defined not only by ethnic origin and geographical boundaries but also by its relationship with its own diaspora communities, rates of export and import and cultural influence. Under these circumstances appeared a new tendency in Irish theatre marked by seeking ways to understand the true diversity of Irish experience both within and without the nation's traditional borders (Trotter, *Irish Theatre* 177).

The third generation playwrights are in a way similar to the first generation in terms of their preoccupation with Irishness. Their difference is that they try not to define and represent the perceived basics of Irishness but to destabilize the very

notion of nation by celebrating plurality and multiplicity. As O'Toole states, the mindset of the first generation is that of a single world, a close-knit, well-defined society ("Irish Theatre" 50). The new generation represents worlds as "fragments not of a coherent whole called Ireland but of a mixed-up jigsaw of the continents" ("Irish Theatre" 56). Supposing that the basic assumptions that come together to create a national identity had been destabilized, they set out to reconfigure the meaning of Irishness, which provides the basis for the main argument of this work that the nationalist concerns gave way to postnationalist views in Irish theatre. These postnationalist views manifest themselves through the playwrights' awareness of and their search for reconciling social diversities and multiple identities.

1.5 The Aim and Scope of the Study

This study aims to investigate how McDonagh and Bolger subvert the constitutive elements of Irishness - land, religion and family - in their own particular ways, thereby opening their plays to a postnationalist exploration of the variety and complexities of the Irish society. To this end, McDonagh's *The Leenane Trilogy*- consisting of *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (1996), *A Skull in Connemara* (1997) and *The Lonesome West* (1997) - and Bolger's *The Lament for Arthur Cleary* (1989), *Blinded by the Light,* (1990), and *The Passion of Jerome* (1999) will be analyzed. These plays have been chosen for discussion because they are the earlier plays of McDonagh and Bolger, written before and during the Celtic Tiger period.

This will be necessarily a one-way attempt focusing on only a textual analysis. Performance analysis is beyond the scope of the study, but the fact that the plays at hand might be staged in quite different versions by different directors so that they are open to various different interpretations, should be borne in mind.

As a limitation of the study, only three constituents of Irishness are analyzed. Ethnicity, or a shared Gaelic past and language, and other important elements which constitute Irishness are not included. This limitation mainly stems from the

fact that McDonagh and Bolger commonly deal with issues related to land, religion and family.

The study follows an eclectic method of analysis rather than confining itself to one particular theoretical frame. The following chapters are thus clearly indebted, in different parts, to the postmodern Gothic, the Bakhtinian carnivalesque, Baudrillardian simulacrum and Kristevan abjection. A full discussion of these theories and their implications are beyond the scope of this study. Another limitation faced results from the fact these theories are not used self-consciously by the playwrights. Thus it is impossible to indicate their full implications in the texts. They are only referred to in order to better illustrate the playwrights' subversion of the three constituents.

Each of the following chapters will present a close textual analysis. In each chapter a theoretical frame will be constructed to be followed during the textual analysis. A theme-based organization is preferred to a text-by-text organization. Each chapter will focus on a theme (land, religion and family) and cover the plays most relevant to that theme. Accordingly, some plays can occupy a more prominent place in some chapters while others remain peripheral.

CHAPTER 2

DEBATES AROUND NATIONALISM AND POSTNATIONALISM

This part of the study will trace the process of nation-building in Ireland from the end of the nineteenth century onwards in order to be able to detect the changes in the perception of Irishness during the 1990s. It will thus, in the first place, introduce a brief survey of different approaches to the concepts of nation, nationalism[12] and postnationalism. Its focus will then shift to Irish nationalism by drawing on the theories which best explain the Irish case in terms of nationalism and the different phases it underwent. Finally, it will try to reveal the dialogue between nationalism and Irish drama during the twentieth century.

2.1 Theorizing Nation and Nationalism

Umut Özkırımlı starts his *Theories of Nationalism,* which is a comprehensive overview of the current debates on nationalism, with an appropriate question: "Did nationalism have its own 'grand thinkers'?" (10). He answers his own question, drawing on Benedict Anderson's argument that "[u]nlike most other isms, nationalism has never produced its own grand thinkers: no Hobbes, Tocquevilles, Marxes or Webers" (5). Another prominent scholar on nationalism, Ernest Gellner, asserted that existing thinkers offer more or less similar arguments, thus none of them is irreplaceable (*Nations* 124). Bernard Yack proposes a parallel idea: "there are no great theoretical texts outlining and defending nationalism. No Marx, no Mill, no Machiavelli" (ix).

Before the 1920s, there were few academic studies exclusively devoted to theorizing nation and nationalism. Related issues were generally discussed by

[12] Various critics and theorists have talked about nationalism, but it is beyond the scope of this study to cover all of them in detail. Some of them will be briefly mentioned, while some others will be totally excluded. The chief concern is to include those theories which will best work to explain the Irish nationalist experience.

philosophers and historians including such groups as Enlightenment philosophers and Marxist thinkers (Özkırımlı 9). Nationalism as an ideology and as a social and political movement can be traced back to the eighteenth century, particularly to German Romantic thought. Even though German Romanticism was an aesthetic movement, the Romantics contributed to the rise of German national consciousness by laying emphasis on the authenticity of a specifically German mode of thought. Those thinkers were deeply influenced by the philosophical foundations laid down especially by Kant[13] with whom the idea of nationalism is said to have started.

Another significant contribution to the idea of nationalism was maintained by the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. His idea of a "general will" foregrounded the importance of nations. Rousseau argued that each individual may have a particular will, and thus this will might conflict with the general will of society and run the risk of turning into tyranny and become liable to the most frightful abuses (11). To avoid this danger, man needs to submit to the general will, of which he is a part as a citizen. Rousseau further stated that "[e]ach of us puts in common his person and all his power under the supreme direction of the general will; and in return each member becomes an indivisible part of the whole" (164). In order to lead to this public submission, a common spirit has to be created so that every citizen will see a supreme moral good in citizenship. This idea of common spirit evokes the idea of something close to a national spirit (Yack 239).

Although the idea of nationalism was rooted in the eighteenth century, it is the nineteenth century which might be referred to as "the age of nationalism" during which various epistemological studies and debates on nationalism flourished (Özkırımlı 42). In the nineteenth century, historians and some important thinkers of the period contributed to discussions of nationalism. Özkırımlı explains that the English political theorist John Stuart Mill (1806-73) was probably the first major liberal thinker to engage directly with the idea of nationalism (25). According to Mill, free institutions were almost impossible in a country made up of different groups without fellow-feeling because in such a disconnected people,

[13]For Kant's contributions to nationalism, see the second chapter of Elie Kedourie's *Nationalism.*

the united public opinion necessary to the working of representative government could not exist (144).

An important scholar in the area of nationalism in the 19th century was the French historian Ernest Renan. Renan described the nation as follows:

> A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received inane undivided form (19).

In Renan's definition, nationalism was considered as a pre-given, natural phenomenon. This understanding was one of the general characteristics of studies of nationalism in the nineteenth century. Scholars of the period took for granted the naturalness of nations. Therefore, they never questioned the authenticity of ideas of nation and nationalism. Instead, they were generally preoccupied with exploring the philosophical and ethical dimensions of nationalism.

Özkırımlı notes that it was in the opening decades of the twentieth century that nationalism became a subject of academic inquiry (31). In the early twentieth century nationalism studies covered the examination of the historical conditions and modes of thought that created it. Scholars of the period focused on the emergence and development of nationalism as a historically novel concept, yet they did not question the existence of nations and nationality. They continued to take them as given and unchangeable categories. In that respect, they were similar to the earlier generations.

In the 1960s nations were still accepted as organic entities that existed in nature since time immemorial. They were invoked as independent variables to explain international events and relations; scholarship on nations typically took the form of describing the history, symbols, and heroes of the nation (Smith, *Nationalism* 8). Studies of nationalism took a new direction after the Second World War. New studies and researches emerged that challenged the assumptions and ideas upheld by the former scholars. Studies in this period chiefly depended on the distinction between traditional and modern societies. Scholars defined three

different stages in the modernization process: tradition, transition and modernity. Modernization consists of the collapse of a traditional order and the establishment of a new type of society. In the process of transition from a traditional society to a modern one, nationalism plays a crucial role: it provides people with identity and a sense of belonging and thereby prompts the creation of a standard national culture.

From the second half of the twentieth century a good number of scholars studied nations and nationalisms. Their analyses varied, but all shared the belief that nationalism was distinctly a modern phenomenon, and that the context and conditions of modernity both demanded and supported the birth of the idea of nationalism. "Modern" as it was used in this literature, signified relatively recent times. Accordingly, most scholars marked the rise of nationalism at the time of the French Revolution in the late eighteenth century, or, in some cases, the middle of the nineteenth century. Modernity, on the other hand, referred to the modernization process itself, and to the socio-economic, cultural, and political trends that comprised it such as industrialization, urbanization, increased literacy and social mobility, and the consolidation of the modern state[14].

2.1.1 Theories of Nationalism: Implications

As the brief overview above reveals, theories of nationalism basically revolve around two specific ontological arguments which put forward two contrasting definitions of nationalism. The first argument, being an essentialist one, assumes nations as natural, organic entities. This argument is appropriated by theorists and thinkers referred to as primordialists. The primordialist thinkers are marked by their belief in the persistent and immemorial nature of nations as seamless wholes stretching back centuries, and by their analyses of nations as deeply rooted in ethno-cultural and ancestral ties (Smith, *Nationalism* 18). According to the primordialists, nation "is both historically determined and general. As a term, it

[14] The ideas in this paragraph were synthesized from the following studies: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (1983), Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (1983), Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence* (1985) and Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (1990).

refers both to the modern nation-state and to something more ancient and nebulous – the 'natio' – a local community, domicile, family, condition of belonging" (Brennan 45).

The other argument inferred from the theories of nationalism is that of modernists who argue that nationalism as a form of belonging is the product of the modern period following the age of industrialization. Modernists hold the belief that nations are social creations engineered by elites in pursuit of political and economic goals (Croucher 94-5). They also hold the opinion that a nation is not a natural and organic entity but an imagined construct based largely on narratives, myths and symbols (Kearney 9). Nation in the modernist sense "can be understood as the predominant mode of sovereignty which emerged during modernity, and which bases its legitimacy and territorial boundaries upon distinctly national imaginings of collectivity and belonging" (McLeod 99).

Some primordialist ideas and scholars have already been referred to in the previous part of this section. Since modernist views better serve to explain the development of Irish nationalism, the ideas of the important modernist thinkers will be reviewed in the following part.

2.1.2 Modernists

Modernists rejected the immemorial nature of nations. Instead they regarded them as the products of modernity or, as in the case of Marxists and neo-Marxists, as an effect of the rise of capitalism.[15] European modernity signaled the demise of feudal systems of government and the establishment of democratic forms of state power. In these forms, the concept of nation superseded the divine right of the monarch to rule, and authority was subject to electoral contest rather than derived from inheritance or traditions of nobility. These novel forms of government and power required new myths to sustain their legitimacy, and it was here that the "ancient and nebulous" image of the nation emerged as an effective idea, aligning

[15]For Marxist and neo-Marxist arguments in relation to nationalism, see Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Construction of Peoplehood" (1991) pp. 71-85 and Tom Nairn, *The Breakup* of *Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (1977).

the subjectivity and psychology of individuals with the sense of belonging to a common people, in whose shared interests the nation-state appeared to function (McLeod 99-100).

Ernest Gellner is one of the well-known theorists who argue that nations are not universal necessities. Gellner asserts that "[n]ationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist" (*Thought* 169). They do not exist at all times and in all circumstances (*Nations* 6). He claims that the idea that nations are natural, God-given entities as an inherent though long-delayed political destiny is a myth. Nationalism takes ancient cultures and turns them into nations (*Nations* 48-9). Gellner notes that nationalism is an effect of industrial social organization:

> They [agricultural societies] tended and strove to be trans-ethnic and trans-political…They were tied to a faith and church rather than to a state and pervasive culture. By contrast, an industrial high culture is no longer linked whatever its history - to a faith and a church. Its maintenance seems to require the resources of a state co-extensive with society, rather than merely those of a church superimposed on it…So the culture needs to be sustained as a culture, and not as the carrier or scarcely noticed accompaniment of a faith…The transition from one kind of high culture to the other is visible outwardly as the coming of nationalism. (*Nations* 141-42)

According to Gellner, the transformation from the agricultural, feudal state to the industrial age also marks the rise of an age of nationalism. Nationalism is thus a modern idea which emerged as a result of some socio-economic and political conditions within the course of history.

Another influential thinker who explains the rise of nations as a consequence of the modern era is Benedict Anderson. His identification of nations as "imagined communities" actually covers the insights of the various modernist ideas outlined so far. His concept implies that the nation emerges and proliferates as a universally outstanding cultural and political formation of the modern era. Nations, as Anderson argues, are imagined because in the minds of each lives an image of their communion although the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members or meet them. All communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are

imagined (6). Nationalism then involves an imaginary sense of relationship and commitment.

Anderson conceptualizes nations as cultural artifacts created toward the end of the eighteenth century as a result of "the spontaneous distillation of a complex crossing of discrete historical forces" (4). One might argue that all forms of community are to an extent imagined, but according to Anderson, it is the particular style of imagining which distinguishes the nation from other forms. This style of imagining was generated and reinforced in the novel and the newspaper, literary forms which became established in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Characteristic of each of these genres was the production of different places and disparate moments of time as simultaneously existing so that the reader of the daily newspaper or the novel comes to imagine himself or herself as linked to a temporality and terrain equally inhabited by others, and hence to a wider community of people (McLeod 100).

Ideas which focus on the function of nationalist ideas in post-colonial periods, that is, in the decolonization processes of societies, can also be discussed within the modernist context since they consider nationalism as a product of specific socio-political conditions within the course of history. Kearney suggests that certain forms of nationalism have served, historically, as legitimate ideologies of resistance and emancipation such as the nationalist opposition of local peoples of Latin America to US involvement, opposition of local people to Soviet imperialism in Eastern Europe and Afghanistan, the struggle of European nations themselves against Nazi occupation in the Second World War or the campaigns waged by African nations against supremacist colonial policies. Similarly, Irish nationalism was an emancipatory one (46).

As O'Mahony and Delanty argue, national identity serves many purposes. It provides a sense of collective belonging to a group of people who perceive themselves as bonded by common experience, and it provides a reference system for distinguishing one group of people from another (2). In Gerry Smyth's terms, it formalizes people into a state (12). This aspect of nationalism assumes a central position in the struggle against colonialism. Smyth states that nationalism, in both

its political and cultural forms, is a kind of strategy through which decolonizing subjects set about organizing discourses of resistance (13). This idea is also echoed by McLeod: "The ideas of nation and nationalisms equipped colonized peoples with many vital resources for contesting the ideological, material, and cultural apparatus of European colonialism" (98).

Despite the emancipatory function of nationalism in the decolonization process, a number of critics approach this function of nationalism discreetly. Frantz Fanon argues that intellectual and social elites of colonized countries, formerly the driving force behind nationalist resistance, adopt the hierarchy and privilege left by the colonial powers in the postcolonial period. To those elites, he claims, "nationalization quite simply means the transfer into native hands of those unfair advantages which are a legacy of the colonial period" (152). Robert Young shares similar ideas with Fanon. He argues that though nationalist movements worked well for constructing a sense of solidarity and as a goal for which people were fighting in anti-colonial movements, the attempt to stabilize nationalism and impose it by means of state control after independence has in general had disastrous consequences (60-1)

2.1.3 Modern Primordialists

Despite the dominance of the modernist approach to nationalism after the 1960s, primordialist views did not totally disappear. Modern primordialists based their arguments on the contemporary persistence, even resurgence, of nationhood as a form of belonging. According to these thinkers, the persistence of nations in the contemporary era stems from the fact that they are real, historic entities with distinct ethnic cores that naturally or essentially inspire strong emotional attachments and loyalties (Croucher 100).

Anthony Smith is one of the well-known contemporary primordialist scholars. Nations, according to Smith, must be understood as historically rooted, "derived from pre-existing and highly particularized cultural heritages and ethnic formations" (*Nations* viii). Smith writes: "[o]nly by grasping the power of nationalism and the continuing appeal of national identity through their rootedness

in pre-modern ethnic symbolism and modes of organization is there some chance of understanding the resurgence of ethnic nationalism at a time when 'objective' conditions might render it obsolete" (*Nations* 7). John Hutchinson, like Smith, criticizes the modernist argument of the novelty of nations. Instead, he emphasizes ethnic continuity, and considers ethnicity as the core of nations. He defines nations as "long term historical collectivities that structure the forms of modernity'' ("Ethnicity" 651).

According to modernists, the persistence of nations does not contradict the fact that they are constructed imagined communities; they just transform into other constructs being subject to changing socio-political situations. Persistence in this context is actually perpetual imagination. Despite the arguments of primordialists, as Croucher puts it, "[m]any of the nations that are now capturing attention on the world stage do not constitute, either in content or form, seamless wholes stretching back centuries" (Croucher 100).The significance of the primordialist view is weakened by the fact that the number of nations in the world and their individual contours or constituencies are fluid, and the form of nationhood as a mechanism of belonging is also in a state of flux (Croucher 101). To illustrate this within the Irish context, Honor Fagan refers to the current international popularity of Irish music, dance, film and pubs, which have led some observers to expect a new Celtic cultural revival. Yet, as Fagan reveals, none of these things reflect pure cultural forms any more. Instead, they are hybrid cultural forms born in a globalized context ("Globalised Ireland" 117).

Within the framework of this study, modernist arguments are more relevant to explain the early years of Irish nationalism. The changing reflections of Irishness on the stage, as already discussed in the introductory chapter, reveal the fact that Irishness is not an immutable and fixed entity; rather it has always been in flux. The early analyses show that the attempts of cultural Revivalists to revive and preserve ethnic elements of Gaelic culture and to utilize them while building a contemporary Irish nationhood support the idea that nations are imagined communities. Yet, these nationalist attempts went bankrupt in the course of

Ireland's gradual integration into global culture, which stresses the relevance of the postnationalist arguments which will be discussed in the following parts.

2.2 Postnationalism

In Europe, a series of social and political events that took place from the end of the 1980s deeply influenced views of nations and nationalism. The unification of East and West Germany in 1989, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, and the Balkan Wars of the 1990s are the most striking among those events which destabilized both modernist and primordialist arguments. It seemed that the nearly simultaneous break up of one nation into sixteen smaller nations as in the case of the Soviet Union, the fusing of two German nations into one, and the re-Balkanization of the Balkans led scholars to revisit their arguments on nationalism (Kaluhiokalani 83). Consequently, the theoretical debate on nationalism has entered a new stage since the end of the 1980s (Özkırımlı 46). In that period, John Breuilly, Liah Greenfeld and Eric Hobsbawm deployed a postmodernist strategy going beyond the primordialist/modernist debate. These scholars form a block of thinking that has been termed "postnationalist"[16] by Richard Kearney because they subscribe to the notion that the era of nationalism is over, that nationalism is no longer sufficient to account for geopolitical processes, and that contemporary political theory must better account for the rise of subjective and social heterogenization (Kaluhiokalani 84).

A number of other scholars of nationalism refer to a postnational environment, although they never use the term, where identities, allegiances and affinities become fluid and fragmented, but they still function in the socio-political world (Kaluhiokalani 89). In this context, John Breuilly's *Nationalism and the State* can be regarded as one of the key postnationalist texts. Breuilly introduced a new conception of nationalism, that is, nationalism as a form of politics (Özkırımlı 84). He criticized primordialist and modernist debates, arguing that "to focus upon culture, ideology, identity, class, or modernization is to neglect the fundamental

[16]The term was employed by Kearney in *Postnationalist Ireland,* 1997.

point that nationalism is about politics and that politics is about power" (1). Thus, the central task must be to relate nationalism to the objective of obtaining and using state power (1).

Breuilly puts forward a typology of different nationalist movements from different historical periods and regions in order to show that nationalism cannot be described as a stable and unified phenomenon, but a phenomenon shaped according to specific political contexts. He argues that political movements seeking or exercising state power tend to justify their actions with nationalist arguments (2). He accepts, to some extent, the modernist account that nationalism is the product of relatively modern periods. He also agrees with Gellner in seeing that nationalism provides a stable sense of cultural identity for individuals during times of rapid social change. The point at which he breaks with Gellner is that, for Breuilly, nationalism is in constant social upheaval, whereas for Gellner it is merely part of a transition from the agrarian to the industrial phase of societies (Kaluhiokalani 85).

In *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity,* Liah Greenfeld attempts to show the contingent nature of nationalism and its resistance to easy definition. This state of nationalism results from the fact that "[s]ociety is an open system, and whether or not the existing potentialities are fully realized depends on many factors entirely unrelated to the nature of these potentialities" (7). Greenfeld implies that a country's sense of nationalism may be rooted in historical times, but the elements prompting the so-called nationalist feelings in earlier times fail to operate in contemporary times (7).

Greenfeld introduces the notion that nationalism is an "emergent phenomenon" (7). She argues that an emergent phenomenon "cannot be reduced to the sum total of its inanimate elements, it cannot be explained by any of their properties; it is the relationship between the elements, unpredictable from those properties, which give rise to it" (493). Greenfeld argues that theorists of nationalism specify the vital components of nationalism, but fail to explain how these components come together.

Eric Hobsbawm contributed to the nationalist debate with his concept of "invented traditions". According to Hobsbawm traditions which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented ("Introduction" 1). In *The Invention of Tradition* Hobsbawm defines the term in the following way:

> "Invented tradition" is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. (1)

Hobsbawm, by invented tradition, refers to traditions actually invented, constructed and formally instituted and those emerging in a less easily traceable manner within a brief and dateable period and establishing themselves with great rapidity (1). On this basis, Hobsbawm claims that the nation is the most conspicuous of such invented traditions; it is a form of "social engineering" (13).

Although Anderson's idea of imagined communities and Hobsbawm's concept of invented traditions seem to be identical, they are definitely different. Anderson emphasizes the self-evident success of nationalism at a certain period in modern political history which means that it is fundamentally and progressively rooted in the minds and actions of people (Kearny 166). On the other hand, Hobsbawm reveals the self-reflective nature of current debates on nationalism which is itself a token of a postnationalist consciousness (Kearney 166).

Nations are historically recent phenomena, but they generate themselves by maintaining an artificial connection with the past, by exploiting history "as a legitimator of action and cement of group cohesion" (Hobsbawm, "Introduction" 12). In this respect, Hobsbawm further argues that all historians, whatever else their objectives, are engaged in the process of inventing tradition. They contribute, consciously or not, to the creation, dismantling and restructuring of the images of the past which belong not only to the world of historical investigation but to the public sphere of man as a political being ("Introduction" 12). Invented traditions are the product of attempts to structure at least some parts of social life as unchanging and invariant ("Introduction" 2).

Hobsbawm, like Breuilly, assents to modernist arguments, especially to those of Gellner. He agrees with Gellner's definition of nationalism, "a principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent" (*Nations* 1). In line with the modernist argument, Hobsbawm acknowledges that nations belong to a historically recent period. On the other hand, Hobsbawm criticizes Gellner for assuming that nationalism is a stable and coherent phenomenon operating in the same way in all layers of the society. In other words, Gellner along with other modernists was inclined to jump into generalizations. Hobsbawm claims that Gellner failed to recognize that nations cannot be understood unless analyzed in terms of assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people, which are not necessarily national (*Nations* 10).

Hobsbawms's argument implies that the progress of national consciousness is neither linear nor absolutist. Accordingly, he focuses on three points in *Nations and Nationalism since 1780:* Firstly, official ideologies of states and movements are not guides to what is in the minds of even the most loyal citizens or supporters. Secondly, we cannot assume that for most people national identification - when it exists - is always superior to other forms of identification which constitute social being. Thirdly, national identification and what it means to ordinary people can change and shift in time, even in the course of quite short periods (10).

Postnationalism seeks how nations and nationalism operate in the postmodern, post-World War II era and explains how modern political processes and nationalism function to create complex, fragmented as well as collective social identities. In that respect, it exposes the structures of national identity creation and the identity gaps which nationalism ignores (Kaluhiokalani 61-2). Writing within the literature on postnationalism, several analysts have argued that contemporary conditions ranging from technological advancement to the rise of various forms of international political and economic governance have superseded states and diminished the need for or relevance of national belonging (Croucher 99).

In her analysis of the changing meaning of citizenship in contemporary nation-states, Yasemin Soysal claims that a new and more universal concept of citizenship has unfolded in the post-war era, one whose organizing and legitimating principles are hardly based on national belonging (1). According to Soysal, this stems from the fact that the state is no longer an autonomous and independent organization closed over a nationally defined population. Instead, we have a system of constitutionally interconnected states with a multiplicity of membership. "Postnational formations of membership challenge us to refurbish our definitions and theoretical vistas of and about citizenship and the nation-state" (163-65).

It is important to note that postnationalism does not imply a denial of national identity and its endurance. Rather, it suggests that the nation-state and the forms of nationalism that underpinned it are being empirically and normatively superseded but they have not been dissolved. This claim of supersession rests on two key arguments which typify the postnationalist perspective: that the nation-state is being relegated as an effective political institution by the processes of globalization, and that national identity is being outstripped and displaced by the rise of alternative forms of identity (Breen and O'Neill 2).

One of postnationalism's most articulate proponents Arjun Appadurai examines several implications of the term postnational in *Modernity at Large.* The first is temporal and historical and suggests that we are in the process of moving to a global order in which the nation-state has become obsolete, and other formations for allegiance and identity have taken its place. The second is the idea that what are emerging are strong alternative forms for the organization of global traffic in resources, images, and ideas—forms that either contest the nation-state actively or constitute peaceful alternatives for large-scale political loyalties. The third implication is that the steady erosion of the capabilities of the nation-state to monopolize loyalty will encourage the spread of national forms that are largely divorced from territorial states. These are relevant senses of the term postnational, but none of them implies that the nation-state in its classical territorial form is as

yet out of business. It is certainly in crisis, and part of the crisis is an increasingly violent relationship between the nation-state and its postnational Others (168-69).

The term postnationalism was used in a clearly defined sense by Richard Kearney, Jürgen Habermas and Deirdre Curtin during the 1990s, reporting on a radical development in the contemporary European legal, social, and political landscape (Fitzpatrick 171). In addition, a number of scholars[17] have argued that we are now in a postnational age. As Kearney suggests, current theories related to postnationalism take two different lines of argument. Some of them are informed by an Enlightenment cosmopolitanism while others espouse a more postmodern perspective (166). This study will follow the later line consisting of arguments which analyze postnationalism in relation to some postmodern and poststructuralist theories. However, in the first place, the earlier line will be briefly overviewed prior to a more profound survey of the postmodern perspective.

Two key theorists of postnationalism, Jürgen Habermas and Deirdre Curtin are considered as chief thinkers in the Enlightenment cosmopolitanist line. Jürgen Habermas set the basis for a philosophical debate on postnationalism. The very point which withdraws Habermas from the postmodern postnationalist argument is his claim to universality and his advocating of constitutional patriotism which connects people by means of a set of universal laws and norms (76).

Habermas introduced an engaging account of the nation-state's transitions in *The Postnational Constellation*. He makes a claim to universality, stating that the idea of an originary, homogenous and clearly defined "nation of the people" fails to conform with the universalistic heritage of political liberalism (14). Habermas argues that the idea of nation provides people with a symbolism that confirms their shared heritage (Leonard 16):

> The cultural symbolism of "a people" secures its own particular character, its "spirit of the people," in the presumed commonalities of descent, language, and history, and in this way generates a unity, even if only an imaginary one. It thereby makes the residents of a single state-controlled territory aware of a collective belonging

[17]See Archibugi and Held (1995), Sassen (2003), Soysal (1994) and Tambini (2001).

> that, until then, had been merely abstract and legal. Only the symbolic construction of "a people" makes the modern state into a nation-state. Constructed through the medium of modern law, the modern territorial state thus depends on the development of a national consciousness to provide it with the cultural substrate for a civil solidarity. With this solidarity, the bonds that had formed between members of a concrete community now change into a new, more abstract form. (64)

Habermas's argument is similar to that of modernist nationalist theorists, but he goes further in that he declares the arrival of a new type of social order as we ourselves now approach the threshold of a postnational form of collective political life (17).

Habermas argues that "economic globalization forms the central challenge for the political and social orders that grew out of postwar Europe. One way to meet this challenge would consist in strengthening the regulatory power of politics, to allow politics to catch up with global markets that are beyond the reach of nation-states" (49). Thus, the demands of globalization necessitate a redefinition of the nation-state. Globalization processes are not just economic. The acceleration and the intensification of communication and commerce shrink spatial and temporal distances; expanding markets run up against the limits of the planet; the exploitation of resources meets the limits of nature (55). As a result, "under the changed conditions of the postnational constellation, the nation-state is not going to regain its old strength by retreating into its shell" (81).

Deirdre Curtin in *Postnational Democracy* argues that the term postnational expresses the idea that the link implied by nationalism between cultural integration and political integration can be prised open (51). The structural function of nationalism has been considered to provide the ideological glue that unifies a group of people around a set of shared institutions and practices over a well-defined territory. National identity derives from membership in a people, the fundamental characteristic of which is defined as a nation. Political community, loyalty and legitimacy were tied in this way to state power and authority. The postnational idea, on the contrary, is premised precisely on the separation of politics and culture, of nationality and citizenship. It is about separating out a

number of our most elided concepts cherished with the nation-state. It presupposes that national (cultural) plurality can coexist alongside political unity. In other words, the nation when extracted from the hard core of the state with its functions of defense, money, borders, etc. can enter a more flexible process independent of political institutions (50-2).

The Enlightenment cosmopolitanists stand for universal laws and norms which would connect all people regardless of their national identities whereas postmodern postnationalists emphasize cultural and local difference. "Postmodernism, in questioning the construction of history and by rupturing fixed notions of the collective in order to illuminate alterity, therefore has strong links with postnationalism" (Bell 140). To move on to the postmodern line of the postnationalist debate, it would be useful to begin with a definition of postnational identity in a postmodern context. While it is difficult to explain postnational identity with a single definition, the definition given by Gerard Delanty may provide a useful conceptual framework. Delanty suggests that postnational identity is best defined as based on multiple identities, and it can therefore be contrasted to national identity which is based on an exclusive reference to a single identity. It is not focused on the territorial nation-state but on more reflexive reference points. Unlike national identity, it is not defined by reference to the past or a myth of origins but by the present (17). As Appadurai writes as well, "We are looking at the birth of a variety of complex, postnational social formations … The new organizational forms are more diverse, more fluid, more ad hoc, more provisional, less coherent, less organized, and simply less implicated in the comparative advantages of the nation-state" (168). Postnationalism recognizes the meaningfulness of contingency and embraces its uncertainties and instabilities.

Another important theorist of postmodern postnationalism, Richard Kearney focuses on postnationalism in the Irish context. He considers postnationalism as an intellectual and political space that can surmount the restrictions of nationalism without rejecting it altogether. Actually, it makes no sense to argue that nations are completely lost. If we accept the assumption that nations are invented

traditions, then there is no reason not to think that they will continue to be invented and constructed.

Kearney observes five constituents of a nation: state, territory, ethnicity, migrant nation (nation as the extended family), and culture. Nationalism, Irish or otherwise, has the structural function of unifying these five constituents into a certain identity, thereby granting to them a special mission of inclusion and exclusion (7). Some other components such as language, tradition, history, race, religion and ideology also take part in this process of inclusion and exclusion by means of which national identity acquires a unifying and homogenizing quality. Postnationalism challenges constructions of homogenizing identity. It exposes the contradictions that animate the liberal myth of the national subject, as a subject whose abstract universalism is produced by bracketing off the markers of difference (race, class and gender) that are at once constitutive of the narrative of national subjecthood and unrepresentable within it (S. O'Brien 65).

Under the current socio-cultural circumstances shaped by globalization, imagined communities, as defined by Anderson, and the sense of home and belonging have been called into question (Llena, "Glocal Identities" 143). But, this does not mean that locality has been completely discarded. As Fagan expresses: "Local differences have not been done away with by the juggernaut of globalization; indeed, the new syncretism has brought them to the fore" ("Globalization" 118). Similarly, Kearney defines postnational space as a space between the local and the global. It is not a fixed point or centralized power, or it is not the source of some unitary and indivisible sovereignty (80). He argues that "the drift towards a more global understanding of identity calls for a countervailing move to retrieve a sense of local belonging" (102).

Given that postmodern postnationalism rejects a fixed identity position and the idea of centralized power, it would not be incongruent to view it within the context of a number of other postmodern and poststructuralist theories, as those theories maintained that national identity is a construct like all other identity categories; and identity formation is necessarily incomplete and fluid, a

contradictory and fragmented process not amenable to simple closure (Fagan 122).

Kearney argues that the change of a deconstructive moment into political terms has subversive consequences for inherited ideologies. Totalizing notions of identity (imperial, colonial, national) are submitted to scrutiny in the name of an irreducible play of differences (50). In this respect, Kearney identifies the postmodern reconfigurations of power as central to a postnational consciousness (49). Drawing on Jean-Francois Lyotard, he explains that the postmodern turn seeks to deconstruct the "Official Story", which presents itself as "Official History", into the open plurality of stories that make it up. Modern imperialism and modern nationalism are two sides of the "Official Story". Genuine internationalism, working at a global level, and critical regionalism, working at a local level, represent the two sides of a postmodern alternative (51).

Donald Pease defines nation as the surface on which the Enlightenment's grand narratives[18] were inscribed (1). Pease's argument refers to Lyotard's explanation of the postmodern condition as a period in which Enlightenment's grand narratives are past their prime: "In contemporary society, and culture-postindustrial society, postmodern culture - the question of legitimation of knowledge - is formulated in different terms. The grand narrative has lost its credibility" (37). Nationalism is a grand narrative of these theorists' understanding of Enligtenment thinking, aspiring to a homogenous community and universal value. It is a hegemonic concept through which "Enlightenment's ideals of freedom and equality were transmuted into universal rights rather than local demands" (Pease 1). Therefore, in a global context requiring a borderless world for its effective operation, the nation-state turns into a tolerated anachronism. Even if it may not be dead exactly, it has undergone a drastic change in role (Pease 1-2).

Julia Kristeva elaborates on this drastic change in role in "Women's Time". Her article opens with her affirmation of the demise of the nation as a nineteenth -

[18]The concept grand narrative implies an organizing principle under which all the social institutions such as law, education and technology come together to seek a common goal for all humanity, that is, absolute knowledge and universal emancipation (Malpas 27).

century reality (188). Actually, what Kristeva means is not a total disappearance but a reminder of the artificiality of nation existing as an ideological form. Kristeva claims that the nation as a nineteenth- century reality seems to have reached both its peak and its limits when the 1929 financial crash and the National-Socialist disaster demolished the pillars that were its essence: economic homogeneity, historical tradition and linguistic unity. She further argues that the Second World War, though fought in the name of national values brought to an end the nation as a reality. Nation turned into a mere illusion which would be preserved only for ideological or strictly political purposes, its social and philosophical coherence having collapsed (188).

The postcolonial writings of Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha are also helpful in highlighting the volatile and contingent nature of national identity. Hall challenges understandings of identity as an essentialist condition: "Identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions … They are constantly in the process of change and transformation" ("Who Needs Identity?" 4). Hall emphasizes the dynamic process related to the identity marked by continuous interaction and re-formation. Given this feature of identity, Hall further states that national identity and the idea of culture as a set of autonomous, self-enclosed meaning systems and practices, begins to seem anachronistic (Hall "New Cultures" 190).

Homi Bhabha, like Hall, in *Nation and Narration* and *The Location of Culture* challenges essentialist accounts of nationality which identify nations as homogenous, innate, and historically given categories. He argues that nation is a construct, and further asserts that the nation is a metaphor, or imaginary subject ("Introduction" 2). Moreover, it is an ambivalent phenomenon, a narrative strategy. By narrative strategy, Bhabha implies that the concept of nation produces a continual slippage of categories, like sexuality, class affiliation, territorial paranoia, or cultural difference in the act of writing the nation (*Location* 140). Nation is an obscure, complex and ubiquitous form of living the locality of

culture. Actually, it is a complex strategy of cultural identification and discursive address that functions in the name of the people and makes them the immanent subjects of a range of social and literary narratives (*Location* 140).

2.3 Nationalism in the Irish Context

2.3.1 The British-Irish Conflict

In *Inventing Ireland* Declan Kiberd claims that "if England had never existed, the Irish would have been rather lonely. Each nation badly needed the other, for the purpose of defining itself" (2). Kiberd here implies that the Irish identity in political, religious and ethnic terms has definitely been defined with its distinctiveness from the English identity. In this context, a brief history of the British-Irish conflict will be included prior to the discussion of nationalism in the Irish context.

The historical context of the Irish national development and the growth of Irish nationalist ideology could be fully understood in the broader context of the British and Irish archipelago. The colonial relationship between Ireland and England was "the background against which Irish nationalist ideology constructed a sense of the Irish nation at the end of the nineteenth century, and which has shaped the Northern Irish conflict well into the twenty-first century" (Llena, "Multiculturalism" 85). Ireland began years of conflict with England around the1160s, one hundred years after the Norman conquest of England. As a consequence of this conquest, the Anglo-Saxon ruling class of England had been entirely replaced by a new dominant ruling class from Normandy. When Ireland itself was invaded by the Normans in 1169, an enduring tension between the natives and the Norman (by now perhaps sometimes perceived as Anglo-Norman) settlers developed (O'Mahony and Delanty 35).

Over the centuries of civil wars and rebellions, Norman troops acted to suppress the Irish populace and to lay waste the land. The Tudor and Stuart governments initiated the plantation system in Ulster to pacify the rebellious North in what was in reality the first English colony. They moved Protestant colonists from England and Scotland into the towns and onto the land, displacing the native Irish, most of whom had resisted the Reformation and remained loyal to the Church of Rome (Sternlicht 5). Henry VIII established the Protestant Church of Ireland in 1536. As a result, the island was divided as the Catholic south and

Loyalist Ulster, triggering the age-long conflict between Northern and Southern Ireland.

In spite of the conflict between them, both the Catholic South and Loyalist Ulster rebelled against the Puritan Commonwealth rule. Consequently, Oliver Cromwell arrived in Ireland in 1649, destroying Drogheda and Wexford and executing much of their populations. Cromwell also banished Catholic nobles and landowners in those areas to the remote West. The Restoration of the British monarchy brought peace to Ireland, but repressions on Catholics continued (Sternlicht 5).

Following England's so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688, Catholic James II was deposed. In the following year James II arrived in Ireland to gather loyal troops; there he fought his Protestant successor, William III. Defeated in 1690 at the battle of Boyne, James fled to France. His many Catholic supporters, Irish and French regiments, saw another defeat in Ireland at Aughrim (Co. Galway) in 1691 (Sternlicht 5). As a consequence of these defeats, Ireland lost its Catholic ruling class and was left with an Anglican elite, isolated from the masses by the great gap between their religions (O'Mahony and Delanty 38).

Early in the eighteenth century, the infamous Penal Laws were enacted. These laws included restrictions on Catholics' religious freedom, participation in public life, and inheritance rights as well as on their rights to vote, bear arms, receive higher education, own land, and even to own a horse. The Irish Parliament in Dublin was dissolved with the Act of Union in 1800. The act of Union was a setback for Irish people who dreamed of an independent Ireland or Home Rule (Sternlicht 5-6). By the middle of the nineteenth century, the pattern of Irish politics was subsequently shaped. A national consciousness emerged that combined Catholic religious identity, democratic rights and social justice. This process of identification was formed by a long series of historical events, and the experiences of dispossession, confessional discrimination and unequal citizenship in the eighteenth century (O'Mahony and Delanty 50).

The greatest landmark event in modern Irish history was the famine of 1845-48, the Great Hunger, as it is commonly referred to. The Great Hunger had begun

with the failure of the potato crop. Such failures had occurred before, earlier in the century, but the nature of this famine was different from the previous ones in that it occurred nation-wide and was repeated in successive years. When the crisis had past, about one million people had died of hunger or disease and an equal number had fled the country to Britain and America. The immediate impact of the famine was to reinforce nationalistic feelings and to unite all parties in Ireland against the inadequacy of British policies (Hutchinson 109-10).

The Great Famine contributed to a great extent to the creation of an Irish diaspora. Irish emigrations, which peaked in the period after the Great Famine, continued up until 1920s. As Hickman explains, in that period, approximately 8 million people left Ireland. In the twentieth century, outward migration continued, but it was marked by two more periods of very heavy out-migration, the 1950s and the second half of the 1980s, and by two periods of net inward migration, the 1970s and the second half of the 1990s. Although the Irish diaspora is a world-wide phenomenon, the two most important destinations for Irish migrants have been Britain and the United States of America (117).

2.3.2 Implications of Irish Nationalism

As is implied by the discussions on nationalism mentioned above, developing an all-inclusive theory to explain the concept of the nation seems difficult and perhaps even impossible. There are many different types of nationalism appearing in different periods of history and in different regions of the world. Surveying the state of studies on nationalism, Valery Tishkov concludes that "[a]ll attempts to develop terminological consensus around nation resulted in grand failure" (627). As a result, many scholars of nations and nationalism turned their attention away from the pursuit of a universal definition of nation towards an effort to classify or categorize different types of nations and nationalisms (J. Hall 93).

Modern Irish nationalism first appeared as a political movement, but gained its real strength as a cultural nationalism. In order to understand Ireland's situation better, one needs to be familiar with the distinction between civic and cultural

nationalisms, as referred to by various scholars[19]. The goal of civic nationalism, which is also known as political nationalism, is the establishment of an autonomous modern state based on citizenship equality. It is about citizenship, social rights and obligations. Cultural nationalism, on the other hand, is based on custom, language and the communal memory of a nation. Its preoccupation is to emphasize a sense of the authenticity of a nation. Smith explains that each experience of nationalism contains civic and ethnic elements in varying degrees and different forms. Sometimes civic elements predominate while at other times, it is the cultural components that are emphasized (*National Identity* 13).

Within the context of this study, when Irish nationalism is taken into consideration the emphasis will be laid on cultural nationalism, reserving the fact that civic/political nationalism has been equally important in modern Ireland. Smith emphasizes that cultural nationalism is generally an invention of intellectuals and artists concerned to provide people with a historical rationale and to disclose to the community its true nature, its authentic experience and its hidden destiny (*National Identity* 140). This idea reflects well the Irish experience in the formative years of Irish National Theatre as discussed in the previous part and as will further be elaborated on.

In *Postnationalist Ireland,* Kearney details types of nationalism and refers to five concepts associated with nation in order to define the constituents of Irish nationalism in relation to those concepts. Kearney states that as a legal entity, the nation-state usually supports what might be called civic nationalism: the claim is that the nation is composed of all those, regardless of colour, language, creed or race, which subscribe to the nation's political principles or constitution (2). The second common understanding of nation is as territory, that is, a specific place or land which constitutes the so-called national territory. The nation as geographically defined must cover the entire national territory in order to exist. In the case of Ireland, geography has been one of the most commonly invoked

[19]See Shelia L. Croucher, *Globalization and Belonging: The Politics of Identity in a Changing World*, p.87; Gerry Smyth, *Decolonisation and Criticism: The Construction of Irish Literature,* p.3; John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism,* pp. 12-13; Anthony Smith, *National Identity,* p.13 and Richard Kearney, *Postnationalist Ireland* p.2.

criteria for justifying the aspiration to unity within the island and separation from the neighboring island of Britain. The fact that Ireland is an integral island has been the backbone of separatist nationalism (3).

The third concept associated with nation is ethnicity. Unlike civic nationalism, in ethnicity, belonging presupposes blood relation rather than law. Accordingly, the nation is defined in terms of a racially homogeneous population that seeks out a state appropriate to its unique identity. Ethnicity and common roots better suit definitions of Irish nationalism than civic nationalism. Certain instances of Irish nationalism display an ethnic feature, based on assumed differences between Gaelic and non-Gaelic (Kearney 3). The idea of a shared Gaelic (Celtic) past leads to the development of strong communal ties.

A fourth understanding of the nation comes under the rubric of the "migrant nation", or the nation as "extended family." Here the definition of the nation remains partially ethnic, but is enlarged to embrace all those emigrants and exiles who live beyond the territory of the nation-state. In that sense, it is far more inclusive than the ethnic nation-state. Irish nationalism is strongly supported by the migrant nation. Irish-Americans, Irish-Australians or Irish-Britons, for example, can affirm a strong sense of national allegiance to their "land of origin" even though they may be three or four generations from that land and frequently of mixed ethnicity (Kearney 4).

The final variable of nation is what might broadly be called the "nation as culture". National culture can include many things besides ethnicity such as religion, language, art, sport, dance, music, cuisine, clothes, literature, philosophy and even economics (Kearney 4). Nationalism accepts some of these elements as an organizing principle which functions as a force unifying a variety of elements including territory, language, tradition, history, race, religion and ideology into a certain identity, thereby imparting to them a special function of inclusion and exclusion (Kearney 7). In case of Irish nationalism, language, religion and other Gaelic cultural elements play crucial roles in emphasizing Irish cultural distinctiveness.

2.3.3 Civic Nationalism: Political Nationalist Activities for Home Rule and Afterwards

The formation of a national identity and its institutionalization in a nation state in Ireland gained momentum in the nineteenth century, the idea of a distinctive Irish nation becoming more prevalent in this period. By the 1830s a new wave of ethnic revivalists had emerged. They reacted against the hegemony of English values and turned to an investigation of Gaelic Ireland to vindicate Ireland's claims to a separate civilization (Hutchinson, *Cultural Nationalism* 75). In the 1840s, "the Young Ireland Movement" became active, striving to separate Ireland from Britain. "Their movement was important to the future pattern of Irish republican nationalism" (Ranelagh 104). The group issued a nationalist newspaper, *The Nation* through which they diffused a set of national aims. Reacting against the intrusion of English utilitarian values, they attempted to construct an independent Irish identity, acknowledged by the world of nations (Hutchinson, *Cultural Nationalism* 95).

There was another revolutionary nationalist movement formed by the emigrants in the USA, known as the Fenian Brotherhood.[20] This movement plotted a rebellion to establish an independent Irish democratic republic through a popular insurrection. However, it remained merely an attempted rebellion and ended as a dismal failure in 1867 (Hutchinson 114-15). Following the rebellion, three Fenians were executed, and this further "reduced Irish faith in British justice and helped encourage a romanticization of Fenianism" (Ranelagh 124).

Another noteworthy political organization which struggled for Home Rule was Sinn Fein which was established by Arthur Griffith in 1905. As a political movement it attracted groups of revolutionaries and militant constitutionalists. Nevertheless, it did not amount to a serious challenge until 1914. Griffith's philosophy of national self-sufficiency and passive resistance to British rule gradually transformed into political separatist ideals, driving it into repeated militant opposition to the British Government. After the parliamentary party was

[20]The word Fenian, after the Fianna, referred to the warrior defenders of ancient Ireland (Hutchinson 115).

discredited by the British military rule following the Irish rebellion of 1916 (the Easter Rising), Sinn Fein became the vehicle of the political campaign for national independence (Hutchinson 170). The British execution of most of the members of Sinn Fein as leaders of the Rising "galvanized public sympathy behind the rebels, making them into martyrs for Ireland and thereby legitimating the physical-force cause" (S. Moran 175). Following the Rising, the nationalist struggle reached its peak, especially after the foundation of the Irish Republic Army (IRA) by Sinn Fein in 1918. The IRA fought against British armed forces between 1918 and 1921, known as the period of the Anglo-Irish War.

In December 1918, Republicans won a victory in the general elections and they assembled their own parliament, the Dail Eireann in Dublin in January 1919 under the rule of Eamon de Valera, the only surviving commander of the Easter Rising and the later prime minister of Ireland. In 1922, the Dail approved the Anglo-Irish Treaty providing for the partition of Ireland into the Irish Free State in the south and Ulster in the North which remained a part of the UK. De Valera became the head of the government in 1932. He campaigned for an Irish nationalism grounded on three major elements: Catholicism, land and national awareness. The 1943 St. Patrick Day speech of Prime Minister de Valera reflected the combined Gaelic and Catholic values insisting on the importance of the family and rural life. De Valera envisaged "a land whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose fields and villages would be joyous with the sounds of industry, with the romping of sturdy children, the contests of athletic youths, the laughter of comely maidens", and "the home of a people living the life that God desires that man should live".[21]

De Valera attacked the influence of British secularism and materialism while foregrounding the significance of cultural isolationism (McCaffrey "Components" 15). During his rule, Ireland's characteristics as a small-scale, rural, religious and traditional society were appreciated as qualities of a community, almost unique in retaining what contemporary, secular, industrial societies were abandoning:

[21] Quoted from the St Patrick's Day Speech made by Eamon De Valera on Radio Eireann on 17 March 1943.

continuity with the religious and artistic glories of early Christian Europe (Hutchinson, *Cultural Nationalism* 75-6).

2.3.4 Irish Cultural Nationalism: Claiming to Nation-building

The nation-building process in Ireland continued until the late 1950s. The main concern during both the pre- and the post-Independence projects was to prove the existence of a unique, coherent and stable Irish identity deeply rooted in a heroic Gaelic, in Anthony Smith's words, "in the image of its presumed ethnic roots" (*National Identity* 129). "What was Irishness?" "Were there any elements which defined a unified and coherent Irish identity? If so, what were they?" These questions corresponded to some chief issues preoccupying the Irish politicians and intellectuals who had undertaken the mission of nation-building.

The need to construct a unified and coherent national identity gave rise to nationalist pursuits in the cultural domain. The Gaelic League played a leading role in cultural nationalist activities. Founded in 1893 by Douglas Hyde[22] and Eoin MacNeill,[23] the Gaelic League first set out to revive the Irish language led by the idea that a nation could not be free if it remained in cultural slavery. It reprinted examples of ancient Gaelic literature; members visited the remote Irish-speaking districts, the Aran and Blasket islands, to interact with native speakers (McCaffrey "Components" 14).

Language was not the only element of Irish culture that the cultural nationalists aimed to preserve. In 1884, the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) was established, promoting ancient Irish games such as Gaelic football. The Association was intolerant of all things related to England so it banned participation in such English sports as rugby, cricket, soccer or field hockey (McCaffrey "Components" 14). Kuhlig and Keohane point out the influences of the cultural nationalists on the formation of national identity:

[22] Douglas Hyde was a pioneering scholar of Irish language, literature, and history, and the first President of Ireland (Koch 574).

[23] Eoin MacNeill was an Irish nationalist and politican.

> The reification of these organizations and the "traditions" they supported had the effect of falsely homogenizing Irish culture and of existing cultural forms deemed to be Other, apparent for instance in the GAA ban on "foreign" games such as rugby or soccer. The process of identity construction often requires inventing or at the very least selectively constructing "tradition". (67)

Cultural nationalists set out to reveal the distinctness of the Irish nation by rejecting everything which was not Irish. This rejection was an important element of the nation-building process. As Pease states, "the construction of the national Other produces a totalized image of the national community. A patriotic national identity was subsequently structured in the imagined relation of absolute difference from the national enemy" (5).

Cultural nationalists returned to historic symbols of nationality. Perceiving nation in organic terms, they portrayed Ireland as a living personality whose individuality had to be cherished in all its manifestations (Hutchinson, *Cultural Nationalism* 153). Cultural nationalist activities in Ireland in the first half of the twentieth century evoke the modernist nationalist arguments which regarded nations as imagined communities: Anderson demonstrated how nations create heroes by inventing narratives through the print and other media, which justify their particular identity and history. Nationalist elites have been especially effective in creating such "imagined communities" through the propagation of collectively shared national myths (37, 42). In the Irish case, the nation was imagined by intellectual elites, and it was shaped through historical memory, symbols and myth. The aim of the cultural nationalists was not just to reanimate a long-dormant tradition but to formulate a new and distinct national cultural identity for Ireland that would discard the unpleasant stereotypes developed under British rule to "replace them with a rich and colorful fabric woven both from Celtic mythology and from the unvarnished experiences of ordinary Irishmen and women" (Felton 56). Kiberd discloses the constructedness of Irishness by making a distinction between the idea of Ireland and the fact of Ireland: "Knowledge of the past enabling idea and of its nature involves a degree of idealization. The Ireland we live in is only a proximate version of the entity to which we refer in

literary, historical or political discourse. The idea of Ireland permits us to observe and comment upon the fact of Ireland" (19).

2.4 Ireland in Transition

In 1959, de Valera relinquished executive office as leader of Fianna Fail to his successor, Sean Lemass. Lemass, as Taoiseach, led Ireland to move away from the concerns of Republicanism. "The Lemass Era, which lasted from 1959-1966, is generally thought to be the period in which Ireland, as a nation, changed from a parochial island of the European continent to a fully, if underdeveloped, member of Europe" (Buchanan 51).

Lemass, with his close ally T. K. Whitaker, embarked on the First Programme for economic expansion. During the Lemass and Whitaker years, economic modernization had become the new Irish objective. The goal of Irish Nationalism following Independence had been to create an Ireland that would be culturally distinctive and independent. As a result of the above-mentioned social changes of the second half of the century, the reproduction of national identity became more complicated and lost its consistency as some of his foundations were challenged (O'Mahony and Delanty 159). With Ireland's integration into the globalized world order, nationalism and its assumptions tended to lose their cultural importance. Cultural nationalists ultimately failed to isolate Ireland from American and British cultural influences for a number of reasons. Urban industrialism weakened the rural Catholic content of Irishness (McCaffrey, "Components" 18-9). As a result of Ireland's growing interaction with the globalized world, "[t]he government policy of trying to protect a unified, predominantly rural, Catholic and conservative society collapsed" (O'Toole, "Irish Theatre" 51).

Along with the various social and economic developments, gradual transformations began to be marked in the interpretation of Irish nationalism in the 1960s. From that time on, the nation would be fulfilled not in the achievement of a complete independence, but in alignment with global capital. Thus, after decades of stagnation the Irish economy was on the move. A series of events that

also accompanied economic developments invalidated the claims of cultural nationalism: The arrival of an Irish television service at the end of 1961 made a huge difference to the reception and dissemination of ideas. Moreover, in 1969, the outbreak of what is termed the Troubles in Northern Ireland threw all stable views and categories into confusion in the south (Murray, "Unlocking" 111-12).

2.5 Ireland in a Postnationalist Context

Beginning in the late 1980s, Ireland experienced economic prosperity in industry, trade, tourism, public services and especially in information technologies. Between 1991 and 2003, the Irish economy developed considerably. Within a decade Ireland changed into one of the most globalised countries in the world. The influential US magazine *Foreign Policy* issued a "Globalization Index" in 2001, which found the Republic of Ireland to be at the top of the list:[24] "The country has been experiencing momentous social and cultural change, which in some ways has secularized, liberalized and cosmopolitanised Ireland" (Kuhlig and Keohane 1).

The 1990 election of Mary Robinson as the President of Ireland was a moment of extraordinary significance in Ireland. Robinson's rhetoric of inclusion and her welcoming marginalized voices to speak out in Ireland amounted to a political and cultural watershed (Merriman 250). The years of Robinson's Presidency coincided with a period of unparalleled expansion in the Irish economy, which one investment banker at Morgan Stanley[25] likened to the "roaring" economic advances in the Asian Pacific by coining the phrase Celtic Tiger. The Robinson era witnessed also major changes in social legislation, particularly in relation to the politics of sexual relations and reproductive activities; for instance, divorce and homosexuality were legalized (Parker 6-7). The shift from rural to urban patterns of living increased. Ireland was thus transformed from a premodern,

[24] "Globalisation Index 2001", *Foreign Policy*. No. 128 (January/February 2002).

[25] Morgan Stanley is an American business organization of multinational financial services.

peasant rural community to a postmodern, high-technology urbanized society (Kuhlig and Keohane 1).

Besides the rising economic prosperity, some other developments in the international cultural arena reinforced the image of a globalized and cosmopolitanised Ireland:

> The decade produced a steady flow of international entertainment exports such as U2, The Corrs, The Cranberries, Enya, etc. The Irish film industry moguls and sport heroes flourished; Ireland won the Eurovision Song Contest five times during the 1990s, most notably in 1994 when *Riverdance* was first performed as an interval act, the same year that the term 'Celtic Tiger' appeared … As well as producing local products for global export, Ireland became a new commodity market for designer goods and commodities of all sorts. (Kuhlig and Keohane 1-2)

In addition to its economic boom, Ireland was experiencing a transformation in the social context which turned Ireland into a new commodity market.

In relation to these ongoing developments in Ireland, the course and mode of the Irish diasporic experience also changed, assuming the feature of a "post-modern version" of diaspora. The traditional perception of diaspora sees it as a process of uprooting and resettlement outside the boundaries of the homeland of large numbers of people. The traditional account was derived from the Jewish diaspora, and it has six significant features: dispersal, collective memory, alienation, respect and longing for the homeland, a belief in its restoration, and self-definition in terms of this homeland. In its post-modern version, however, the diasporic experience is regarded as a process of unsettling, recombination and hybridization. As a result of this experience, a diasporic space is created that transgresses the boundaries of ethnicity and nationalism (Hickman 118-19).

Tölölyan argues that under the pressure of globalization, a form of nationalism shared by homelands and diasporas like the one prevalent among Armenians and Jews (Tölölyan calls this exilic nationalism) is being replaced by a new diasporic experience in which considerations of subjectivity and personal identity play a major role (28). The difference between this new kind of diasporic experience and exilic nationalism comes possibly from the fact that those who migrate do this by choice, and with considerable economic and social insight. On account of this,

there is no mythic event equivalent to slavery or the Holocaust motivating this type of movement (Akenson 178). Irish diasporic experience in the Celtic Tiger period can be considered as an example of postmodern diaspora, being "an overwhelmingly voluntary phenomenon" (Akenson 185).

In *Postnationalist Ireland,* Kearney claims that in the new European dispensation, nation-states will become increasingly anachronistic. Power will be disseminated upwards from the state to transnational government and downwards to subnational government. In this context, future identities may, conceivably, be less nation-statist and more local and cosmopolitan. Contemporary Ireland is in historic transition as well, and calls for new modes of self-definition in keeping with an overall move towards a more federal and regional Europe (13).

Kearny defines postnational Ireland as "the fifth province", one that is between the local and the global. He states that

> Irishness is no longer coterminous with the geographical outlines of an island. The diaspora both within and beyond the frontiers of Ireland (over seventy million claim Irish descent) challenges the inherited definitions of state nationalism. But it does not condemn us to endless fragmentation. It is possible for Irish people today—indigenous or exiled—to imagine alternative models of identification. One such model, I submit, might be that of the ancient Fifth Province where attachments to the local and the global find reciprocal articulation. (80)

Kearney suggests that this province is not a political or geographical position, it is more like a disposition. It is not a fixed point or centralized power. It is not the source of some unitary and indivisible sovereignty. If anything, it may be re-envisaged today as a network of relations extending from local communities at home to migrant communities abroad (80).

A term like postnationalism resists generalizations. Each country has its own unique context when it comes to comment upon the term. As Gellner argued, nations progress at different paces, and they have their own specific social, political and economic dynamics (*Nations and Nationalism* 4). Postnationalism in Ireland is not characterized by a rejection of past identity constructs that emerged

from very specific historical circumstances; it is characterized by a critical revisitation of the past in order to expose the other realities that sanctioned versions of identity submerged, and to foster plural and multifaceted definitions of Irishness which will be representative of the diversity and complexities of contemporary society in Ireland (Shortt 118).

Changes in Irish identity all through the twentieth century prove that if national identity is an imagination and construction, then Irish identity was reimagined and reconstructed several times. Thus, Irishness can only be understood as constantly being in flux. As Fagan asserts, "the nation-state can no longer (if it ever could) de-link from the global system. It is not an unproblematic, simple, homogeneous unit but a genuine crossroads where the global flow of peoples, foods and ideas intermingle and produce their hybrid cultural forms ("Globalization" 118). Referring to modernist nationalist arguments, Fagan further argues that nations have always been imagined communities, but they are being re-imagined in the context of globalization. Ireland is most clearly invented and re-invented, a place to be sure, but also a state of mind, an ideological construct ("Globalization" 118).

The Celtic Tiger period had its discontents as well as the prosperous condition it offered to Ireland. Kuhling and Keohane maintain that Ireland has rapidly transformed from being a semi-peripheral to a rapidly-growing economy in a short period of time which means that it provides an interesting case study with regard to the social gains and costs of globalization, and perhaps represents a microcosmic example of both the winners and losers of globalization (207). Despite Ireland's alleged status as one of the wealthiest and happiest nations in the world, there were a number of illnesses, diseases and medical syndromes prevalent in Celtic Tiger Ireland that became public health concerns such as depression, obesity and binge drinking. The problems such as high housing prices, traffic congestion, under-employment, over-dependence on credit, and immigration were all also pressing issues for Ireland during the 1990s. At the same time, Irish society has been fractured by Church scandals, an increasing crime rate and growing lawlessness and alienation (Middeke and Schenierer viii).

The symptoms listed above can be taken as indicators of the crises engendered by the fragmenting effects of globalization that are inimical to solidarity, satisfaction and a sense of community (Kuhlig and Keohane 211). Catherine Rees defines this situation as "postnational crisis". She explains that the nation is experiencing moments of revolution and of crises of identity within a global context and of instabilities surrounding the deconstruction and problematisation of national distinctiveness. "Ireland and 'Irishness' are thus rendered unstable concepts, describing geographies and borders in states of flux, anxiety and crisis" ("The Postnational" 221). The pessimistic side of the Celtic Tiger can also be related to the postmodern condition, characterised by Frederic Jameson with cultural depthlessness, spiritual exhaustion, fragmentation and skepticism towards utopias (*Late Capitalism* xvii-xviii).

The ills of the globalized Irish society triggered a sense of neo-racism on some layers of the society in recent years. It suggests a nostalgic or defensive retreat into an idealized past and a pure and unified national identity, culture and the national homeland. This sense of racism developed in contrast with postnationalist concerns (Wilson and Donnan 161). Nevertheless, this study will focus on the postnationalist responses to the discontents of the Celtic Tiger rather than neo-racist approaches.

CHAPTER 3

LAND

The notion of land had always been of great significance in the Irish nationalist project**.** Within the context of Irish nationalism, the term "land" refers to the national soil, which implies the importance of geographical rootedness. Land was an important element which served the promotion of a common nationalist spirit and a sense of belonging for Irish people. This was also reflected in various works of Irish theatre. Margaret Llewellyn Jones states that from Boucicault through the Abbey repertoire, a historicized concept of land has been used as a key signifier of Irish nationhood, merging myth and notions of a lost heroic past (21). Irish playwrights made use of an established construct of land and manipulated it in different ways according to their perceptions of Irishness.

Although land refers to a physical reality, its national connotations and implications are imaginary. In *National Identity,* Smith notes that nationalist intelligentsias seek to construct cognitive maps of a world of nations, and to this end they employ poetic spaces, which "constitute the historic home of the people, the sacred repository of their memories" (78). When considered from this aspect, the playwrights of the Abbey period were inclined to work on a romanticized idyllic version of rural Ireland, promoted as the core of true Irishness. They mostly portrayed rural Ireland as a sacred place. Kearney explains that the cliché of the "sea-divided Gael" has more significance than one might think. It was associated with "an internal experience of loss—e.g. a lost language (Gaelic) or ancient homeland" (157). It was also closely linked with the exaltation of the Irish peasant and thereby offered a kind of challenge against the stage Irishman. The plays of the period were mainly peasant kitchen plays, "idealizing peasants - and by defining them as the essence of an ancient, dignified Irish culture - the Revivalists were specifically countering the English stereotype" (Hirsch 120).

The goal of Irish nationalism during the independence movement had been to create an Ireland that would be culturally distinctive, independent and free. When it came to the 1960s, the revised national agenda of the Irish Republic was changed to create an Ireland that would be economically and socially modern through a convergence with other Western societies (Cleary 14). The Irish plays of the period generally included alienated individuals influenced by the social and economic changes discussed in the previous chapters. Emigration also became a powerful theme. Thus, the plays were characterized by a reflection of perceived Irish erosion of ties with the land, but at the same time, this erosion gave rise to a kind of nostalgia, a longing for the homeland that was prevailing in the mode of the plays. Kiberd defines this situation of being an exile from the homeland as "the nursery of nationality", something which backs up the longing for the homeland and creates an emotional bond with it. The playwrights were "dreaming of a homeland, and committed to carrying a burden which few enough on native grounds still bothered to shoulder: *an idea of Ireland*" (emphasis original) and "[f]or all of these persons, nationalism evoked an idea of homecoming, return from exile or captivity" (2-3).

The playwrights writing in the late 1980s and 1990s continued to dwell on the broken ties with the land. Their chief difference from the earlier playwrights was that they made use of this disconnectedness to disclose the artificiality of national identity. They acted against the manipulated depictions of land which attribute meanings of home and belonging to particular places. In this sense, they can be placed in the postnational "Fifth Province"[26] as defined by Kearney. Kearney believes that Irish artists, historians, and critics could escape the essentialist dichotomies informing much thinking about Irish identity by writing from a Fifth Province, an imaginative space that would transcend the limitations of physical boundaries (80). The Fifth Province may well be a province of the mind, through which one hopes to devise another way of looking at Ireland (Llewellyn-Jones 19).

[26] See pg. 44

3.1 McDonagh's Leenane: A Postmodern Gothic Town

> Father Welsh: What kind of a town is this at all?
> Brothers fighting and lasses paddling booze
> and two fecking murderers on the loose?
> (*The Lonesome West* 140)

Martin McDonagh is one of the most celebrated playwrights of contemporary Irish drama. He was born in London in 1970 to Irish parents who had emigrated from rural Ireland to London. He was raised in Irish neighborhoods in south London. During his childhood, he spent almost every summer in Connemara, a district on the west coast of Ireland. These visits to Connemara and his experiences in London led him to feel that he existed in a liminal space which is "multi-faceted, and in his own words, defies easy categorization" (Middeke 213). He states:

> I always felt somewhere kind of in-between … I felt half-and-half and neither, which is good…I'm not into any kind of definition, politically, socially, religiously. It is not that I don't think about those things, but I've come to a place where the ambiguities are more interesting than choosing a strict path and following it. (qtd. in Middeke 213)

When asked why he chose to set his plays in the west of Ireland, McDonagh replied that he had tried to write plays set in London and America, but without success. It was when he recalled his summer visits as a child to the West of Ireland that he found his dramatic idiom: "close to home but distant" (Roche, "Close to Home" 22).

The Leenane Trilogy is set in Leenane, a small town in the county of Connemara which is a wild region in the west of Galway. It encompasses bogs, mountains and a rugged coastline (Perry 207). The natural beauty of the Irish West was always emphasized even before the Celtic Revival: in a handbook on the West Coast of Ireland, written in 1871, John Bradbury exclaims that in this region the tourist "will find scenery so romantic and intensely beautiful, that no description, however enthusiastic, could do it justice" (5-6). According to Bradbury, the West Coast is "in no part becoming tame or uninteresting" (7). Bradbury also describes the setting of Leenane in the following way:

> Passing onward from Kylemore, the famed Kellery Bay is soon reached, a narrow inlet of the sea running about ten miles from the Atlantic, and somewhat resembling a Norwegian fiord; along the edge of which we travel up to Leenane at its head. The marine scenery all along this bay is massive, wild, and grand beyond description and cannot fail to make an impression on the beholder. (6)

Later on, in a travel guide, originally released in 1902, John O'Mahony praises "[t]he mountain scene in the immediate vicinity of the town" (189).

Obviously, the untamed nature of Connemara and its isolated position was exalted while, actually, those qualities led to underdevelopment and poverty, as is put forward in more recent times. For instance, in her 2001 work, *For the Love of Ireland*, while Cahill mentions "[t]he surreal beauty of Leenane" (n.pag.), she also refers to its inconvenient position:

> More than three centuries ago, the ramping armies of Oliver Cromwell told natives to go "to hell-or to Connaught." The western province - including the wild, stony, mountainous region of Connemara in the county of Galway where Leenane can be found- was so bleak and infertile that (Protestant) planters willingly ceded most of its badlands to the (Catholic) Irish. Ever after it became a byword for all that was primitive and underdeveloped. (n.pag.)

Connemara's being primitive and underdeveloped, however, did not decrease its significance for the cultural nationalists; rather it was appreciated as superior to the perceived British materialism. Graham suggests that "the West of Ireland was 'invented', primarily by an intelligentsia, as a spatial metaphor for Irish nationhood. Bonded by language, landscape, economic circumstance and a history of marginalisation (both before and after independence), the lands along the western seaboard were homogenised intellectually" (188).

Gülşen Sayın also points out that Connemara is discursively situated at the core of the West which had been an epicenter for nationalist discourse. The leading figures of the Celtic Revival had promoted the return to Gaelic origins as an extension of the nation-building project, and to that end they encouraged people to go to the West to rediscover their native language and culture. The West was seen as the repository of poor but generous and noble Irishmen (37 my

translation). For instance, Yeats said, "Connaught[27] for me is Ireland" (qtd. in Cahill n.pag.). Bradbury also particularly emphasizes the significance of Connemara for Celtic cultural heritage: "Every lake, mountain, ruin of church or castle, rath or boreen, has its legendary tale; the fairies people every wild spot, the Banshee[28] is the follower of every old family" (7-8). In a nutshell, the Revivalists and nationalists regarded Connemara as a treasury of an essential national identity embodied in Irish folklore and as a landscape of dreams and imagination (Cahill n.pag.).

McDonagh does not share this enthusiasm of the Revivalists and nationalists for the exciting and impressive beauty of Connemara and its cultural associations. It is not that he completely denies these qualities of the district, as he says in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, through the medium of Pato who is an inhabitant of Leenane: "Of course it's beautiful here [Leenane], a fool can see. The mountains and the green, and people speak" (22). He, however, rejects the idealization of the place and its association with nationalist ideals. He does not "embrace the symbolic or mythic possibilities of the space, instead he downplays and even disparages them" (Jordan, "The Native-Quarter" 225). Thus, he departs from the Irish dramatic tradition which celebrates life in rural Ireland. Maria Kurdi states that McDonagh's subversive approach results in both a ruthless and an unsentimental picture of this part of the country, by questioning its status as serving a long held national metaphor of social cohesion and cultural unity (72). He achieves this subversive approach by representing Leenane as a postmodern pastiche and as attributed with gothic features. In this context, in the following parts Leenane's representation as a postmodern pastiche will be analyzed, and after that the discussion will turn to the gothic elements involved in this postmodern context.

[27]Connaught is one of the provinces situated in the west of Ireland.

[28]The female fairy whose wail in the night means imminent death (Cahill n.pag.).

3.1.1 Leenane as a Postmodern Pastiche

Jameson argues that one of the most significant features or practices in postmodernism is pastiche ("Consumer Society" 113). He defines pastiche as an imitation of a peculiar or unique style without parody's ulterior motive, without the satirical impulse, without laughter. Pastiche is blank parody, parody that has lost its sense of humor (*Late Capitalism* 16). It brings together different styles for the sake of bringing them together and offers the combination as reality. In other words, it does not refer to an outside reality but it refers back to itself. In this way pastiche problematizes the idea of origin and truth. "All the elements that make up the picture are real, but their combined effect is one that questions the very idea of reality" (O'Toole, *Critical Moments* 160).

For Jameson pastiche also provides a chance to sense the specificity of the postmodernist experience of space ("Consumer Society" 113). In this sense Leenane presents a good example of a postmodern pastiche. According to O'Toole, it offers two overlapping world images. One refers to a certain nostalgic perspective of the old construct of Ireland: a small, isolated town that could belong to an earlier Abbey play, which O'Toole defines as a black-and-white picture (O'Toole, "The Beauty Queen" n.pag.). Simultaneously, however, Leenane appears as a place which is integrated into the globalized world. O'Toole calls this image a lurid Polaroid of a postmodern landscape, a disintegrating place somewhere between London and Boston, saturated in Irish rain and Australian soap operas (O'Toole, "The Beauty Queen" n.pag.). Consequently, what is at hand is a polarized image of old and new. Thus, Leenane is not a traditionally ensvisaged western Irish town, which is supposed to be authentic and unspoiled.

The main settings in McDonagh's plays to be analyzed are traditional Irish cottages furnished with simple and modest properties. For instance, in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*[29], the cottage of the Folan family, is depicted in the following way:

> The living room/kitchen of a rural cottage in the West of Ireland. Front door stage left, a long back range along the back wall with a

[29] It will be referred to as *The Beauty Queen* and in brackets as *BQL* henceforth.

> box of turf beside it and a rocking-chair on its right. On the kitchen side of the set is a door in the back wall leading off to an unseen hallway, and a newer oven, a sink and some cupboards curving around the right wall. There is a window with an inner ledge above the sink in the right wall looking out onto fields, dinner table with two chairs just right of center…a crucifix. (*BQL* 1)

The cottages in the other two plays display almost the same design and objects. *A Skull in Connemara*[30] opens in "[t]he fairly spartan main room of a cottage in rural Galway" (*SC* 63). In this room "[a] crucifix hangs on the back wall and an array of old farm tools, sickles, scythes and picks etc., hang just below it" (*SC* 63). Similarly, *The Lonesome West*[31] is mainly set in "[t]he kitchen/living-room of an old farmhouse in Leenane, Galway" (*LW* 129). Among objects stereotypically available in the kitchens of impoverished Irish cottages as they are conventionally represented on stage, even in these contemporary plays, are the crucifix that appeared in the two kitchens mentioned above, farm tools and turf (for the fires). These objects symbolize rural values, in the conventional language of the Irish stage. However, as Lonergan observes as well, "those icons will quickly be exposed as empty signifiers – as signposts pointing the audience in wrong directions" (8). Although the cottage kitchens indicate, at first sight, a rural, introverted and unspoilt place, Leenane is in fact a part of the globalized world, that is to say, a pastiche of the global modern and the traditional.

The pastiche effect is created by McDonagh in his specific use of domestic images and media images and in his representation of the migrant experience. In the cottage of the Folan family in *The Beauty Queen*, near the domestic objects of a traditional rural setting also lay "a framed picture of John and Robert Kennedy", and "a touristy-looking embroidered tea-towel … bearing the inscription 'May you be half an hour in Heaven afore the Devil knows you're dead'" (*BQL* 1). Picture of the Kennedys[32] recalls the American President's 1963

[30] It will be referred to as *A Skull* and in brackets as *SC* henceforth.
[31] It will be referred to as *The Lonesome* and in brackets as *LW* henceforth.
[32] It should also be noted that the Kennedy family was of Irish descent. Like many Catholic Irish immigrants who left Ireland, mostly for economic reasons, the Kennedys had settled in Boston in the first half of the twentieth century (Darraj 13). John F. Kennedy who was elected the 35th president of the United States in 1961, was the only Irish Catholic ever elected to the presidency

visit to Ireland, "a visit which initiated a strong American influence over the Irish economy" (Diehl 109). The towel which has a traditional Irish blessing on it is a souvenir, an overt reminder of the "Ireland". At first, the rhyme written on it seems to be suggestive of the strongly religious culture that Ireland has long been associated with: Ireland being considered "exceptionally religious by the standards of the western world" (O'Toole, *Black Hole* 134). Religion and particularly Catholicism have always been an inseparable part of the Irish identity [33]. Nevertheless, in a community for which religious rules do not function at all anymore[34], that towel in fact only stands for a commoditized culture, the religious content displayed on it makes sense only as part of a souvenir. Elsewhere, religion has no place in the Folans' life. Lonergan identifies these objects together with other traditional domestic objects including the crucifix as "relics from a half-forgotten past" (9). They are situated in the house, but they do not represent the characters' way of life.

In the Folans' kitchen there are also a small TV and a radio, which foreshadow the intrusion of the outside world into the isolated world of Leenane. In Leenane, as the play shows, rural life is juxtaposed with media images taken from the radio and the television. Therefore, the conventional picture of an isolated and withdrawn society is compromised by intrusions of present-day international media. Morash and Richards state that in contemporary Irish theatre "very little now escapes some tinge of the global, and where local places once existed, we now have the glocal, produced in plays such as those of McDonagh" (179). Characters mostly associate their daily experiences with the images from the American and Australian television shows that they regularly follow. This is implied by Ray, a local youngster, in *The Beauty Queen* when he says: "Everything's Australian nowadays" (*BQL* 8). To avoid any misunderstanding, Ray is not worried here about everything's being Australian, but he just remarks a thoughtless observation, which hints the dissolution of Leenane's withdrawn way

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until then.

[33]This point will be discussed in the following chapter.

[34]This will also be discussed in the next chapter.

of life.

In *The Beauty Queen*, Australian soap operas regularly appear on Irish TV stations. For instance, there are many references to *The Sullivans*, the Australian soap opera which ran from 1976 to 1982 and to *Sons and Daughters*, another Australian soap opera, which ran from 1981 to 1987. Ray is fond of *Sons and Daughters* because, he says, "[e]verybody's always killing each other and a lot of the girls do have swimsuits" (*BQL* 37). As a teenager, he is attracted by the sexual display. He is also attracted by violence, which is a foreshadowing of the townspeople's propensity for violence, which is gradually disclosed as the play develops. Thus, the fact that the soap opera is foreign makes no difference for Ray as long as it offers images of sex and violence. Rees points out that Irish television began with the concern to promote national identity and social stability by embodying national values. It had a powerful shaping influence along with educational and religious institutions. However, the implication in Ray's response is that this influence has been lost, and the promotion of national values has given way to a sense of disintegration of national identity for the sake of providing the audience with easy entertainment ("Globalisation" 118).

TV occupies a great part in Ray's life, being his chief pastime in a town that is represented as boring and dull. He tries to organize his daily routines according to the time of his favorite programs. For example, Ray drops in at the Folans' cottage to convey to Maureen Folan a message from his brother Pato. Since Maureen is not at home at that moment, Ray has to wait for a while. He gets bored and nervous while he is waiting, thinking that "[a]whole afternoon I am wasting here. (*Pause*) When I could be at home watching telly" (*BQL* 40). In another case, he is upset because his brother's upcoming wedding in the States will coincide with some European Championships. He expects his brother to change the wedding date: "I'll have to write and tell him to move either forward or back…I wonder if they'll have the European Championships on telly over there at all?" (*BQL* 56). Evidently, McDonagh challenges the traditional image of rural Irish youth described by de Valera as consisting of sturdy children romping, athletic boys contesting on fields and comely maidens laughing with the joy of life. In

response to this image, he presents a generation captivated by foreign TV shows, indifferent to the idyllic beauty of the West of Ireland, and bored with the dullness of country life.

The rural life is exposed to foreign media images in the other two plays as well. In *A Skull*, there are references to American television detective series from the 1970s and 1980s, programmes like *Petrocelli, Quincy* and *McMillan and Wife.* Thomas Hanlon, a police officer, is so fond of these series that his brother, Mairtin, teases him by calling him "you, *McMillan and Wife*" (*SC* 120). Thomas complains to Mick, a fellow townsman, that in Leenane, there is no opportunity to be a detective like the one in these series: "Ah there's no detective work in that oul bullshit. Detective work I'm talking about. You know, like *Quincy*" (*SC* 89). Thomas's greatest ambition is to solve the mystery about Mick Dowd's involvement in his wife's death. Mick's wife died during a car crash when he was driving drunk. Mick is actually suspected of killing her by striking her on the head before the accident. While trying to solve the case, Thomas is especially inspired by the eponymous hero of *Petrocelli*; he wants to be a detective like him. His conversation with a local woman, Mary, reveals his desire:

> Thomas. …It isn't knowing the difference between hearsay and circumstantial evidence that makes you a great copper. No. Detective work it is, and going hunting down clues, and never letting a case drop no matter what the odds tacked against you, no matter how many years old.
> Mary. Like Petrocelli.
> Thomas. Like Petrocelli is right. (*SC* 117-18)

Solving this mystery is a matter of great importance to Thomas's self-esteem, and he believes that he can achieve it only by emulating detectives he sees in TV serials.

In *The Lonesome*, likewise, characters often talk about an American western series, *Alias Smith and Jones*, and the world of TV seems to be as familiar to them as that of their own community. An illustration of this is found on the occasion when the local priest, Father Welsh, informs Valene and the Coleman brothers, the main characters of the play, that Thomas Hanlon has killed himself, and tells them about the Catholic Church's view of suicide. He mentions that that people

who commit suicide will be punished in the after-life. At first, this does not make sense to Valene. He can understand the gravity of the situation only when he remembers the suicide of an actor who played in *Alias Smith and Jones:*

> Welsh…Rotting in hell now, Thomas Hanlon is. According to the Catholic Church anyways he is, the same as every suicide. No remorse. No mercy on him.
> Valene. Is that right now? Every suicide you're saying?
> Welsh. According to us mob it's right anyways.
> Valene. Well I didn't know that. That's a turn-up for the books. (*Pause.*) So the fella from *Alias Smith and Jones*, he'd be in hell?
> …
> Welsh. I don't know the fella.
> Valene. He killed himself, and at the height of his fame.
> Welsh. Well if he killed himself, aye, he'll be in hell too….
> Valene. That sounds awful harsh. (*Pause.*) So Tom'll be in hell now? Jeez. (*Pause*.) I wonder if he's met the fella from *Alias Smith and Jones?* Ah, that fella must be old now. Tom probably wouldn't even recognize him. (*LW* 154)

Evidently, popular culture is deeply intermingled in Valene's life as it is in most of the other townspeople's lives.

In *The Beauty Queen*, the popularity of the foreign media images is contrasted with the diminishing popularity of what is Irish. When the song "The Spinning Wheel" by Delia Murphy has just started on the radio, Pato and Maureen talk about the song in a way revealing their dislike:

> Maureen. Me mother does love this oul song Oul Delia Murphy.
> Pato. This is a creepy oul song.
> Maureen. It is a creepy oul song.
> Pato. She does have a creepy oul voice. Always scared me this song did when I was a lad. She's like a ghoul singing. (*Pause*.) … They don't write songs like that anymore. Thank Christ. (*BQL* 23)

Delia Murphy is an Irish singer who lived between 1902 and 1971. The songs that Murphy sang represent traditional Irish music. She was also known for collecting Irish ballads. For the earlier generation, Murphy represented "the importance of re-establishing cultural identity after the devastating period of Civil War in Ireland and the many years of English colonization" (Lanters 14). Pato and Maureen find her voice and her song annoying, unpleasant and outdated because, obviously, Murphy does not appeal to their tastes which have already been

transformed by the ceaseless infusion of popular cultural images.

Leenane, consisting as it does of the polarized images of old and new, does not offer a promising atmosphere for the people living there. In *The Beauty Queen*, this is revealed by Ray while he is chatting with Maureen in Scene Two:

> Ray…Are you not watching telly for yourself, no?
> Maureen. I'm not. 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?... All you have to do is look out your window to see Ireland. And it's soon bored you'd be. 'There goes a calf'. (*Pause*.) I be bored anyway. I be continually bored. (*BQL* 53)

Ray insists on this train of thought, saying that Leenane is more dangerous than drugs:

> Maureen. Don't be getting messed up in drugs, now, Ray, for yourself. Drugs are terrible dangerous.
> Ray. Terrible dangerous, are they? Drugs, now?
> Maureen. You know full well they are.
> Ray. Maybe they are, maybe they are. But there are plenty of other things just as dangerous, would kill you just as easy. Maybe even easier.
> Maureen (wary). Things like what, now?
> Ray (pause. Shrugging) This bastarding town for one. (*BQL* 54)

Ray has no emotional attachment to the town; on the contrary, he resents living there because, according to him, Leenane is dull, tedious and uninspiring. For this reason, he wants to leave Leenane for somewhere else: "London. I'm thinking of going to. Aye. Thinking of it, anyways. To work, y'know. One of these days. Or else Manchester" (*BQL* 53).

In addition the dreams of leaving Leenane, the migrant experience is also included to some extent in the trilogy, particularly in *The Beauty Queen*, which is used to create a more elaborate pastiche. The social life of Leenane has been infiltrated by the globalized world, while it is still an economically disadvantaged place with limited access to economic opportunities, and for this reason, as Maureen emphasizes, "[t]here's always someone leaving" (*BQL* 21). Leenane is actually "utterly anachronistic to what was happening socially and economically in the progressive Ireland of the times of [its] setting, estimated as the early

1990s" (Jordan, *From Leenane* 41). To illustrate, Pato has had to emigrate to London to find a job. Although he works in hard conditions there, and from time to time he misses his hometown, he would still not choose to live in Leenane:

> Pato (*pause*). I do ask meself, if there was good work in Leenane, would I stay in Leenane? I mean, there never will be good work, but hypothetically, I'm saying. Or even bad work. Any work. And when I'm over there in London and working in rain and 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…when it's there I am, it is here I wishg I was, of course. Who wouldn't? But then 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. (*BQL* 21-2).

When away from Leenane, Pato feels homesickness, but he is not that attached to Leenane to stay there. Of course, economic conditions do not allow him to live in Leenane, but as he says, even if there was a proper job, he would not like to stay there. Indeed, "[n]either the home space nor the world beyond is cast as simply preferable" (Wallace 25).

Instead of returning to Leenane, Pato chooses to go to Boston in America upon his uncle's invitation. He hopes to find better living conditions there, a hope which is much more important for him than the idea of a homeland. He also wants to take Maureen Folan, his former schoolmate, to Boston with him. Unfortunately, Maureen does not learn this on time since her mother has destroyed the letter in which Pato confesses his love, and invites her to join him in his new life:

> I have been in touch with me uncle in Boston and a job he has offered me there, and I am going to take him up on it…and the thing I want to say to you is do you want to come with me?...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 and what good to your mother does that big hill do? No good. (*BQL* 36).

Pato does not seem to have any devotion to Leenane or, in general, to Ireland, and assumes that Maureen does not, either, which is understood to be most likely true

when she is seen to be extremely disappointed that Pato has left Leenane without her.

Maureen also worked in England some years ago. She had to leave there after suffering a mental breakdown, which Mag spitefully betrayed to Pato in order to disaffect him from Maureen: "Difford Hall!...It's a nut-house! An oul nut-house in England I did have to sign her out of and promise to keep her in me care. Would you want to be seeing the papers now?" (*BQL* 30). As a result of her mother's betrayal, Maureen has to reveal to Pato what happened to her in England:

> It's true I was in a home there a while, now, after a bit of a breakdown I had. Years ago this is... In England I was, this happened. Cleaning work. When I was twenty-five. Me first time over. Me only time over…Over in Leeds I was, cleaning offices. Bogs. A whole group of us, only them were all English…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 ypurself out of.' Half of the swearing I didn't even understand. I had to have a black woman explain it to me. (*BQL* 30-1)

In England Maureen was exposed to discrimination and she suffered greatly from loneliness and alienation. These terrible experiences resulted in her mental breakdown. However, her sufferings did not make Maureen more attached to her hometown where she is not happy or satisfied. All Maureen wants is a life with dignity together with the person she loves, no matter where she is. The loss of the opportunity to leave Leenane with Pato thus remains as a traumatic scar on her mind. She gradually loses her sanity, which ends up her killing her mother. After the murder she deludes herself that she has still got a chance to go to Boston, as she reflects while talking to herself throughout Scene Eight: "Almost begged me, Pato did. Almost on his hands and knees, he was near enough crying. At the station I caught him... 'You will come to Boston with me so, me love, when you get up the money.' 'I will Pato…So long as it's you and me'" (*BQL* 50).

McDonagh, by means of the experiences of Maureen and Pato, questions the sense of belongingness to a particular place, which gets more and more complicated in globalized world conditions. The feelings and emotions of Pato and Maureen in relation to the diasporic experience suggest the postmodern

version of diaspora[35] which transgresses the boundaries of ethnicity and nationalism. Their experiences harbor a sense of displacement which is unlikely to be compensated for by the promises of nationalism. They left their countries in search of better living conditions. Although Pato is not content with his working conditions in England, he is motivated by neither "an idealization of the homeland" nor "a commitment to the maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity of that homeland" (Akenson 180). He returns to Leenane just to leave it soon after for the New World. Similarly, Maureen turns back to Leenane out of necessity and not to find safety and prosperity, and she dreams of leaving the place at the first opportunity. She becomes extremely frustrated when her only chance to go away with Pato has been hindered by her mother. These examples underscore a fading of the desire for geographical rootedness and of the organic bond between characters and their homeland.

3.1.2. Leenane as a Postmodern Gothic Town

Some parameters can be specified by which literary works can be identified as Gothic in its most classical sense. As Hogle clearly explains, though not always as obviously as in *The Castle of Otranto*[36], a Gothic literary work usually takes place in an antiquated or seemingly antiquated space – be it a castle, a foreign palace, an abbey, a huge prison, a graveyard, an ancient frontier or an island or a large old house. Within this space, or within a selection from such spaces, are hidden some secrets from the past that trouble the characters, psychologically or physically (2). This threatening atmosphere harbors other traditional Gothic elements such as the uncanny, a charismatic villain, a supernatural haunting and an oppressed, seemingly doomed heroine. These elements or devices serve the purpose of generating horror (Beville 42). The secrets haunting the characters can appear in various forms such as ghosts, specters, or monsters, often blurring the line between life and death. They invade a Gothic place to reveal unresolved crimes

[35]See pp. 43-4.

[36]*The Castle of Otranto* (1764) is generally regarded as the first Gothic novel.

or conflicts that can no longer be suppressed. Gothic works generally raise the possibility that the boundaries between conventional reality and the supernatural may have been crossed, mostly psychologically but sometimes physically or both (Hogle 2-3).

In fact, in its traditional forms, the Gothic had a strong tendency to serve the claims of nationalism. As Judith Halberstam puts it, the early Gothic texts produced "an easy answer to the question of what threatens national security and prosperity—namely, 'the monster'" (3). In "Abjection, Nationalism, and the Gothic," Robert Miles draws attention to "the Gothic's manifest relationship to the rise of Nationalism" (48). Specifically, he underlines the rise of the British national self-awareness following Britain's separation from Rome and the Protestant identity of the first producers and consumers of the Gothic. According to Miles, "it seems self-evident that the genre's stock-figures, that is, scheming monks, mendacious abbots, and homicidal abbesses - are the stuff of sectarian nightmares" (47).

Subverted versions of some of these Gothic elements can be detected in McDonagh's Leenane. In this way, McDonagh undermines the traditional way the Gothic constructs distinctions between one's own nation and the monstrous other. What is monstrous, immoral and destructive in his work is the Irish themselves. His plays lay bare hatred, violence and disorder in the heart of Western Ireland, thereby challenging the image of a peaceful, unified and tranquil West. His Leenane is a dark and isolated town which is haunted by a tense atmosphere, mysteries, death and demonized characters. Focusing on gothic elements in McDonagh's plays can thus offer another way of looking at Irishness and land. When considered from a postnationalist view, they contribute to questioning the nationalist ideology which regards Irishness as a homogeneous unity consisting of individuals who live up to an elevated nationalist ideal.

In Leenane, a subverted Gothic atmosphere is created through a contemporary version of Gothic gloom, isolation, secrets, sinister actions, hatred, greed, violence and monstrosity; elements which resolutely challenge the Ireland that de Valera had dreamed of. In the following part, these elements will be explored in order to

show how McDonagh twists the traditional Gothic elements to subvert the idea of a pleasant, peaceful and harmonious West of Ireland which was supposed to be the home of nationalist ideals.

One of the characteristics of Gothic is the experience of space as claustrophobic and imprisoning (Wasson 132). In line with this, Leenane has a suffocating and claustrophobic atmosphere, which is frequently complained about by the characters. In *The Beauty Queen*, the opening dialogue hints at a sense of gloom and dissatisfaction. The play opens in the living room/kitchen of the rural cottage where Maureen Folan and her mother Mag Folan live; Maureen enters carrying shopping:

> Mag. Wet, Maureen?
> Maureen. Of course wet. (*BQL* 1)

A similar conversation takes place in Scene Two when Maureen has been out and turns back:

> Mag (*nervously*). Cold, Maureen?
> Maureen. Of course cold. (*BQL* 12)

As Grene states, Maureen's responses to her mother suggest a rhetorical question: What else would it be but wet and cold in Leenane? ("Ireland" 300). Again in Scene Two, Mag exchanges a similar dialogue with Ray when he comes to the Folans' cottage with an invitation for a party to be held the following evening. This time, the conversation is about the landscape:

> Mag. It's a big oul hill.
> Ray. It is a big oul hill.
> Mag. Steep.
> Ray. Steep is right and if not steep then muddy.
> Mag. Muddy and rocky. (*BQL* 9)

These brief exchanges show that nature as a source of beauty, consolation and inspiration is almost entirely absent from Leenane. Castleberry argues that McDonagh's rustic Ireland has nothing to do with the idyllic countryside of Boucicault or the poetic terrain of Synge (43). Instead, nature here is one of the sources creating feelings of gloom and pessimism.

In each play of the trilogy, the dark and pessimistic Gothic atmosphere is

reinforced. *A Skull* opens in a manner parallel to *The Beauty Queen.* The opening setting is again a rural cottage, that of Mick Dowd whose job is to remove the bones of the dead that are more than seven years old from the churchyard, and to smash the skulls and bones so that new bodies can be put into the recently vacated graves. In Scene One, Mick chats with his neighbor, Mary Rafferty:

> Mary. Mick.
> Mick. Maryjohnny.
> Mary. Cold.
> Mick. I suppose it's cold. (*SC* 63)

They go on with the dialogue to talk about the season, which makes another gloomy remark in relation to Leenane:

> Mary. The summer is going.
> Mick. What summer we had.
> Mary. What summer we had. We had no summer.
> Mick. Sit down for yourself, there, Mary.
> Mary (*sitting*). Rain, rain, rain, rain, rain we had. And now the cold. And now the cold. And now the dark closing in. The leaves'll be turning in a couple of weeks, and that'll be the end of it. (*SC* 6)

The climate of the west of Ireland has regularly been represented in Irish drama as dark and rainy. In McDonagh's trilogy, this quality turns into a symbolic element that contributes to the pessimistic and tense atmosphere, and triggers boredom and tedium.

In *A Skull,* the dark and claustrophobic atmosphere is created in the quintessentially Gothic setting of a graveyard. In Scene One, Mairtin, another local youngster, comes to Mick's cottage with a message from Father Welsh: "You're to make a start on this year's exhuming business this coming week. This graveyard shenanigans … I am to help you anyways and twenty quid the week oul Walsh, oul Welsh is to be giving me" (*BQL* 71). At the beginning of Scene Two, then, Mick and Mairtin are seen carrying out their tasks of digging up old bones in the graveyard. The stage directions require the Gothic to be emphasized by a night-time scene and dim lighting: "A rocky cemetery at night, lit somewhat eerily by a few lamps dotted about. Two graves with gravestones atop a slight incline in the center" (*SC* 81). In traditional Gothic works, the major locus- mostly a castle- was linked to other medieval edifices such as abbeys, churches and

graveyards. Botting explains that these buildings, in their generally ruinous states, harked back to a feudal past (2). While commenting on an established funerary tradition in Irish literature, Witoszek and Sheeran state that '(t)he Irish omphalos is the graveyard, the centre of continuity and the meeting place between the worlds" (78). However, in McDonagh's play, the graveyard is far from bearing a link with the past. On the contrary, it displays a site where ancestors are swept away, a society which does not bear emotional ties with its ancestors and past. As Lonergan puts it, "even the dead cannot rest in peace: their graves will be violated" (Lonergan 20).

McDonagh extends the Gothic atmosphere of Leenane into sinister actions, violence, monstrosity and secrets. Grene has coined the term "black pastoral" to describe Irish plays which self-consciously invert the earlier idealizations of life in the west of Ireland. Traditional pastoral idealizes another space, a prior time while black pastorals invert such a norm by representing a brutally unidyllic place ("Black Pastoral" 253). McDonagh's Leenane is a good example of a black pastoral through which McDonagh portrays a problematic image of the West of Ireland as opposed to the harmonious one closely associated with Irishness. In *A Skull,* Mick's job, digging up old graves to make room for more, symbolizes in a chilling way the increasing need for burial places. Mick explains this to Thomas who calls his job an "awful morbid work": "Work to be done it is. Isn't the space needed?" (*SC* 89). This need is not surprising considering the town's constant murders and suicides, which are referred to in *The Lonesome* when Coleman teases Father Welsh with the comment: "A great parish it is you run, one of them murdered his missus, an axe through her head, the other her mammy, a poker took her brains out" (*LW* 134). Coleman here refers to Mick's suspected murder of his wife and to an incident in *The Beauty Queen* where Maureen murders her mother. In addition to these murders, in *The Lonesome West,* Coleman kills his father, and Thomas Hanlon commits suicide. Father Welsh sadly complains about deaths in his parish: "I thought Leenane was a nice place when first I turned up here, but no. Turns out it's the murder capital of fecking Europe" (*LW* 161). In this sense, the dark and gloomy world of Leenane is built up alongside suffocating and hostile

relationships, and by means of both McDonagh challenges the image of a rural Irish society living in an amicable and compatible union.

The Beauty Queen challenges traditional images of domestic relationships, presenting a subverted version of the gothic theme of the oppressed virgin. This play depicts a hostile and mutually destructive mother-daughter relationship. Maureen has been caring for her mother, Mag, for years. She is exhausted by Mag's selfish, demanding and manipulative manners. Mag pesters Maureen with her insistent demands for porridge, biscuits or tea all through the day. Maureen serves Mag, though each time scorning and scolding her, and showing extreme displeasure.

In the first scene this tense relationship between mother and daughter is strikingly introduced. Mag begins to complain about her Complan[37] as soon as Maureen returns from shopping, and all through the scene she goes on to annoy Maureen with her never-ending demands presented in expressions like "me Complan" (*BQL* 1), "me porridge" (*BQL* 3) and "me mug of tea" (*BQL* 6). At the end of the scene, the tension comes to a head when Mag asks for sugar for her tea:

> Mag. No sugar in this, Maureen, you forgot, go and get some.
> *Maureen stares at her a moment, then takes the tea, brings it to the sink and pours it away, goes back to Mack, grabs her half-eaten porridge, returns to the kitchen, scrapes it out into the bin, leaves the bowl in the sink and exists into the hallway, giving Mag a dirty look on the way and closing the door behind. (BQL 7).*

In the following scenes Mag's demands and Maureen's consequent displeasure are repeated in a similar omnious pattern until Maureen murders Mag in the last scene.

Botting emphasizes that the Gothic world "at large presents the greatest terrors for the young heroines" (38). However, the oppression Maureen suffers under is far from the exotic world of classic Gothicism's castles, sinister male figures, and dungeons. Maureen's confined space is the modern Irish cottage in which trivial domestic details and petty behaviour become psychological constraints as

[37] A brand of thick milky drink or porridge-like food, fortified with vitamins and designed for the elderly or infirm.

imprisoning as fetters and barred windows. Maureen is "a hopelessly trapped character" (Wallace 24), trapped in the dark and gloomy life of the cottage and her daily chores, her mother being her chief oppressor.

Although she seems to be the victim of the play, Maureen does not submit passively to her victimizer. She is not less monstrous than Mag; in fact, she herself turns into the oppressor much of the time, being just as cruel to her mother as the mother is to the daughter. Throughout the play, these characters oppress each other and suffer from each other's cruelties. It is therefore unsurprising that, in contrast to the ending of a traditional gothic story, where a straightforwardly oppressed innocent victim is rescued by her lover, in this horror story the two oppressor-victim composites, that are Mag and Maureen, conflate into just one figure: Maureen's future is symbolically killed by her mother's actions, and having murdered Mag, Maureen is transformed into the image of her monstrous mother. This shows that the family unit, which is the core of the Leenane society representing rural Ireland, will never be a peaceful environment, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

Hatred and violence is not limited to the family environment. In the plays the cottages of the main characters are often visited by neighboring townspeople, which provides the audience with conversations involving scraps of news from the daily life in the town. These conversations disclose that most characters hold long-lasting grudges against each other based on past disputes and petty annoyances, some of which are the results of trivial incidents or the playing of childish and spiteful tricks. For instance, in Scene Six in *The Beauty Queen* while Ray is chatting with Mag, he says that he is still resentful with Maureen because for ten years she did not return his tennis ball (*BQL* 38). The cruelty, sheer nastiness and unexpected deadliness of petty incidents like this are emphasized by Mag's revelation that Ray had killed one of Maureen's chickens by throwing the ball at it (*BQL* 38). Maureen's obstinacy in not giving the ball back and Ray's childish resentment are presented as comic because absurd, but they are also examples of how trivial matters can result in enduring conflicts between the townspeople. Pato expresses the contrast between the attractiveness of the

landscape and the vindictiveness of the Leenane people (Lonergan 12) in the following way: "Of course it's beautiful here … But … You can't kick a cow in Leenane without some bastard holding a grudge twenty year" (BQL 22). Pato's complaint discloses the nature of Leenane as a site of oppressive relations in which "one is almost always in more danger from the people in the house next door, or one's own family, than from external threats" (B. Murphy 2). Obviously, monstrosity is not associated with racial difference or the national Other but with the members of the same society.

In addition to antagonistic human relations, another characteristic of Leenane is that all domestic interiors there bear sinister undertones. McDonagh attains these undertones by juxtaposing the mundane with the murderous and shocking thereby creating a Gothic atmosphere of unease and uncanniness. In his famous essay, "The Uncanny", Freud identifies the uncanny as a "class of the frightening which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar" (336). To put it in another way, the uncanny is the experience of something which is both strange and familiar evoking the responses of uneasiness, anxiety and alienation. The German word that Freud uses for the uncanny, *das Unheimlich*, suggests exactly the feelings evoked by what is uncanny. *Das Unheimlich* is the inversion of *das Heimlich* which means homely, comfortable and familiar, and by extension, contradicts feelings of comfort causing the sense of not being at home, unhomely (Edwards and Graulund 4-5).

The sense of not being at home, the sense of anxiety and alienation, typically results from a conflict or confrontation based on the notion of incongruity or the juxtaposition of the opposites (Edwards and Graulund 7). In this context, Freud states:

> In general we are reminded that the word 'heimlich' is not unambiguous, but belongs to two sets of ideas, which, without being contradictory, are yet very different: on the one hand it means what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other, what is concealed and kept out of sight. (224-25)

As Corinna Wagner also points out, uncanniness focuses attention on the darker realities that exist just below the ordered surface of normal relationships and

everyday life (545).

The traditional kitchen/living rooms in the trilogy produce the effect of the uncanny for they negate the feelings of comfort and homeliness that such places are expected to offer. This is suggested dramatically in the Folans' urine-smelling kitchen: Mag, who suffers from a kidney infection, routinely pours her urine down the kitchen sink, so the kitchen stinks of it. The misplaced routine activity thus creates senses of unfamiliarity and uneasiness together with the feeling of disgust. The ongoing physical and psychological torture of the play takes place in this kitchen as well. For instance, when Maureen understands that Mag destroyed the letter Pato had written to her she pours boiling cooking oil over Mag's hand (*BQ* 46). As seen in these examples, the kitchen is no longer a place of nurture and nourishment but of malady, sufferin and torture.

The uncanny atmosphere is dominant in Scene Three in *A Skull.* The setting is Mick's living room and "[t]hree skulls and their sets of bones lie on the table" (*SC* 100). All through the scene, Mick and Mairtin smash up the bones while having a conversation. They perform the act of hammering as something normal and part of their daily routines. Mick even asks for music to accompany them while working:

> Mick. We should have music as we're doing this.
> Mairtin (*blankly.*) Music, music…
> Mick. Music to hammer dead fellas to. I have a Dana record somewhere… (*BQL* 108)

Hammering bones in the middle of a living room is a very disturbing scene, expressed by Mairtin when he says that: "Skulls do be more scary on your table than they do be in their coffin" (*SC* 100). The disturbing effect of the situation is intensified with the fact that Mick and Mairtin act in an indifferent manner while doing such a grotesque and macabre job, as seen in the following stage directions given during the scene: "[Mick] brings the mallet crashing down on the skull nearest to him, shattering it, spraying pieces of it all over the room" (*SC* 103), "Mick starts smashing the skull into even smaller pieces and stamping on the bits that have fallen on the floor" (*SC* 103), "The smashing continues more or less unabated by at least one of the men throughout most of the rest of the scene" (*SC*

104). These examples suggest that the coexistence of the familiarity of a living room with the strangeness of the job carried out there drags the scene into the realm of the uncanny.

Domestic objects contribute to the uncanny atmosphere of the Folans' kitchen, too, being used in ways "that will surprise and unsettle the audience" (Lonergan 18). For instance, Maureen's torturing her mother has already been mentioned. It is not the first time that Maureen burns her mother with the cooking oil. There is a reference to Mag's "bad hand" in scene one (*BQL* 3), and the stage directions given above refer to her hand as "shriveled". Moreover, in Scene Two, before Maureen's torture of her mother, Mag makes a reference to "[her] burned hand" (*BQL* 10), while she is complaining to Ray about her ailments. These references only make sense later when Maureen burns Mag's hand with the cooking oil on stage. Maureen is regularly torturing her mother by pouring boiling oil on her hand. Here an everyday item like cooking oil turns out to be a sign of torture. The uncanniness of it is that it is still being used as 'cooking' oil, but what it is cooking is not food, but a living woman's hand.

Maureen uses another domestic object, a poker, to kill her mother. Before this incident Ray sees this poker, and asks Mag to sell it to him because he thinks that it is "just going to waste in this house" (*BQL* 40). The underlying reason of Ray's idea is quite appalling. He suggests that the poker will serve well to beat policemen: "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. Will you sell it to me?" (*BQL* 39). Ray's desire reflects both his prospenity to violence and also his being subjected to the police violence, as Mairtin in *A Skull* brings into question while talking to Thomas:

> Mairtin. Aren't the polis the experts at battering gasurs [boys] anyway? Don't you get a bonus for it?
> …
> Thomas. What gasurs do I ever batter?
> Mairtin. Ray Dooley for a start-off, or if not you then your bastarding cohorts.
> Thomas. What about Ray Dooley?

> Mairtin. Didn't he end up the County Hospital ten minutes after you arrested him? (*SC* 92)

Thus, Ray probably associates the poker with a nightstick, and wants to use it to take his revenge on the police. Ironically, later in the play it is used to a violent end by Maureen, that is, to murder her mother. In its routine function, a poker is used to poke the fire to make a place warmer and cozy, but in the Folans' cottage it assumes the macabre quality of a murder weapon.

Maureen also uses some food stuffs to irritate and displease her mother. Mag is disgusted with lumpy Complan; Maureen makes it lumpy in order to upset her mother. As in the case of cooking oil, she uses lumpy Complan when she believes that her mother is concealing something from her. In Scene Two, Mag tries to conceal that Ray has visited them in order to invite Maureen to a dance, but Maureen met Ray by chance as he was leaving the Folans' cottage. When Mag realizes that Maureen is aware of Ray's visit she says that Ray just dropped in to say hello while passing by; Maureen is, however, sure that Ray came to convey something important for her. She then makes some lumpy Complan for her mother without giving her a spoon to stir it, and forces her to drink it, saying, "Drink ahead…There is no little spoons for liars in this house…Be drinking ahead" (*BQL* 14). In addition, she does not put enough sugar in the porridge so that Mag has to ask for more sugar all the time, and she buys Kimberley biscuits although she knows that her mother does not like that brand. She confesses to Pato that "[She] only get[s] them to torment [her] mother" (*BQL* 19). Namely, Mag is never allowed to enjoy her food. The more offensive Maureen is the more demanding Mag becomes. Mag frustrates Maureen by asking for Complan, biscuits and porridge one after the other. Thus, the primary function of food shifts away from nourishment, and it becomes an instrument of torment.

The uncanny undertones are extended outside to the lakeside as well. The famous beauty spot of the lake in Leenane turns into a place where people drown themselves. First Thomas Hanlon kills himself there, and upon learning of this Father Welsh calls it: "A lonesome oul lake that is for a fella to go killing himself in. It makes me sad just to think of him. To think of poor Tom sitting alone there,

alone with his thoughts, the cold lake in front of him, and him weighing up what's best, a life full of the loneliness that took him there" (*LW* 153). He will prove these words to have been a foreshadowing of his own loneliness and death, for he follows Thomas in drowning himself there. As in the domestic examples, McDonagh is evoking an image that is conventionally used to evoke a comforting sense of Irish community and natural beauty, only to make it the site of grotesque, uncanny and alienating loneliness.

Another feature of Leenane's Gothic world is that it is a chaotic place where law no longer rules. "Law is a recurrent theme within Gothic literature … In various contexts the law is presented as archaic and dark" (L. Moran 87). In the postmodern Gothic context, Susan Chaplin claims, what is at issue is not the failure of the law's disciplinary and regulative functions, but rather the increasing inability of law to maintain its symbolic coherence (38). In this sense, characters in Leenane torture each other, kill each other or damage each other's possessions but they escape punishment in one way or another. The most conspicuous example is that Maureen escapes punishment even though she murders her mother. At the end of her delirious monologue in Scene Nine, she says: "Twas over the stile she did trip. And down the hill she did fall. Aye." (*BQL* 51). As the reader learns from Coleman's reference to the incident in *The Lonesome,* Maureen's argument was accepted truth: "Maureen's mam only fell down a big hill and Maureen's mam was never steady on her feet" (*LW* 155).

Similarly, in *The Lonesome* Coleman kills his father, but he escapes punishment since he convinces the jury that it was an accident, and his brother Valene acts as witness. However, when Coleman burns Valene's plastic figurines, Valene in a rage confesses to Father Welsh that Coleman killed his father on purpose: "Didn't Dad make a jibe about Coleman's hairstyle, and didn't Coleman dash out, pull him back be the hair and blow the poor skulleen out his head" (*LW* 157). Even after this confession, Coleman is not punished because it is not made to the legal authorities. It also appears that Valene has given false testimony in favor of Coleman because Coleman promised to renounce what his father left to him in his will and give everything to Valene.

Lawlessness can give rise to the Gothic because it destabilizes the link between action and outcome, and when it is a rampant in a community, as it is in Leenane, this results in a disturbing sense of mystery (which could be Gothic in tone) and ambiguity (which is a fundamental feature of the uncanny). In *A Skull*, there remains ambiguity about the cause of the death of Mick's wife Oona. Mick says that it was a car accident: "I had had a drink taken, and a good drink, and…she had no seat-belt on her, and that was the end of it" (*SC* 78), but everybody in town thinks that Mick killed her. This is what Mairtin is referring to in his angry response to Mick's continually teasing him: "Well isn't that better than the most of them round here? Will smile at your face 'til you are a mile away before they start talking behind your back" (*SC* 79). Thomas, who wants to solve the case, steals Oona's skull from her grave, but he tells Mick that "[d]own the bottoms of our fields I found her" (*SC* 117). Thomas is not interested in the truth about Mick, but he simply wants to obtain enough credible evidence to make it seem that he has solved a crime (Lonergan 24). He claims that there are marks of injuries on the skull which show that Oona was dead before the accident. He wants Mick to sign a confession stating that he killed her. Although Mick accepts to sign the confession, he still denies that he has killed his wife saying: "I didn't butcher my wife. I never butchered anybody 'til tonight" (*SC* 118). By the end of the play, the mystery remains unsolved and whether or not Mick murdered his wife before the car accident has not been clearly revealed. This shows that the legal authorities fail in their duty to clarify matters and, even worse, they themselves become involved in illegal actions.

Mairtin admits that Thomas bribed to get him to help him dig up the bones of Mick's wife. He also reveals that he caught Thomas carving a hole in Oona's skull the day after he stole the bones:

> Thomas. What are you on his fecking side for?!
> Mairtin. Well why wouldn't I be on his fecking side, when it's me own blackguard brother I catch carving a hole in Mick's missus's skull, there, the day after you'd dug her up on him.
> Thomas. Shut up about that digging…!
> Mairtin. I won't shut up about digging and and I'll tell you why I won't shut up that digging! Because not even a fecking pound

> would the Galway pawn give me for that rose locket, and you said it'd give me at least ten. (*SC* 120)

All these claims add to the mysteries in the town, and the issue of how Oona died gets more complicated. Lonergan draws an analogy between Oona's empty grave and the search for truth in Leenane: McDonagh's characters "strip away layers and delve deeper – only to find an empty space where they expected to uncover a hidden truth" (28). This situation also defies the image of a stable and peaceful west of Ireland. It is instead a place where violence and murders are routines of life, and a place which is deprived of a lawful authority to set the chaotic life in order.

3.2 Bolger's Dublin: A Carnivalesque City

Kathy: A city is like a person, Arthur, it can never stay the same.
(*The Lament for Arthur Cleary* 61)

In "The Country versus the City in Irish Writing", O'Toole looks into the urban-rural dichotomy in the Irish cultural context. He explains that "[f]or the last hundred years, Irish culture and in particular Irish writing has been marked by this dominance based on a false opposition of the country to the city which has been vital to the maintenance of a conservative political culture in the country" (111). A constructed image of rural values was exploited in order to create a sense of social unity and solidarity; the image was based on the country being generally regarded as a site of family and communal values (114). In the plays of McDonagh, these values are invalidated within the very rural context of which they are supposed to be integral elements. Therefore, in those plays, the rural has lost its meaning as a mainstay for a stable Irish identity. While McDonagh is thus seen to be exploring and challenging the nationalistic associations of rural life, Dermot Bolger appears to be focusing on a different aspect of the urban-rural counterposition; he concerns himself with searching for the meaning of Irishness within the urban and suburban context; he rejects the tradition of Irish rural writing.

Born in 1959 in Finglas, one of Dublin's earliest working-class suburban areas, Bolger belongs to the suburban culture of Dublin. He holds the opinion that suburban experiences such as his own have been underrepresented and underestimated in Irish Theatre as well as in social and political discourse. In an interview, he reflects this: "[C]ertainly in school, and in the political speeches, and on television, there was nothing of my world being written about, so there was a sense of being a child of limbo, of living your life in a place which doesn't officially exist" (qtd. in Paula Murphy, "Dermot Bolger" 194). As in McDonagh's case, the place where Bolger was born and raised inspired in the writer the idea of in-betweenness and the sense of a "social as well as physical liminality", rather than reinforcing a sense of national belonging (Paula Murphy, "Dermot Bolger"

188).

Bolger attempts to represent the marginalized social groups living in working-class suburban areas. Although they constitute a considerable part of the Irish population, they have usually been excluded from the nationalistic discourse because they are at odds with any unified and stable understanding of Irishness. Christina Wald observes that "[f]requently set in the working-class suburbs of Dublin that are afflicted by unemployment, poverty and criminality, Bolger's plays innovatively explore a virgin territory for Irish literature in which the rural melancholia familiar on Irish stages gives way to urban anger" (33). This also implies that Bolger's representations of Dublin do not offer an alternative to the rural as sites embodying the core of Irishness. On the contrary, Bolger's choice of setting for his plays consolidates the futility of associating national identity to a certain place.

Bolger is neither the first nor the only playwright in Irish theatre to set his plays in an urban context. Even in the Abbey period, there were playwrights, though few in number, who somehow drifted away from the use of typical rural settings. Thus, it is possible to talk about an Irish urban writing tradition existing alongside the dominanct rural tradition. O'Toole explains that the classic location for Irish urban writing was the tenement building[38], which was essentially an urban version of the rural setting ("Going West" 114). Earlier examples of urban plays were not much different from peasant kitchen plays. The box-set which enclosed the space of the country cottage could be reused with a minimum of adaptation to make up the one room on view in tenement plays (Grene, *Politics* 132).

Sean O'Casey and Thomas Kilroy were earlier playwrights who dealt with national experience within the city context. As Grene puts it, "O'Casey offered something new on the Abbey stage, a picture of Dublin's urban poor, of the lives of the tenement streets which were literally just around the corner from the Abbey Theatre, but where most of the audience would never have set foot" (*Politics*

[38] A rundown, low-rental apartment building whose facilities and maintenance barely meet minimum standards ("tenement").

111). O'Casey's plays, mainly set in tenement flats, were each centered on a significant event in the revolutionary years of Ireland, events such as the independence war, the civil war and the Easter Rising. In his *Dublin Trilogy*[39], O'Casey tried to portray a realistic picture of a nation's process of settling down, and social, economic and political problems arising in this process, especially focusing on the lives of working-class Dubliners. William Dumbleton explains that O'Casey himself had been raised in the poverty of Dublin, and had experienced and seen the distress widespread in the city. For him it was that distress, that reality, which needed dramatic articulation. He preferred to shift away from the idealized peasant play and move to the miseries of Dublin's tenements and slums (71).

Kilroy, one of the playwrights discussed within the context of the second generation of Irish drama, began writing in the 60s. He set his plays in the controversial Lemass era that saw the opening of the Irish economy to the outside world, international trade and communication and a subsequent ill-planned urban expansion in Dublin. Economic changes encouraged depopulation in rural Ireland and over-population and poverty in the more urban East of the Republic (M. Jones 13). Kilroy mainly focused on individuals' situations in that rapidly changing urban context; being "fascinated and often appalled by what happens when the intense, concentrated hopes, fears, beliefs of the private person are subjugated to the fragmenting, diffusionary effects of public life" (qtd. in Berchild 181).

From the late 1980s onward, Irish plays set in urban contexts have been concerned with displaying diversity and plurality in city life by portraying the lives of people from the margins of society, especially those living in Dublin suburbs. Trotter observes that in the 1980s and 1990s Dublin grew more expensive, and traditionally working-class neighborhoods became gentrified with drastically increased rent causing middle-class and working-class families to be forced to move farther and farther outside the city. These events contributed to the mushrooming of new slums, and an increasing homelessness and drug use (*Irish*

[39]*The Shadow of a Gunman* (1923), *Juno and the Paycock* (1924) and *The Plough and the Stars* (1926).

Theatre 179). Actually, especially in the Celtic Tiger period, many suburbs of Dublin were exposed to social marginalization. As Berchild notes:

> When the economic boom began in the early 1990s, society in Ireland, and in Dublin especially, began to polarize into two broadly conceived groups: those who were able to take advantage of the sudden economic upturn largely due to education or saleable skills, and the lower classes and the dispossessed who could not avail of the inflow of capital into the country. The more the economy boomed, the greater the margin between these two groups became, and those who could not compete were relegated to the margins of society and to the margins of the city (i.e. the suburbs) where crime and drug use began to thrive again. (143)

Thus in dealing with the suburbs, playwrights were also provided with a space in which to tell the stories of marginalized people. This was a postnationalist space, as Deane describes it, a space promoting geniality towards micronarratives in which Ireland as the object of study gives way to an analysis of regions, phases and issues (*Strange Country* 56).

In his introduction to *Plays 1* by Dermot Bolger, O'Toole argues that new suburbs were born inside Dublin, places "without history, without the accumulated resonances of centuries, places that prefigured the end of the fierce notion of Irishness that had sustained the state for seventy years. Sex, drugs and rock'n' roll were more important in the new places than the old Irish totems of Land, Nationality and Catholicism" (ix). Bolger disclaims "the concept of a totality for the random and undecidable micropolitics these new urban sites contain, and this generates an emergent postnationalism, one that emphasizes the fragmenting, alienating experience of the city over pastoral values of wholeness and community" (Ryan 150). The plays of Bolger to be analyzed in this study are mainly set in O'Toole's "new suburbs". These plays are *The Lament for Arthur Cleary* which is mainly set in Finglas, *Blinded by the Light* which is set in a bed-sit in an unspecified part of Dublin and *The Passion of Jerome* which is set in Ballymun.

At first view, Bolger's focus on crime, poverty and drug use seems to present a dark and pessimistic picture of urban life. On consideration, however, it can be seen that his Dublin provides a space for the combination of incompatible

elements, and offers an alternative, allowing one to go beyond the boundaries of a homogenous understanding of place. He lays bare some of the cultural processes taking place in Dublin suburbs by representing different social groups. In this way he also brings into view the diversity and multiplicity of the urban experience. Thus, rather than dwelling on "what makes the space of a particular nation unique and unified", Bolger focuses upon internal difference and the borderland spaces of cultural contact (E. Jones 45). In this respect, Bolger's representation of Dublin is similar to the characteristics of carnivalization as described by Bakhtin.

In his works, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* and *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin explores the carnivalesque tradition in medieval times and traces the elements of carnival in modern literature. He states that

> the medieval man lived, as it were, two lives: one, the official, monolithically serious and gloomy life, subject to a strict hierarchical order filled with fear dogmatism, reverence and piety and the other, the life of the carnival square, free, full of ambivalent laughter, blasphemy, the profanation of all that was holy, disparagement and obscenity, and familiar contact with everyone and everything. Both of these lives were legal and legitimate, but were divided by strict temporal limits. (*Dostoevsky* 129-30)

During the carnival time, the strict line between these two lives disappeared, and things were turned upside down. The hierarchical ordering of the two lives was not only suspended but inverted. "Carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions" (*Rabelais* 10).

Bakhtin also asserts that

> [a]ll things that were once self-enclosed, disunified, distanced from one another by a noncarnivalistic hierarchical worldview are drawn into carnivalistic contacts and combinations. Carnival brings together, unifies, weds, and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid. *(Dostoevsky* 123)

Expanding on Bakhtin's ideas, Robert Stam points out that "during carnival, all that is socially marginalized and excluded including the mad, the scandalous, the aleatory, assumes center-stage in a liberatory celebration of otherness" (88).

Bakhtin explains that laughter, having a subversive power, is the vital element of carnival. "[Carnival laughter] is gay, triumphant and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives" (*Rabelais* 11-2). Associated with laughter, fools and clowns are also integral parts of carnival. Bakhtin argues that clowns represent a certain form of life, which is real and ideal at the same time. They stand on the borderline between life and art, in a peculiar mid-zone (*Rabelais* 8).

Bakhtin also associates grotesquerie with carnival's potential for disrupting established social and political hierarchies (Edwards and Graulund 21). He focuses on the body as a fundamental category of the grotesque, as represented and developed in the originally medieval literary genre of grotesque realism.

> The grotesque images are ambivalent, contradictory; they are ugly, monstrous, hideous from the point of view of 'classic' aesthetics, that is the aesthetics of the ready-made and the completed… Their traditional contents: copulation, pregnancy, birth, growth, old age, disintegration, dismemberment…are contrary to the classic images of the finished, completed man, cleansed, as it were, of all the scoriae of birth and development. (*Rabelais* 25)

According to Bakhtin, the grotesque has a positive and regenerative power. "The grotesque body … is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body" (Dentith 226). A grotesque body that is incomplete or deformed leads to the questioning of what it means to deviate from the norm. It suggests a sense of instability and uncertainty. In this context, it resists totalization and opens up a space for possibilities (Edwards and Graulund 3). Grotesque figures can cause the dissolution of borders between the normal and abnormal, inside and outside, internal and external and life and death. Sarah Cohen Shabbot suggests that a grotesquerie opposes any system of ontological thought that configures reality as unchangeable, static, well-ordered and highly defined, or that calls for homogeneity. It presents, instead, a reality that embraces fluidity, change, heterogeneity and disorder: a distinctly postmodern picture of reality (57).

A full discussion of carnivalesque with all its implications is beyond the scope of this study. The notion of carnival will be employed "in a strictly metaphorical

sense", as it was used by Keith Booker in *Techniques of Subversion in Modern Literaure* (13). Booker explains that this use of the carnival is somewhat more general than that of Bakhtin, and is much closer to the view which generalizes the Bakhtinian carnival into the notion of "transgression", which involves a violation of the rules of hierarchies in any of a number of areas, psychic forms, the human body, geographical space and social order (13). It also emphasizes inclusiveness, giving marginalised access to the privilege of self-representation (Gilbert and Tompkins 84). This idea of carnival involves a viable way to question and challenge strict identity categories, and thus can pave the way to questioning the national identity. Furthermore, as Bakhtin noted, it possesses a mighty life-creating and transforming power, an indestructible vitality. It challenges one-sided rhetorical seriousness, singular meaning and dogmatism (*Dostoevsky* 107).

The conservative view of the carnival should also be noted at this point: Despite the subversive significance of the carnival, it is in fact accepted as "a sanctioned form of subversion whose very purpose is to sublimate and defuse the social tensions that might lead to genuine subversion" (Booker 6). This view also serves the postnationalist implication that although postnationalism is a transcending of nationalism, it is still rooted in it. In other words, the subversion of the nationalist elements do not indicate the disappearance of the nation. It only undermines its privilege and prevents its unproblematic reassamblage (Gilbert and Tompkins 84).

Although there might be other ways of analyzing place in Bolger's plays, the carnivalesque has been preferred because of a strong contrast observed in his plays: Bolger does not offer a crude, realistic representation of Irish society in contrast to the serious issues he is dealing with. Bolger clearly displays the discontents of the society before and during the Celtic Tiger period. The first two plays to be analyzed, *The Lament for Arthur Cleary* and *Blinded by the Light*, were written just before this period began. The third play, *The Passion of Jerome* is set in the Celtic Tiger period. In this play, Bolger deals with the drawbacks of the period when the Republic of Ireland exhibited all those class distinctions and inequalities that are the hallmarks of a capitalist society (Coulter 21). In spite of

the economic boom in Ireland working-class people still struggled with poverty, and unemployment was an important issue. Besides, as also explained, drug use and crime rate drastically increased. These problems of society find their place in Bolger's play. In spite of the seriousness of the issues he is dealing with, a life-creating and transforming power of carnival controls his representation, and this excludes rhetorical seriousness and totalization of meaning. Bolger achieves this by bringing together conflicting views of Dublin, and by blurring the boundaries between the serious and comic, the sacred and profane, the past and the present and life and death.

In *The Lament for Arthur Cleary*[40], Bolger's debut play[41], conflicting and contesting views of Dublin are combined "without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Bhabha, *The Location* 4). The play is centered around Arthur Cleary, thirty-five years old, who has returned from the Continent, having worked there as a labourer for fifteen years, to a Dublin which has dramatically changed since he left. Arthur is completely bewildered by the changes in Dublin's architecture, inhabitants and social structure. His emigration to Europe is similar, to a certain extent, to the postmodern version of diasporic experience, as explained for Maureen and Pato in McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen.* Like Pato and Maureen, Arthur migrated by choice. This is clearly revealed during the surrealistic scene when he faces up to his dead mother and says: "I wasn't running from you, Ma. You know that, don't you? ... It was just … the time. So easy to drift between jobs and places, it just seemed right to wander off for a while and then wander back" (*LAC* 32). Arthur's reaction to his postmodern diasporic experience is different from that of McDonagh's characters, however. Maureen and Pato do not develop the nostalgic feelings which are deeply felt by Arthur.

Arthur experienced a psychologically crushing working life and a concomitant sense of alienation in the Continent, which he expresses to his girl friend Kathy in

[40] It will be referred to as *The Lament* and in brackets as *LAC* henceforth.

[41] The play is inspired by an eighteenth century Gaelic elegy named "Caoineadh Airt Ui Laoghaire", (Lament for Art O'Leary) written by Eileen O'Connel for her dead husband. In the eighteenth-century version, which is a popular nationalist text, Arthur O'Leary is a young Catholic, Irish Captain murdered by a British official. Bolger's play is a kind of the subversion of this nationalist text.

the following way:

> Some nights working in a canning factory in Denmark I'd stand up on the loading bay beside the hoist and I'd look down at three in the morning on the workers below, nobody speaking, the limbs moving automatically, the curious stillness behind all the bustle. And I'd start thinking it was the conveyor belt and the loading machine that were alive, that they were thinking 'more cans for the arms' and at seven in the morning the machines would stop and the arms of the men would move back and forth till somebody remembered to press a switch. So maybe I'm crazy too, but that's why I came home. (*LAC* 26)

Arthur's need to attach himself to Dublin is motivated by the overwhelming feelings of isolation and in-betweenness he experienced in the Continent, which he explains when describing his time there as "[f]ifteen years … [i]n limbo-autobahns, trains, borders. But I was never homeless, always knew I'd come back. Here, at least, I know who I am. I don't have to register my address with the police" (*LAC* 49-50). In Dublin, Arthur insistently searches for a sense of home to overcome his in-between position and to feel the security of belonging somewhere, but he never finds find. His experience shows that "[i]ncreasingly, nationality is becoming something you carry with you rather than a fixed attachment to a specific place of birth" (Kearney 156).

Arthur is surprised to find that the present-day Dublin he returns to does not resemble his memories of the place at all:

> It's all smaller, different when you return. Look at it… O'Connell Street. Just like some honky-tonk provincial plaza. Everywhere closed except the burger huts, all the buses gone, everyone milling around drunk, taking to the glittering lights like aborigines to whiskey. Just like some provincial kip I've seen dozens of. (*LAC* 21)

Obviously, Dublin is now becoming a part of the globalized world to the extent that it is difficult to distinguish it from any other small town in Europe. It may resemble other places elsewhere by having burger huts, and bright light, but it seems to have lost grandeur (it is "smaller," "honky-tonk", and "provincial") and, evidently, its individuality. O'Toole observes that Arthur returns to the world of a Dublin working-class suburb, "but it could be a working-class suburb in Liverpool

or in Ankara, anywhere where there are young people with nothing much to do and a metropolitan center beckoning them as temporary, uncertain migrants. This kind of suburb is everwhere and nowhere" (*Critical Moments* 123). Arthur nevertheless still tries to recover a sense of belonging to this place, which is both different and familiar at the same time. It is not the same place he left ten years ago, but it is not different from the places he has just left.

Arthur tries to overcome his displacement by clinging to memories of Dublin in the past. Nostalgia of this nature has been considered as one of the symptoms of the postmodern condition. It is "an alarming and pathological symptom of society that has become incapable of dealing with time and history" (Jameson, *Consumer Society* 117). Arthur can relate to the transformed Dublin only through his memories. This is observable in the scene in which he takes Kathy to Knocksedan, a place in the countryside where he passed time in his youth. He enjoys narrating his memories about Knocksedan to Kathy:

> Kathy…Tell me about this place. Come on. Who did you come here with?
> …
> Arthur. Anyone who would come. Or just alone.
> Kathy. Girls?
> Arthur. Girls who'd go sick from the factories to swim here in the river with me. Two hours persuading them to take their dresses off for five minutes in the water. (Grins.) But it was worth it. That mound there. (He points.) It's man-made. Older than Christ. Some evenings I'd climb up there in the dusk and it was as though you could almost hear it saying to you: "I know you. I know everything you will ever feel. I have felt it all before. (*LAC* 41)

Arthur is involved in recreating his past by narrating his memories in order to make his existence more meaningful, and to revive the emotional tie between himself and the city. Kathy is enchanted by Arthur's way of talking about Knocksedan and she wants him to talk more about the place:

> Kathy. Tell me about it again.
> ...
> Arthur. Sure, can't you see it with your own eyes?
> Kathy. It's not the same. It's only weeds and bushes and rocks, but when you describe it it's special, it's your world.
> Arthur (*looking around him*) It's as much yours as mine. That's

> what's special about it…it's just here, it's anybody's.
> Kathy. It's not here, Arthur. Not the way you knew it. With other people…well places seem to pass before them like scenes in a film, but with you it's all kept inside-everywhere's special. " (*LAC* 40)

Arthur's longing for his hometown leads him to idealize the places where he passed time in the past. His way of talking about places is interesting for Kathy because she does not view them in the same way as Arthur.

Arthur's nostalgic view of Dublin is contested with other views. Bolger does not allow nostalgia to dominate the mood of the play. Arthur falls in love with Kathy, an eighteen year-old-girl who dreams of leaving Ireland to live a better life elsewhere. Throughout the play, Arthur's desire to attach himself to Dublin is opposed to Kathy's dreams of leaving Ireland. Bolger constantly balances Arthur's nostalgic idealizing tone with Kathy's critical and skeptical tone in relation to the idea of home and belonging. The play opens with the implication of this difference in perceptions. Kathy dreams that Arthur is on the border between life and death, about to be taken away by death. When she wakes up alarmed, Arthur tries to console her:

> Arthur. A bad dream love, just a bad dream.
> Kathy looks at him, coming to her senses
> Kathy. I'm frightened Arthur. I dreamt it again.
> Arthur. The same one? Can you remember it?
> Kathy. No, but it was the same one. It's always gone when I wake but I know it. I know the fear in it. Like the fear of nothing else. (*Pause.*) Let's go Arthur, now while we've still time.
> Arthur (*half amused half soothing*) Go away? Listen love, I've finally come home. This is our home. Nobody can take it from us. Home. Say it.
> Kathy (*nervously*) Home?
> Arthur (*firmly*) Home.
> *His arm nestling her head, they lie back slowly as light go to blackout.* (*LAC* 4)

From Arthur's perspective, Dublin is the home to which he needs to feel attached. Kathy, on the other, cannot feel at home there, in spite of Arthur's desperate efforts. Through Arthur's and Kathy's conflicting perceptions, Dublin is presented as a place where there is "a nostalgia for lost origin juxtaposed with the impossibility of retrieving such origins and an acknowledgement of the necessity

of adopting nomadic subjectivities" (Paul Murphy "Immigrant Mind" 129).

Despite, Arthur's suggestions, Kathy rejects the idea of constructing a bond with the city. This is noticeable in the following dialogue as well:

> Kathy… Why'd you come back to this kip?
> Arthur. I belong in this kip. It's like at the end of a night, you know you have to go home.
> Kathy. You're welcome to it. If I had a chance I would be gone tomorrow. Anywhere-just out of here. Somewhere anonymous, the freedom of some city where if you walked down the longest street not one person would care who you are or where you're from. (*LAC* 25)

Kathy does not like life in Dublin, and does not think it is an ideal city for her. Unlike Arthur, she does not have ideals attached to any particular place; she can live in any place where she will be free to live her life as she likes.

Kathy often expresses her desire to leave, while Arthur is insistent on staying and becoming a part of life in Dublin. Kathy says:

> You can live with loneliness. You can't live here... You're different somehow, you're still breathing. Maybe because you got out. Sometimes… I think they've sucked all the air out of this city and people are walking around opening closing their mouths with nothing coming in, nothing going out… And that sounds crazy, I know (*LAC* 25-6).

Kathy is fed up with living in the same place. She thinks that Arthur is lucky because he has been away for a while and had a chance to refresh himself somehow. For Kathy who has never left Dublin, life is suffocating and claustrophobic. Kathy's complaints recall Ray's observation in McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen* that Leenane is more dangerous than drugs.

The play provides other characters' perspectives on the city, apart from those of Arthur's and Kathy's. The Friend[42], for instance, hears Kathy's concerns and her desire to leave Dublin, and reacts harshly, which reflects her own perception of the city:

> Kathy. I've packed a bag Sharon. If he will take me in I'll go to him, or I'll go somewhere else, anywhere, but I don't fit here anymore. (Pause.) Will you be glad for me?

[42] There are only three more characters other than Kathy and Arthur in *The Lament:* The Friend, the Porter and the Frontier Guard. These three characters play different roles interchangably.

> Friend. What's wrong with here?
> Kathy. You hate it, you always say you do.
> Friend. But I'll settle for it... Real life isn't like that. This isn't a bleeding movie Kathy, real people don't do this (*LAC* 33).

The Friend does not like the city either, but she is content with her life as long as she is able to eat her fill and sustain a mediocre life. She is tied to the city by practical concerns instead of emotional ones. She does not want her established order of life to be disturbed. In this respect, she is different from Arthur who seeks a lost origin in Dublin. This shows that a place might stand for different concerns for different people. Bolger puts together all these concerns, avoiding any totalization or prioritization of meaning, and thereby presents a kind of "carnivalesque collage" (Kearney 52).

In *Blinded by the Light*[43], Bolger, this time, carnivalizes a private space as a part of Dublin. The play is set in the bed-sit of a young Dubliner called Mick, an "untidy bedsit, crammed with stolen library books" (*BL* 129). O'Toole notes that in the play "Ireland has shrunk to the temporary, shabby, shifting bedsit of a young man on the edge" ("Frontier" xiv). Mick works in a library, but during the action of the play he never goes to work, calling in sick. He likes staying in his untidy bed-sit smoking joints and reading the books he has stolen from the library. A number of other characters enter Mick's bed-sit: his girlfriend-to-be, Siobhan, his neighbors, two Mormons[44] determined to convert Mick, and people from the Legion of Mary[45]. During these visits, a number of comic misunderstandings occur adding carnivalesque laughter to the presentation of the place.

Mick attaches great importance to his individuality as expressed by his motto: "I've a life-long aversion to joining anything" (*BL* 160). In this context, he has no nationalistic or religious concerns either. He encapsulates his philosophy of life in

[43] It will be referred to as *Blinded* and in brackets as *BL henceforth.*

[44] Mormonism is a religion started by Joseph Smith in the 1820s as a form of Christian primitivism, a counter-Catholic movement which was affiliated with Protestanism. During the 1830s and 1840s, Mormonism gradually distinguished itself from traditional Protestantism.

[45] The Legion of Mary, founded in Ireland in 1921, is a lay Catholic organization whose voluntary members give service to the Church worldwide (*Concilium of Legionis Mariae*).

this way: “I’m just trying to live my life in my own way in the Independent Republic of Mickonia” (*BL* 162). Mick identifies his worldview with Cynicism, which he explains to Siobhan in the following way:

> The Cynics were the finest philosophers in the ancient world. The name comes from the Greek for Dog, after old Diogenes of Sinope who founded them and was a bit of a dog himself … He used to go around in broad daylight with one of these lit up, trying to find an honest man. Old Diogenes thought we should live without possessions or artificial complications to bind us down, scornful of sexual restraint or social institutions, as free as the dogs in the street. (*BL* 163)

Cynicism “took the form of a rigorously practiced doglike existence, a self-styled and extraordinarily ‘natural’ mode of life” (Davis and Vitanza 133). Diogenes defied all social norms, institutional norms and other dependencies introduced by culture, society and civilization. Diogenes is also accepted as a proponent of the cosmopolitan ethic as he refused all nationalisms. When he was asked where he came from, he said “I am a citizen of the world” (Davis and Vitanza 133). Like Diogenes, Mick’s commitment to Cynicism shows his rejection of subjection to any social restraints or identity categories.

Although Mick puts great emphasis on his privacy, it is often disturbed by neighbors entering his room without permission to ask for drugs, something to eat or to play poker. For instance, in Scene One Siobhan visits Mick’s room for the first time. While Mick is trying to break the ice between them, his neighbor Shay suddenly enters the room, and begins to talk to Mick ignoring Siobhan: “Where have you been till now? Don’t you know you’ve got to be up for the work in the morning?” (*BL* 132). Following Shay, “Bosco, Pascal and Ollie crowd through the door behind (Shay) … Bosco grabs the deck of cards on the beside table and begins to shuffle them. Ollie kneels beside the stereo and begins to pull CDs out over the floor while Pascal wanders past Siobhan to root for food in the presses above the sink” (*BL* 132). Mick exerts great efforts to get them out. He complains about the difficulty in keeping his privacy to Siobhan when she accuses him of being lazy: “I’ve stepped out of that world and you won’t believe how much hard work and vigilance it takes to get people to simply leave me alone” (*BL* 163).

Apart from his friends who sweep into his room with various demands, Mick is also visited by two Mormons, Elder Stanford and Elder Osborne who try to convert him. With their visits Mick's bedsit turns into a carnivalesque mixture of the sacred and the profane. The Mormons believe that Mick is a lonely, misguided person who needs their help to find the right way to God. Mick, on the other hand, tries to convince them that he does not need any religious affiliations. This involves some comic dialogues. For example, Elder Osborne explains that they have knocked on many doors and been turned down before coming to Mick. In order to talk about the difficulty of their mission, he quotes from the Bible, and Mick responds with a quotation from a popular song:

> Elder Osborne. Nobody ever said the work of the Lord was easy. 'In the desert prepare/ The way for the Lord/ Make straight in the wilderness/ A highway for the Lord' Isaiah 40:3.
> Mick. 'Anyone who'se been turned down/ Is bound to be a friend of mine' John Prine[46]. (*BL* 146)

Here, there is a comic confrontation of the religious and the secular. To Mick the biblical quotation is one among many in a world full of words. In such a world, songs interest him more than the religious arguments. Still, the Mormons believe that Mick is not listening to their call because he is frightened to go deep inside his soul. Elder Osborne says, "Often when people turn us away I think it is not to us they are refusing to open their doors but to themselves, not us they are afraid of but their own souls" (*BL* 147). Mick however insists: "I'm actually very happy in my life" (*BL* 156).

Although Mick tries to get rid of the Mormons, he is also "amused at the conversation", as the stage direction suggests (*BL* 147). He enjoys watching their dogged struggles to convert him, remaining wholly unmoved by their efforts. For instance, at the end of their first call, the Mormons give Mick a religious book before they leave. In the next scene, the book is displayed with most of its front cover gone (*BL* 150). Mick uses the book covers to roll a joint. When the Mormons visit Mick next time, they ask him how far he has progressed with the

[46] John Prine is an American Country singer.

book:

> Elder Osborne. How far are you with the first book?
> Mick. I haven't started the back cover yet (*BL* 156).

Here, Mick means that he has only used the front cover to roll a joint, but the Mormons cannot grasp this. Thus, the Mormons' serious efforts are humorously subverted by Mick's profane actions and discourse.

In order to get rid of the Mormons, Mick makes up and talks about sexual adventures with three under-age sisters: "Ah no lads, you've been very good to call in every second night and I'd hate to disillusion you … They were sister, you see … the three of them … Though of course with so much drugs and alcohol and caffeine and tobacco I don't remember much about it" (*BL* 155). He also wears the panties and the bra which Siobhan left in his room to greet them when they visit. Instead of being disappointed in Mick, the Mormons are heartened. They decide that Mick is "the black sheep that the good shepherd seeks" (*BL* 155). To make things more complicated, Mick's landlord wants to save him from the Mormons and sends two of his friends from the Legion of Mary, Jack and Mary. They also intrude in his room and talk to him, baffling him. Jack and Mary try to discredit the Mormons by accusing them of "brainwashing" Mick (*BL* 160). When all these visitors meet in Mick's room- the Mormons and Legion of Mary people together with Mick's neighbors and Siobhan – the carnivalesque atmosphere of the place is complete: The room hosts a diversity of views none of which dominates the others by assuming the role of the single unifying significant meaning.

The combination of the sacred and profane is detectable in *The Passion of Jerome*[47] as well. The play is about Jerome Furlong, a wealthy advertising executive in his late thirties. He is married, but has an affair with his younger

[47] It will be referred to as *The Passion* and in brackets as *PJ* henceforth.

colleague Clara. Jerome and Clara meet in a flat in Ballymun[48], a suburban area in North Dublin, which belongs to Jerome's brother Derek. Jerome, in fact, lives with his wife in Malahide, a coastal suburban place which is considered, a more decent and prestigious area of Dublin than Ballymun. He has a house with a big garden. In Malahide, Jerome leads a relatively sterile life: he "abandoned spirits, wine, then red meat, white meet and cigars even" (*PJ* 12); but in Ballymun, he begins to use the cocaine offered to him by Clara. He says, "[t]hese tower blocks are only meant for fucking in. You couldn't live out here" (*PJ* 4). In this sense, Ballymun epitomizes the places O'Toole describes as places without history where sex and drugs spirited away the authority of the pillars of Irishness that is, land, nationality and Catholicism.

Jerome mentions another characteristic of the place: "We could meet here for decades and no one ever would ever find us" (*PJ* 6). Namely, the flat's neighborhood could be in the middle of nowhere, it is an isolated and neglected area which is inhabited by socially marginalized people. The flat used by Jerome and Clara was rented by Jerome for his brother Derek and Derek's partner. Just before moving in, Derek and his partner decide to go to London to start a new business, but Jerome does not want to give up the flat because he wants to use it for his meetings with Clara. The flat had been vacant for a long time before

[48] Ballymun's history can be traced back to the 1960s. It was a product of the housing crisis and an example of the development without planning. It was built in the period between 1965 and 1969 by the National Building Authority (NBA). When Dublin Corporation endured a number of economic crises, Ballymun faced a serious dereliction. The result of this continuing neglect was a partially completed estate some five or six miles to the north of Dublin city center that lacked the amenities necessary to conduct the daily life. By neglecting their duties to properly manage and service the estate, Dublin Corporation effectively ran the state into decline causing the descent of Ballymun into a sink estate, labelled in the national media as the "nation's biggest black spot" (Boyle184).

The early 1980s were to bring Ballymun's almost fatal collapse. The greatest damage was done in 1985 with the establishment of the national Surrender Grand Scheme. In an effort to encourage greater private ownership of housing in Ireland, this Scheme paid a specific amount of money to citizens who were prepared to move out of the state sector. Almost immediately, most residents of the Ballymun community left the area, including those inemployment and those that served as its leaders. As a result of the operations of the Scheme, many vacant houses became vandalized, and homeless people used them as squats. The estate began to provide a ground for a large proportion of Dublin's antisocial tenants, single parents, single men, and people with mental health problems. (Boyle 184).

Jerome rented it, due to rumors that it is haunted, as related to Jerome by the Caretaker:

> Some years back we'd a suicide here, a fourteen-year-old whose parents went off the rails. Tenants since then, they've tries using his death as an excuse to jump up the housing list. But it doesn't work. There's no try-on the Corpo hasn't heard a thousand times, from poltergeists to termites to outbreaks of plague … This flat should be closed off, boarded up, left alone. (*PJ* 16).

The boy's mother fell from the balcony before his suicide. The Caretaker thinks that she was pushed by her alcoholic husband, because he often heard them quarreling: "What's the thrill some men get from violence? You'd hear him shouting, like he wanted to be overheard. And the boy in between them, begging him to stop" (*PJ* 51). Thus, the boy is presented as one of the victims of poverty, alcoholism and desolation prevailing Ballymun.

Bolger inserts an event of stigmata[49] recalling that of Jesus[50] in such a degraded place. In Scene Three, after one of his meetings with Clara, Jerome sleeps but he wakes up in great agony to find his hands pierced with six-inch nails. Despite medical treatment, his wounds keep reopening. He tells Rita, the woman he meets in the hospital, what he has experienced: "I woke up in McBride Tower around midnight to see a boy in a blue jacket leaning over me, just for the flick of an eyelid. 'Play Jesus for me,' he said. 'Play Jesus.' Then the bastard was gone and there was a burst of pain as nails were hammered into my flesh" (*BL* 30). After news of this event spreads in Ballymun, Jerome is first accepted as a saint, and then cast out by the society. In *Blinded* Bolger mixed the sacred and the profane with the farcical Mormons and the Legion of Mary people constantly pestering the profane Mick, whereas in *The Passion,* he does this by placing the crucifixion story in a contemporary Ballymun context.

After the appearance of his stigmata, characters around Jerome try to find some

[49] Stigmata are wounds that appear on a person's body that resemble the wounds suffered by Jesus Christ during his crucifixion. The most common wounds are marks on the hands and feet resembling puncture holes (Flinn 581).

[50] The word passion in the title strengthens this association. In a Christian context, passion refers to Christ's redemptive suffering, to the last days culminating in his crucifixion (Atkinson 428).

rational explanation for Jerome's situation. Some of them believe that he has been attacked by thugs. For example, Clara implies that in a place like ankruptcy, this is quite possible: "Who attacked you then? Did you go walkabouts around those towers after I left ? You know how dangerous…" (*PJ* 34). Jerome thinks that he himself must have pierced his hands under the influence of cocaine. He first tries to trust his "own eyes…logic…reason" (*PJ* 29), but he fails. In hospital, where he goes to have his wounds treated, he meets a woman called Rita whose granddaughter suffers from cystic fibrosis. Rita is in a desperate situation waiting for a donor organ for her granddaughter. When Jerome relates to Rita what has happened to him, Rita gets excited thinking that his stigmata are a genuine miracle. Jerome refuses to believe anything beyond his logic and reason, however. As he says to Rita: "Mobile phones are miracles, cloned sheep are miracles, Viagra is a miracle for those who need a bloody miracle. Logical miracles but not this" (*PJ* 30).

Although Jerome tends to trust only in his logic and reason, as his hands inexplicably do not stop bleeding he has to accept that there is a world beyond the one with which he is familiar. He has already, in fact, accepted the existence of the supernatural in Act One, Scene Seven, when, alone in the flat, he addresses the ghost: "But the bottom line is that you picked the wrong guy to play Jesus. There's probably some hocus-pocus ritual to send you on your travels, but I just do advertising jingles. So make these ridiculous wounds stop bleeding, then you and I can go back to our own limbos" (*PJ* 42). Jerome struggles to understand and cope with this metaphysical beyond which conflicts with his materialistic sensibility. At this stage, he is reacting against a new situation; later, this will gradually give way to a peaceful acceptance and reconciliation.

Writing with a carnivalesque sensibility, Bolger goes beyond realistic depictions of the city without resorting to a biting social criticism. He creates surreal worlds in which boundaries between life and death and past and present are blurred. In these worlds, grotesque figures related to death transgress the border between life and death, and suggest a sense of instability and uncertainty. In *The Lament*, Arthur is one such grotesque figure. He is already dead, and some

important moments from his earlier life are represented in the play. The audience sees the period between Arthur's returning to Dublin from the Continent and his death. All through the play, it is difficult to discern if Arthur is dead or alive: For the audience watching scenes from Arthur's life, the stage time is the present time, thus Arthur is alive, while for the characters on stage, it is the past time, and thus Arthur is dead. This is implied with Kathy's recitation from her lament for Arthur at the opening of the play:

> I cupped your face in my palms
> To taste life draining from your lips
> And you died attempting to smile
> As defiant and proud as you had lived. (*LAC* 3)

In Kathy's lines**,** Arthur's death is foreshadowed at the very beginning for the audience. In fact, "there remains some vagueness about whether the dead are actually dead or the living actually alive: the World may be the nether World just as much as what surrounds us in our everyday life, or the World may be but a dream" (Dumay, *Dramatic* 204).

Arthur is "the unmasker" of his society in his liminal grotesque situation (Llano 195). His experiences as an outsider disclose the way the Dublin society functions. After Arthur returns to Dublin, he looks for a job but he cannot find one. Deignan who is the local drug baron asks Arthur to work for him (acted out by the Frontier Guard):

> Frontier Guard. Listen to me, Arthur, I don't like to see a school pal down on his luck. I've a lot of business in this block, but it's troublesome, a lot of hassle. Time is money, you know what I mean. I'm too busy to chase it. I could use somebody, someone I could trust, to keep an eye on things for me.
> Arthur. Summer's coming, I'll be busy.
> Frontier Guard. Doing what? Mugging tourists? Cleaning kitchens at three pounds an hour? Listen, I'm not talking anything heavy, Arthur, and the money'd be good…
> Arthur (*cutting in firmly*) Thanks anyway.
> Frontier Guard (sharper) Think about it, Arthur. You'll be a longer time rotting in that flat. It's the best offer you're likely to get. (*LAC* 63)

Arthur rejects him, which leads Deignan to bear a grudge against him. Deignan

repeats his offer a few more times, and finally Arthur, losing his temper, hits Deignan:

> Arthur (*quietly but with menace*) Don't ever address me again, Deignan. Don't ever come near me, don't be on the same landing as me. Ever.
> *Frontier Guard squares up to Arthur as if about to strike him, but suddenly flinches when Arthur blows air into his face. Arthur releases him dismissively.*
> Frontier Guard. You're dead, Cleary, you hear me? And I don't strike the dead, it's not worth the effort. (*LAC* 64)

Soon after this quarrel, Deignan's men beat Arthur to death. As Wald explains, since Arthur did not obey the rules of the newly developed criminal subculture, he was killed (20). His outsider position, his displacement in his hometown and his death caused by his nonconformity unmask the social and economic changes in Dublin society which he has failed to adapt to.

The most drastic examples to Arthur's liminal situation are passport control scenes presented as flashbacks which show parts of Arthur's travelling experiences across Europe. These scenes are repeated many times, with some slight changes. For example, after Kathy's nightmare in the opening of the play and Arthur's efforts to console her, insisting that this is "[their] home and nobody can take it from [them]", there is a rapid change to a passport control scene:

> Frontier Guard. Passport please.
> Arthur (*turning*). Oh, sorry.
> He hands him the passport which the Frontier Guard examines.
> Arthur. Eh, do you mind me asking? Where am I now? Which side of the border, am I on? (5)
> Frontier Guard (*stops and shrugs his soldiers*). What difference to you Irish? I see you people every day, you're going this way, you're going that way, but never home. Either way you're a long way from there. (*LAC* 5)

Arthur's remarks related to home are immediately negated in this scene. The scene is complicated in the sense that its location is not specified; even Arthur himself does not know on which side of the border he is, nor do we know where the border is. The Frontier Guard emphasizes Arthur's nomadic situation: he is crossing borders between European countries and there is no distinct place to call

home any more. This is also suggested by the Porter in the same passport control scene:

> Arthur. What difference does it make? (*He looks up and down*.) Another limbo of tracks and warehouses. Could be anywhere. (*He gives a half laugh*.) Except home.
> Porter (*shining the torch directly at his face*). How can you leave a place when you're carrying it round inside you, Arthur? And how can you go back? Because after a time you can only go there in your mind. Because when you go back you can feel…the distance, eh? The big town just a squalid village, the big man…what's you call him…a crock of shit. You say nothing, but you know and…wait till you see Arthur … (*LAC* 6)

Arthur believes that he will overcome his displaced position when he is at home. The Porter on the other hand, implies the impossibility of this. He actually implies that Arthur carries a home around with him, inside his head, and that the home in his head will not resemble the place it refers to. There will be always a gap between what is imagined and what actually is.

These border scenes further blur the line between life and death. Borders in the play are not merely liminal zones between European countries, they are also those separating life from death (Pelletier, "Dermot Bolger" 250). In some border scenes, it is not clear if the Frontier Guard is a real person or a figure from the other world to take Arthur there. For instance, in another of the passport control scenes the following dialogue takes place:

> Arthur…What country have I come from? I can't remember! I can't! Which one?
> Frontier Guard. One you cannot return to. (*LAC* 58)

Here, though the Frontier Guard's remark is ambiguous, it somehow evokes the idea that Arthur is dead, and he will not be back again. Arthur's confused mind also supports this idea. This situation is made more explicit in Arthur's final dialogue with the Frontier Guard:

> Frontier Guard. It is the border, Irish.
> Arthur. Which border? Where am I?
> Frontier Guard. Don't you know by now?
> Arthur (*thinks, then quietly*) This is it, isn't it… as far as you take me.

Frontier Guard. You catch on faster than most. (*LAC* 66)

This dialogue is highly suggestive of a death scene. As Merriman suggests as the play develops, the menacing significance and the gathering juxtapositions of the repeated border crossings become familiar being an enactment not only of exile, and of tragic return, but of a scene foretelling the death of Arthur (249).

Although death dominates the play and its title, the tone of *The Lament* is not elegiac. Kathy grieves for Arthur's death, but the play does not turn into her lament. In the last scene, Arthur learns from the Frontier Guard that although Kathy has been mourning, she goes on her life. She has got married and given birth to children:

> Frontier Guard. So many trains run through here, day and night, in all directions, all times, coming and going.
> Arthur (*eyes following an unseen train.)* Who's one on that one? Where's it going?
> Frontier Guard. Europe…The future…Her children.
> Arthur. Not mine.
> Frontier Guard (*smiles*) Life goes on, you pick the pieces up. Would you have had her put on black and spin out her life in mourning? (*LAC* 67)

Kathy has realized her dream of leaving Dublin after Arthur's death. She is now somewhere in Europe with her children, and she is taking her part in the diasporic population.

Although Kathy starts a new life, the Frontier Guard informs Arthur that Arthur keeps intruding into her dreams. He wants Arthur to "let her go" (*LAC* 67). Arthur consents: "I was always clinging on. Never able to change. (Silence.) It's not easy. I'm scared" (*LAC* 68). The play ends with his last words, "let go" (*LAC* 68). This last moment suggests that Arthur accepts to loosen and perhaps get rid of "the bonds and ties that are keeping him in limbo" (Pelletier "Dermot Bolger 251). In this sense, his death liberates Arthur while it is transforming and life-creating for Kathy.

The border between life and death is blurred in *The Passion* as well. This is done by means of the ghost that dominates the play. Death has a similar liberating power in *The Passion* as it has in *The Lament*. In Act Two, Scene Seven, Jerome

accepts Rita's offer and prays for her granddaughter at her bedside. Nevertheless, the girl dies. Jerome cannot save the girl, but death is liberating for the girl; she dies peacefully having told her grandmother: "I saw a man, Gran. I had a dream . . . this lovely piebald horse came galloping down from the standing stones on the slope. Galloping towards me, with great friendly eyes. And he was upon it, Gran, some man with blood soaking from his hands…he says, … 'It's all right to let go this pain if you want'" (*PJ* 85).

Ultimately, the metaphysical experience of Jerome liberates him. He decides to change his life, he confesses his infidelity to his wife, and at the very end of the play he tells his brother that he wants "[t]o start again as [himself]" (*PJ* 88). He understands that he does not have supernatural powers to save anyone, but he has the power to change his own life. The beyond he has encountered creates a "carnivalesque sense of a possibility of being something other than what one is; as a dissimulation of authentic identities or a disarray of accepted roles" (Jordan, *From Leenane* 33). Bolger, by blurring the line between life and death, designs Ballymun as a paradoxical place, a world of intense emotional realism as much as a fantasized one (Dumay, "Ballymun" 283). In this way, by putting emphasis on fluidity, change and disorder he subverts the rhetorical seriousness and dogmatism of the nationalist narratives.

3.3 Conclusion

In the plays of McDonagh and Bolger, Ireland and Irishness in relation to the concept of land are rendered unstable in their postnational rejection of coherence, unity and stability. Both playwrights problematize the idea that a particular place can represent a unified and coherent national identity. The two playwrights' approaches and methods of subversion are, however, different. McDonagh challenges the idealized images of the Irish West in his representation of Leenane as a postmodern pastiche and as a dark, ominous and lawless place. He brings together images from earlier Abbey plays and from the globalized pop culture. Leenane may still be an isolated town, but it is constantly bombarded by

globalized media. The analysis of Leenane as a postmodern pastiche shows that the identification of a particular place as a symbol of national identity proves to be ineffectual in the face of global integration. Leenane is a postnational space between the local and the global, where allegiances and affinities become fluid and fragmented. It is a space, as Lisa Fitzpatrick defines, in between the endlessly contested yet secure Irish identity of the past and the threatening chaos of an increasingly globalized world (171).

The analysis of the Gothic elements in the representation of Leenane has also been analyzed in order to reveal the dark, gloomy and confining world of Leenane, which are extended through destructive relationships between its inhabitants. These elements destroy nationalist certainties by representing the Irish as monstrous, vicious and immoral and by creating ambiguity, uncertainty and disharmony, which are important elements in a postnationalist representation of place. In this context, McDonagh questions the nationalist exaltation of the Irish peasant life as well.

Bolger, on the other hand, concentrates on suburban areas of Dublin. He brings together conflicting voices from different, and particularly marginalized layers of the society, thereby offering a fresh look at the urban and suburban experience. As Kaluhiokalani argues, the postnationalist sensibility offers a "beyond space" outside the political sphere in an attempt to give articulation to those that cannot speak in the political world (51). This postnationalist sensibility has been explored within the context of some implications of the notion of carnivalesque that are detected in Bolger's plays. In these plays, Dublin transforms into a carnivalesque space in which the sacred and the profane, past and present and life and death intermingle. Representing the city in this way, Bolger challenges the possibility of using an ordered and simplified vision of the city, and a unified, single and homogeneous society to define Irishness in the urban context.

McDonagh and Bolger also make references to Irish diasporic experiences. As Smith notes, the nationalist ideal of unity encouraged the concepts of the indivisibility of the nation, and therefore "[n]ationals outside the homeland were deemed to be 'lost', and the lands they inhabited, especially those contiguous to

the homeland, were ‘unredeemed’ and had to be recovered and ‘redeemed’” (*National Identity* 75). The diasporic experiences represented by McDonagh and Bolger imply their postnationalist perspectives that Ireland is both everywhere and nowhere – a notion that links psychological and geographical spaces around the world (Jones 13). McDonagh portrays contemporary Ireland as uninhabitable and its people as aimless wanderers (Diehl 110). Bolger, on the other hand, embraces the diasporic experience as a liberation rather than a loss as in the case of Kathy.

CHAPTER 4

RELIGION

In the formation of the Irish nationalist agenda, another forceful element is religion, that is to say, Roman Catholicism. Although nationalism, when defined as a product of modernity, is typically depicted as a secular ideology, it has long existed in Ireland in a religious context (White n.pag.). E. O'Brien argues that epistemologies of religion and nationalism are in fact not that different. Religions like nationalisms are usually founded on faith, as opposed to reason; and faith like nationalism can lead people to believe that they are mystically connected to each other and to the past in some form of communion. In terms of binding a people to their image of themselves, the epistemologies of nationalism and religion hold much in common (100).

Religious identity has long been an essential component of Irish nationalism in creating and preserving a sense of unity and belonging among the people. The Irish were known as devoted Catholics even before the establishment of the Republic, but during the nation-making process Catholicism took on a new meaning: it was transformed into "a nationality as much as a religion" (O'Toole, *Black Hole* 123). John Littleton observes that "[u]ntil the final decades of the 20th century nobody questioned the coupling of the terms Irish and Catholic" (n.pag.). Before moving on to the implications of the close relation between Catholicism and nationalism in Irish theatre, some brief information will be provided about the characteristics of Catholicism that are alluded to in the plays analyzed.

There are three basic elements characterizing the core of Catholicism: universality, tradition and sacramentality. Universality refers to the idea that Catholic doctrine is supposed to be directed to the whole of humanity, an idea

originating from the belief that "Christ died on the Cross for the salvation of the whole human race" (Littleton n.pag.). Therefore, Catholics uphold the universality of the redemption offered to humankind (Flinn 543). The second characteristic, tradition, consists of age-old Christian practice, liturgical devotion, the canon of the lives of the saints, and the writings of great Catholic thinkers. Tradition is supposed to secure the continuity and wholeness of Christ's teachings into the future. Catholics assume that the preservation of the tradition is entrusted to the Church (Thiel 3). Sacramentality is the third aspect of Catholicism. Catholicism is deeply sacramental in its belief that created, finite and material reality is revelatory of the divine and communicates God's presence and activity on our behalf (Wood 340). Catholics expect to discover God's presence in their daily lives by means of sacramental signs. The Church is one of the sacramental signs, which is often described as the sacrament of salvation, the sign of God's salvation to the world (Littleton n.pag.).

In addition to these basic elements, the cult of saints and canonization or sanctification is another feature of Catholicism. "Canonization is the definitive proclamation by which the pope, in the name of the church, declares a beatified deceased person to be a saint who is believed to have entered into eternal glory with God and the other saints, and who may receive a public cult throughout the entire church" (Flinn 122). In Catholic ritual practice, Catholics pray to the saints as members of Christ's mystical body (the "Church"), believing that, unlike ordinary people, the saints are already in full communion with Christ (Buckley 381).

Catholics express their devotion to God and their veneration of saints in a variety of ways, some of which are ritually prescribed in the official Catholic book of prayers and ceremonies. They include making the sign of the cross, bowing, sprinkling or dabbing with holy water, and bestowing blessings. The most common Catholic religious practice is the sign of the cross, often accompanied by the phrase, "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit". Catholics may also hang a crucifix above their beds. Crucifixes are crosses which have the corpus (body) of Jesus on them to represent the historical

crucifixion of Jesus. Catholics use the crucifix in church for public worship or in their homes for personal piety. It is supposed to point to the fact that Jesus really and actually did die a horrible death to save them from their sins (Trigilio and Brighenti 322). Catholics may keep various statues, pictures, and images of the Blessed Virgin Mary and other saints displayed prominently in their houses (Flinn 227-8).

4.1 Catholicism in the Irish Context

Catholicism's bond with Ireland and Irishness dates back to ancient times. Catholic Irish priests converted much of England and Wales in the fifth century. After the Reformation, Catholicism was largely accepted by the Irish as their characteristic attribute distinguishing them from the Protestant English. Catholicism thus turned into a symbol of the Irish way of life whereas Protestantism was seen as an alien force, a part of the process of British conquest and imperialism (McCaffrey, "Components" 527).

The Catholic clergy's power in Ireland was reinforced during the Great Famine. The Famine hit the rural population of Ireland, the majority of which was Catholic, and the Church took a consoling and supportive role on the part of the victims of this disaster. Thus, a strong bond was established between the Catholic clergy and the people against the common dangers and hardships arising from the Famine. Depending on this alliance, the Church began to extend its domination over the social and political life of the Irish during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Littleton n.pag.).

The clergy also took an active part in the establishment of the republic and in the subsequent nation-building process. Many of the Gaelic Revivalists were priests; the clerical proponents of the Gaelic Revival equated the political struggle between England and Ireland with the religious struggle between Protestant and Catholic (E. O'Brien 114). After the establishment of the Irish Free State, the Church also exerted great influence over government decisions. O'Toole argues that "in Ireland where political nationality was often tenuous and submerged, the Church became a kind of surrogate State, the only organized and institutionalized

expression of nationality" (*Black Hole* 123). Ireland was openly declared a Catholic nation in de Valera's St. Patrick Day speech of 1935. De Valera asked for the collaboration of the Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid, in writing the 1937 Constitution. This Constitution proclaimed the special position of the Catholic Church as guardian of the Faith in Ireland. It manifested most of the Church's teachings concerning family, marriage and social responsibility, and fulfilled the clergy's desire to preserve a viable rural community that linked national concerns with Catholic social principles (White n.pag.).

In addition to its formative function in the political area, the Church was involved in social areas such as education, health and social welfare. In relation to the Church's dominance over an ordinary Irish person's life, O'Toole observes:

> An Irish person was, and is likely to be born in a Catholic hospital, educated at Catholic schools, married in a Catholic church, have children named by a priest, be counselled by Catholic marriage advisors if the marriage runs into trouble, be dried out in Catholic clinics for the treatment of alcoholism if he or she develops a drink problem, be operated in Catholic hospitals, and be buried by Catholic rites. The "cradle to grave" attention of European social welfare systems was created in Ireland by the Church. (*Black Hole* 125)

The Irish Church effectively eliminated the British government's attempts to establish a secular education system in Ireland. It constructed its own mass education system under the control of religious brothers and nuns (O'Toole, *Black Hole* 125). The vast majority of primary schools and almost all reformatories and orphanages were under the control of the Church (Bartlett 251). It also founded its own universities and hospitals.

In Ireland, the Church extended its control over private and familial life as well. It provided the ideological basis for sexual repression, which was to become the norm in Ireland until the 1960s. Sexual activity without a marriage license was considered to be sinful, dirty and disgusting; it was tolerated only in marriage and even then only for the procreation of children. Divorce was banned in 1925, and the sale of contraceptives was banned following the 1937 Constitution. (McGarry n.pag.). Homosexual practices were seen as crimes. In addition to these

repressions of sexuality, a censor was appointed to prohibit those books and films that were considered to be subversive of public morality.

Its quasi-monopoly over the political and social life of Ireland made Catholicism an inseparable part of the Irish social identity. Inglis argues that what makes Ireland different is this religious identity, and being religious did not become compartmentalized and separated from the rest of social, political and economic life ("The Religious Field" 112). Inglis further states that being a good Catholic almost ensured social and occupational success, maintaining class position, attaining political power and gaining social respect ("The Religious Field" 118-19). This also implies that people's affiliation with the Church was reinforced by not only religious causes but also practical reasons.

By the mid-1960s, however, the significance of religious identity and the importance of being a good Catholic were declining as a result of secularization, globalization and the increasing significance of other forms of social and personal identities (Inglis, "The Religious Field" 112). Ireland could not avoid the influences of globalization and the values it brought, values like liberal individualism, materialism and secularism. Ireland joined the European Economic Community, currently known as the European Union, in 1973. Joining the EU and the establishment of multinational companies also made Ireland "less myopic, more international and more affluent" (Dantanus 289). The introduction of a new, Europe-sponsored, international dimension led to the partial loss or dissolution of some monolithic concepts and of some of values associated with traditional Ireland, one of them being the dominance of Catholic ideals (Dantanus 268).

As a result of these various social and political developments, mass attendance has declined 10 per cent per decade since the 1970s and there is less belief in such core Catholic concepts as the existence of hell and Satan, and the infallibility of Papal teaching (Inglis, "Catholic Church" 47–8). Following the dissolution of the strictly religious society, by the 1990s divorce became legal, homosexuality was decriminalized and, while abortion remained illegal, access to information about abortion was made available (Parker 8).

In spite of all the eroding influences of socio-political developments, globalization and secularization, the Church in Ireland retained its legacy up to the 1990s. The 1990s were traumatic for the Church as a result of a series of scandals which afflicted it (Barber 287). It was revealed in 1992 that Eammon Casey, the Bishop of Galway, had secretly fathered a child in the 1970s, and helped support the child with Church funds. In 1994 a Dublin priest died in a gay sauna, while in the same year Father Brendan Symth's child abuses came to the fore. In 1995 Father Michael Cleary, who had used his own radio show and newspaper column to promote his extreme conservatism in relation to celibacy and matters of sexual morality, was revealed to have had a child with his house-keeper (Paul Murphy, "The Stage Irish" n.pag.). These and similar scandals damaged the Church's prestige and undermined its earlier status as the most reliable institution in the country.

The diminishing power of Catholic values and the Church do not, after all, attest to the Irish people having totally dissociated themselves from religion. Inglis explains that "[t]he proportion of Roman Catholics has not changed significantly between 1861 (89 per cent) and 2002 (88 per cent). And while there have been some important socio-cultural changes during the years since 1991, which coincided with a period of sustained economic growth, the overall picture is of little substantial change" (Inglis, "The Religious Field" 122). However, as Inglis further argues, affiliation with a particular faith does not tell us anything about the level of attachment or emotional sense of belonging that people feel. Many Irish Catholics accept the fundamental tenets of the faith, but an increasing number rarely or never attend church rituals and disregard some of the church's basic moral teachings ("The Religious Field" 123). Catholicism does not act as a definitive and controlling force in Irish people's lives any more. According to Littleton, Ireland since the late 1980s has become a post-Catholic country. It is the country of Celtic Tiger rather than the land of saints and religious scholars (n.pag.).

4.2 Catholicism and Irish Theatre

The changing relationship between Irishness and Catholicism can be traced in the history of the Irish theatre as well. Farrelly states that "Irish writers since the turn of the twentieth century have dramatized overwhelming faith through characters who rely on God for answers to oppression, violence, and death" (33). Even the plays of Yeats and Lady Gregory, who came from Anglican families, had religious subtexts, embodying the Catholic tropes of sacrifice and resurrection blended with Celtic pagan elements. The plays of Synge (who was also brought up as a Protestant) included many references to "the will of God"[51]. White notes that although Irish cultural nationalism was mainly formalized by the Protestant Ascendancy, the Catholic identity served as a means of organizing the lower strata of society around the goal of the defining of the nation (n.pag.).

Religious elements in the earlier Irish plays suggested "despair and suffering … invoking God to come and save the people of Ireland" (Farrelly 47). Until the 1960s, Irish playwrights reflected their perceptions of Irish Catholic faith without parodying or overtly criticizing it. In the 1960s, as a result of the impact of modernization on a traditionally conservative society, the treatment of religion in Irish theatre changed dramatically. This period was mainly marked by criticisms of the Church: playwrights like Friel and Murphy engaged in exposing what they considered to be the stifling effects of religion on people.

Joanna Meyer emphasizes that most of Friel's characters are in some way entangled with the impositions of Catholicism from a very early age. The conflict between the forces of a rigid Irish Catholicism and human indulgence creates tension in Friel's work (n.pag.). For example, his 1967 play *Lovers,* which is divided into two parts called *Winners* and *Losers,* focuses on two couples, one defying Catholic impositions and the one submitting to these impositions. *Winners* is about Joe and Maggie who are 17-year-old lovers. Joe and Maggie have premarital sex, and Maggie is expecting a baby. Consequently, they are expelled from their Catholic schools, but what is suggested is that they find true

[51]For example, see *The Playboy of the Western World* pp. 19, 69, 76, 77.

happiness and freedom after this. *Losers*, on the other hand, is about two older lovers, Hanna and Andy, who try to have a relationship out of wedlock confronting the protests of Hanna's devoutly Catholic mother Mrs. Wilson and their neighbor Cissy. At the end, Hanna and Andy have to get married but they lose their love. As seen in these examples, Friel's characters find happiness and freedom as long as they deviate from Catholic impositions. They otherwise live in harmony with society, but at the cost of losing their personal hapiness.

The end of the 1980s heralded a new period in Irish drama in terms of the representation of faith and religion. In this period, most Irish playwrights aimed to go beyond representations of the conflict between religion and modernity, of the repressive influences of Catholicism or of the criticism of the Church. They chose, rather, to focus on the fact that religion does not function in contemporary Ireland as it used to do. E. Jones argues that whereas modern societies were characterized by feelings of alienation, isolation and solitude, in postmodern societies the self may be too fragmented to feel such deep emotions. In such a world, people are said to live unthinkingly and without meaning. Similarly, surfaces are said to take precedence over depth, while images and appearances prevail over substance (27). In this sense, many writers in the 1990s reflected the loss of such deeper feelings and the sense of indifference to the weakening of religion.

The Celtic Tiger period saw the promotion of values associated with late capitalism such as competitive individualism, consumerism and material success. Ireland became more globalized and materialistic, and less spiritual, and Catholicism has lost its capacity to define this society (Pelletier, "New Articulations" 98). The lost bond between Irishness and Catholicism is made evident in the plays of McDonagh and Bolger. These playwrights attempt to show that religion is no longer influential in Irish people's lives although it still continues to exist. In this way, they eliminate another constituent of Irishness, along with land. They thus problematize "narrow conceptions of Irishness", which leads to another step in their postnationalist representation of Ireland (Nordin and Llena 8).

As in the case of land, McDonagh and Bolger, while subverting religious elements, adopt different modes and methods. McDonagh's Leenane society is the epitome of a product of what Jameson specifies as the postmodern condition. In this society, "the deep underlying materiality of all things has finally risen dripping and convulsive into the light of day with the extinction of the sacred and the spiritual" (Jameson, *Late Capitalism* 66). Bolger also dwells on the loss of spirituality, but unlike McDonagh he does not linger on it; he tries to show the possibility, in a society characterized by a dominant spiritual depthlessness, of faith and spirituality, but without being trapped by the restrictions of religion.

4.3 McDonagh's Godless Leenane

> Father Welsh: It seems like God has no jurisdiction in this town.
> No jurisdiction at all.
> (*LW* 134)

McDonagh was raised Catholic, and attended primary and secondary schools run by priests (Pocock 62). Although Catholicism was an integral part of his childhood identity, he rejected the faith early in life, as he noted, dissatisfied by "details of the doctrine that didn't seem quite right, as well as not being bothered to leave an hour of every week to go to church" (qtd in. O'Toole, "Martin McDonagh" 66). He further noted:

> I didn't see it [Catholicism] as important when I was growing up because I didn't think about it, like you don't think about being white when you're growing up, being white is just something that's there. It's only in the process of rejecting something that you think about why you were brought up that way in the first place. (qtd in. O'Toole, "Martin McDonagh" 66)

Similarly, it seems that in the Leenane of his plays, the townspeople reject, though thoughtlessly, their bondage to Catholicism. They lead spiritually shallow and materialistic lives. Catholic elements continue to exist but only on a level of symbols, words and icons which do not have any transcendental meaning. The Catholicism of these plays is a religion emptied of its spiritual substance,

resembling the authentic Catholicism of the past but only in appearance. Thus, the status of religion in Leenane can be efficiently explored through Baudrillard's theorizing of hyperreality and simulacra.

Baudrillard calls the postmodern era the "era of simulation" (*Simulacra* 6). According to him, there are three orders of simulation. First-order simulation is in fact the representation of what is considered to be real. A painting or a map can be given as examples of first-order simulation. This order is associated with the premodern period. In second-order simulation, the representation goes one step further, and it masks and perverts a profound reality. In this case, the representation and reality can no longer be discerned, so that the representation becomes, in a sense, as real as the real. To put it another way, the boundaries between reality and representation are blurred (*Simulacra* 2). According to Baudrillard, this second order in fact corresponds to the industrial era. Obviously, for the first and second order simulations, a reality still exists.

Baudrillard further states that we now live in a different order of simulation where there is no real to imitate. "It is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody" (*Simulacra* 4). In this case, simulation does not simply refer to an imitation of a reality but to a situation where the reality does not count at all, and where simulacra function instead of reality. Baudrillard calls this third order the "hyperreal", that is, "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality" (*Simulacra* 2). In third order simulation, there is no confusion between reality and representation as in the case of second-order simulation. There is, rather, a detachment from both of these (Lane 86). In hyperreality "it is all of metaphysics that is lost", which means that there is no "beyond" but only simulacra (*Simulacra* 3).

In *Simulacra and Simulacrum*, Baudrillard mentions some favoured terrains of simulation, like medicine and the army. In addition, he also refers to the simulacrum of divinity, suggesting that the divinity is multiplied in simulacra when it reveals itself in icons. In this case, what is incarnated in images as a visible theology does not represent an idea of a supreme power any more. In

another work, Baudrillard continues this line of thought, arguing that the masses now retain only the image of God, not the "Idea" (*The Shadow* 7).

When analyzed in the light of Baudrillard's arguments, in *The Leenane Trilogy* Catholicism- represented by words, images, rituals and Father Welsh, the local priest – seems to appear and function as simulacrum of God and Jesus. The townspeople are "extraordinarily crude, vulgar, un-Christian, uncharitable people" though their lives are surrounded with religious motifs (Pilny, "Martin McDonagh" 225). Three major imperatives of the Old Testament are violated in the seemingly religious Leenane society:

> Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain. (*English Standard Version,* Ex. 20.7)
> Thou shalt not kill. (Ex. 20.13)
> Thou shalt not steal. (Ex. 20.15)

In *Lonesome West,* Father Welsh sadly points out this situation while he is chatting with Valene: "I'm a terrible priest, and I run a terrible parish, and that's the end of the matter. Two murderers I have on me books, and I can't get either of the beggars to confess to it. About betting on the horses and impure thoughts is all them bastards ever confess" (*LW* 135). Here, Father Welsh refers to Maureen's murder of her mother, Coleman's murder of his father and the moral corruption prevailing among townspeople. Further analysis will provide more examples of biblical violations.

The main indoor settings of the plays in the trilogy include crucifixes, as specified in their opening stage directions (*BQL* 1, *SC* 63, *LW* 129). As Trigilio and Brighenti put it the crucifix reminds believers not only that Christ died, but that they, too, must "die to self"; their ego must perish so that in its place Christ can reign (323). As part of a stereotypical Irish cottage, the crucifix is expected to suggest a religious society, which is, however, not the case for McDonagh's Leenane. Christ does not seem to reign in Leenane's cottages. Characters are actually cruel, selfish and inconsiderate, and they refuse to obey the rules of any of the moral control systems, religion being one of them. Nor do they accept Christ as a moral compass. Thus, the crucifix indicates that its referent is no longer meaningful to the people; the people ignore the religious reference and the

crucifix has become a simulacrum. Pocock suggests that the existence of crucifixes in the main characters' cottages "highlights the ironic contrast between the characters' profound cruelty and the often superstitious remnants of their religious beliefs" (62). To illustrate, in *A Skull,* while Mary and Mick are having a casual chat in Scene One, Mary reproaches students for cursing on the streets. At one point the conversation turns to Jesus:

> Mick. Mary, you're too old-fashioned, so you are. Who doesn't curse nowadays.
> Mary. I don't.
> Mick. "You don't".
> …
> Mary. I'll tell you someone else who doesn't curse. (*Pointing to the crucifix*.) That man doesn't curse. (*SC* 64-5)

This conversation suggests that Mary is a devout Catholic, and that she follows Jesus's lead in her life. As the play unfolds, however, it appears that Jesus does not mean more to Mary than an image on a crucifix.

In Leenane God is reduced to the level of words without substance. The frequent use of the phrase "against God" gives another false impression of the townspeople's religious sincerity. When a character does not approve of another character's behavior, he or she says that it is against God. Ironically, those who use the phrase themselves act against God's so-called orders in one way or another. For instance, in *A Skull,* Thomas uses the phrase when Mairtin curses in the graveyard:

> Mairtin. A back-fecking-hander the fecker gave me, you fecking bastard ya!
> *Mick and Thomas laugh*.
> Mairtin. What the feck are yous laughing for, you feckers you?
> Thomas. Stop cursing now, Mairtin. Not in the graveyard. Against God so it is. (*SC* 91)

Mairtin is cursing because he was slapped by Father Welsh for committing profanity by asking him if it is against Catholicism to bury bodies with genitals still attached. This question in fact refers to a joke made by Mick when Mairtin asked him about the genitals of the corpses:

> Mairtin. Where does your thing go? When you die, I mean. None of them have had their things at all. And I've looked.
> ...
> Mick. Do you really not know where they go? Have you never been told?
> Mairtin. No.
> …
> Mick. Isn't it illegal in the Catholic faith to bury a body the willy still attached? Isn't it a sin in the eyes of the Lord?
> Mairtin (*incredulous*). No... (*SC* 86)

Thus, Mick uses irreverence to fool Mairtin. When Thomas learns that Mairtin naively believed Mick he teases him by calling him "thick as five thick fellas" (*SC* 90). Mairtin is offended by their insulting attitudes so he also swears at them. Instead of criticizing Mick for his profanity and for misguiding Mairtin about a religious matter, Thomas scolds Mairtin for cursing in the graveyard, which, he thinks, is against God. However, he does not consider Mick's joke as against God. This is a good example of characters' distorted perception of religious value judgements and of these judgments operating on just the level of words.

Mick's profanity in his explanation about the corpses' missing genitals:

> Mick. Don't they snip them off in the coffin and sell them to tinkers as dog food.
> Mairtin (horrified). They do not!
> Mick. And during the famine, didn't the tinkers stop feeding them to their dogs at all and start sampling the merchandise themselves?
> Mairtin. They did not, now, Mick...
> Mick. That's the trouble with young people today, is they don't know the first
> thing about Irish history. (*SC* 86-7)

Here Mick makes up a church tradition which did not actually exist, exploiting Mairtin's indifference to and ignorance of religious matters. The Church does not symbolize a higher authority for Mick and thus he can make it the subject of his impertinent humour.

God is absent in Leenane although his name is often mentioned. This situation is again lamented by Father Welsh, while he is talking with Valene about the murders in the town:

> Welsh. What can I do, sure, if the courts and the polis…

> Valene. Courts and the polis me arse. I heard the fella you represent was of a higher authority than the courts and the fecking polis.
>
> Welsh (*sadly*). I heard the same thing, sure I must've heard wrong. It seems like God has no jurisdiction in this town. No jurisdiction at all. (*LW* 134)

What is striking here is that God is being declared absent by a priest. Valene was being quite ironic, saying that God is expected to be a higher authority than the courts and the polis; but God has evidently no authority at all in Leenane, as recognized by even a man of God.

In the trilogy, the Church and its particular teachings are also nothing but simulacra of Catholicism. As already emphasized, the Church is one of the sacramental signs in Catholicism, being the representative of the Kingdom of God on earth. In McDonagh's Leenane, however, this Kingdom has no God to be represented. There are regular churchgoers and those who do not go to church; but there is hardly any difference between their moral standings. In *A Skull,* Mary is a regular churchgoer, and in Scene One she mentions Mick her fondness for confession to Mick. Upon this, the following dialogue develops:

> Mick. What the Hell sins do you have to confess to him every week anyways?
>
> Mary. What sins do you confess would be more in your line.
>
> Mick (*playfully*). What would it be, now? It wouldn't be impure thoughts? Ah no. It must be "Thou shalt not steal" so.
>
> Mary. How, "Thou shalt not steal"?
>
> Mick. Oh, cadging off the Yanks a pound a throw the maps the Tourist Board asked you to give them for free. Telling them your Liam's place was where *The Quite Man* was filmed, when wasn't it a hundred miles away in Ma'am Cross or somewhere…John Wayne photos, two pounds a pop. Maureen O'Hara drank out of this mug- a fiver…So if it's not cadging off them thicks you confess it must be playing the ten books the bingo, so.
>
> …
>
> Mary (*smiling*) I don't play ten books the bingo.
>
> Mick. Oh, the Country could round up a hundred witnesses would tell you the differ, 'cos twenty year it's been going on now. (*SC* 66-7)

This dialogue is telling in terms of the function of the Church in people's lives. Mary goes to confession regularly which gives the impression that she is worried

about being punished by God. She is, however, devious, dishonest and manipulative. In the quotation, Mick ironically refers to the things committed by Mary, things which are against biblical teachings. First of all, she defies a very basic instruction of the Bible: "Thou shalt not steal". As Mick reveals, she makes money dishonestly: she deceives tourists by selling them the maps which are to be given free, she misrepresents an ordinary place as a place where a famous film was shot, and she pawns an ordinary mug off on tourists as Maureen O'Hara's[52]. Moreover, she illegally plays ten books at bingo while the general limit is four books. Obviously, going to church and confession are only routine activities for her. To put it in a Baudrillardian context, she is not affected by the idea of God, nor by anguish over sin and personal salvation. She is only enchanted by the ritual itself.

Provoked by Mick's list of her sins, Mary tries to counterattack by reminding him that he has not even been in a church for seven years:

> Mary. Well on the subject of confession, now, Mick Dowd. How long is it since you've seen the priest? Seven and a half years, is it, Mick?
> Mick. Eh?
> Mary. Seven and a half ... (*SC* 66-7)

What matters for Mary is just going or not going to church; she disregards what it offers spiritually or morally. Farrelly states that Mary might be quick to parrot the traditional position of the Church, but she does not let it interfere with her materialist interests. Selling free maps may not be Christian, but it makes good business sense to Mary (57). When church-goers perform religious rituals for the sake of the ritual only and with no spiritual involvement, the Church is transformed into "a hollow spectacle" (Walters 68).

Morality is reduced to the repression of sexuality in the understanding of the people of Leenane. The Church's teachings on sexuality are still held, particularly by elder characters. For instance, in *The Beauty Queen,* Mag reproaches Maureen for accepting Pato's invitation to dance:

> Mag. Young girls should not be out gallivanting with fellas...!

[52]An Irish film actress and singer.

> Maureen. Young girls! I am forty years old, for feck's sake! Finish it!
> ...
> Maureen. ...'Young girls out gallivanting'. I've heard it all now. What have I ever done but kissed two men the past forty year?
> Mag. Two men is plenty.
> …
> Maureen. Do you think I like being stuck up here with you? Eh? Like a dried up oul...
> Mag. Whore! (*BQL* 15)

Mag labels her daughter a whore because she has openly mentioned her sexual need. Mary in *A Skull* is similar to Mag in her perception of sexual behaviour. In Scene One, while chatting with Mick, she condemns the students she sees on the streets for being immoral:

> Mary (*pause*). Didn't the boys and girls go back to school, and stopped parading up and down the street like…like a pack of whores.
> Mick (*pause*). Who's like a pack o' whores?
> Mary. Them schoolies parading up and down.
> Mick. I wouldn't say a pack o' whores, now.
> Mary. Kissing. (*SC* 64)

As is seen, elderly people seem to stick to some teachings of the Church, like those on sexuality when criticizing other people, but they ignore other teachings in their own lives. Mag and Mary are actually the most manipulative and corrupt characters in Leenane. While Mary is gambling, cheating people and circulating gossip in the town, Mag is tormenting Maureen psychologically, and she tells lies when it is in for her own interest, too. For instance, when Ray entrusts her with Pato's letter inviting Maureen to accompany him to Boston, she vows to give it to Maureen without reading it:

> Ray. And may God strike you dead if you do open it?
> Mag. And may God strike me dead if I do open it, only He'll have no need to strike me dead because I won't be opening it. (*BQL* 41)

In spite of this oath, she opens the letter and reads it, and then gets rid of it in order to prevent Maureen from accepting the invitation. Her oath evidently does not hold any value for her. The way that Mag and Mary are involved in religion

represents the universal characteristic of a post-ideological universe, as Žižek defines it in accordance with Baudrillard, where "we perform our symbolic mandates without assuming them and taking them seriously" (69).

Mag and Mary, the oldest characters of the trilogy, may be placed at one end of a spectrum in terms of their enjoyment of religion as an empty signifier which does not refer to a transcendental being. At the other end are Ray, Mairtin and Girleen, the youngest characters, with their total ignorance of, and indifference to faith and religion. As was the case in the youth of McDonagh himself, Catholicism, for a certain period, was a part of their childhood identities, but, it was something which they never pondered over deeply. When they grow older, they dissociate themselves from religion. While Ray is chatting with Mag in Scene Two, Mag asks Ray about his involvement in the church choir:

> Mag. All right now, Ray. Are you still in the choir nowadays, Ray?
> Ray. I am not in the choir nowadays. Isn't it ten years since I was in the choir?
> Mag. Doesn't time be flying.
> Ray. Not since I took an interest in girls have I been in the choir because you do get no girls in choirs, only fat girls and what use are they? No, I go to discos, me. (*BQL* 11-2)

A similar dialogue takes place in Scene One of *A Skull*:

> Mairtin. Father Walsh or Welsh sent me over. It was choir and I was disruptive...
> ...
> Mary. Why was you being disruptive in choir, Mairtin? You used to be a good little singer, God bless you.
> Mairtin. Ah, a pack of oul shite they sing now.
> *Mary tuts at his language.*
> Mairtin. A pack of not very good songs they sing now, I mean. All wailing, and about fishes, and bears.
> Mick. About fishes and bears, is it?
> Mairtin. It is. That's what I said, like. They said no, the youngsters like these ones. What's the song they had us singing tonight? Something about if I was a bear I'd be happy enough, but I'm even more glad I'm human. Ah, a pile of oul wank it is. It's only really the Christmas carols I do like. (*SC* 69-70)

Mairtin's indifference to religion is further dramatized in his comment about religion classes at school. While explaining to Mick why he skips these lessons in school, he recklessly says, "I do skip a lot of religious studies. It's just a lot of stuff about Jesus" (*SC* 86). For Mairtin, learning about Jesus is not a meaningful or interesting activity, nor is it functional in daily life.

Another young character, Girleen, neglects the Church's moral teachings. Unlike Mag and Mary, Girleen likes talking about sex openly. She uses bawdy language in front of the Conor brothers and Father Welsh. For instance, in her first appearance when she is visiting the Conors to sell poteen to Valene, she dominates the rest of Scene One with her vulgar expressions:

> Girleen…I met the postman on the road with a letter for
> Valene…That postman fancies me d'you know? I think he'd like to be getting into me knickers, in fact I'm sure of it.
> Coleman. Him and the rest of Galway, Girleen.
> *Welsh puts his head in his hand at this talk.*
> Girleen…Well, a fella won't be getting into my knickers on a postman's wage. I'll tell you that, now… What kind of wages do priests be on, Father?
> Welsh. Will you stop now? Will you stop?! Isn't it enough for a girl going round flogging poteen, not to go talking of whoring herself on top of it?!
> Girleen. Ah, we're only codding you, Father. (*LW* 137-38)

Girleen unrestrainedly implies that she is having sex for money, though it is not certain if she is telling the truth or if she is just mocking the priest. She also teasingly asks about Father Welsh's wages apparently to find out if he could afford to have sex with her. Father Welsh's religious affiliation does not stop Girleen from talking to him licentiously because Welsh does not represent a supreme authority for her, nor does his profession attract any respect from her.

Ironically, when Welsh asks Girleen what her "proper first name" (*LW* 164) is, she answers that it is Mary, "the name of the mammy of Our Lord" (*LW* 164), an answer which bears a hint of a reverent tone in the expression "Our Lord"; but this is shown to be irony or sarcasm, because it is immediately negated when she explains why she does not use her first name: "She never got anywhere for herself. Fecking Mary" (*LW* 165). Girleen sees Mary as only a passive character,

an exact opposite of herself. As Susan Harris suggests, Catholic dogma and iconography had made Christ and the Virgin Mary the only culturally acceptable role models available to Irish men and women ("Synge" 4). Girleen then rejects the Virgin Mary as a role model, which shows that Mary has lost the symbolic meanings and roles attributed to her by Catholicism.

Ray, Mairtin and Girleen are not interested in the Church's teachings because they do not respond to their teenage needs and interests. They are much more interested in entertainment, sex and the opposite sex than in religion. Ray naively expresses this, saying that he takes an interest in girls but there are no desirable girls in the church choir. As for Mairtin, his preoccupation with sex is illustrated farcically in the graveyard scene through his question about corpses' genitals (*SC* 86), and through his actions. While asking the question according to the stage directions, he holds two skulls to his chest as if they were breasts; and he places the two skulls together as if they were kissing (*SC* 85).

It is not the case that Ray's, Mairtin's and Girleen's dissociation from religion stems from conscious decisions. Nor does living in a society where religious values do not matter or function cause them anxiety. As Jordan argues, in McDonagh's work existential questions are not packaged through the anxieties, self-questioning, or the self-recognition of the characters (252). Baudrillard's words expand upon this: "[T]here is no longer even pathos, the pathetic of nihilism … It is no longer even disenchantment, with the seductive and nostalgic, itself enchanted, tonality of disenchantment. It is simply disappearance" (*Simulacra* 106). Likewise, in Leenane there is no moral order whose disappearance could be implied through the self-questioning or self-recognition of characters.

Religious rituals also exist as simulacra in Leenane. As previously discussed, there are two groups of characters: those who seem to be religious though their deeds refute this assumption; and those who are totally indifferent to religion. No matter to which group the characters belong, they perform Catholic rituals in a demystfying way, for their self-interest or to tease other characters. This shows that these rituals are not performed as part of a religion. For instance, in Scene

One of *A Skull,* when Mairtin asks Mick to give him a little poteen, Mick "pours a small amount of poteen out onto his fingers and tosses it at Mairtin as if it's holy water. It hits Mairtin in the eyes". While doing this Mick says "Bless yourself, now, Mairtin" (*SC* 76). Mick, thus, desacralizes the important Catholic ritual to make fun of Mairtin, using (illegally distilled) poteen instead of holy water.

Religious rituals related to death do not involve a sense of sacredness, either. As in many cultures, in Ireland death has long been considered a sacred realm. In Leenane, however, characters are indifferent to death, irreverent to the dead and uncaring in performing rituals related to death. "Any notion of spiritual dimension is almost eradicated, a corpse is just a corpse, a skull on a kitchen table is just a skull, with no real fears or anxieties surrounding the presence of remains" (Jordan 84). These attitudes are alluded to by Father Welsh in Scene Four of *The Lonesome* while he is chatting with Girleen by the lakeside. When the topic changes to those like Thomas who drowned themselves in the lake, Welsh miserably raises a question: "We should be scared of their ghosts so but we're not scared. Why's that?" (*LW* 166). Welsh is worried about the fact that the existence of the dead does not elicit fear or awe, since death itself is not a precursor of an otherworld for the people Leenane, including himself.

Death is most noticeably demystified in *A Skull* during the exhumation of the bones from the churchyard. While most cultures are generally resistant to the notion of exhumation and disinterment and one needs a court's permission to disturb a resting place, exhumation is regularly practiced in some countries due to spatial restrictions; corpses are exhumed and stored elsewhere in an ossuary, without compromising the dignity of the dead. Generally, however, the digging up of the dead carries with it all kinds of connotations and taboos (Jordan 63). In *A Skull,* however, the way the exhumation is enacted turns into a transgression of the respect due to sacred matters. As already indicated, in the graveyard scene, bones turn into playthings for Mairtin. Besides, in Scene Three, Mick and Mairtin are seen smashing bones carelessly in Mick's living room; pieces of bones are scattered around, and Mick even stamps on them. This shocking and almost

absurd scene makes the point that in Leenane dealing with the dead is no longer sacred and ritualized, but "a non-event on the metaphysical level" (Jordan 71).

Mick gives the appearance of respect to the dead when he scolds Mairtin for cursing at human remains in the graveyard:

> Mairtin. I was thinking. Goodbye Biddy Curran or whatever it is your name is. You're all mixed up now anyways, you poor feck you.
> Mick. Don't be cursing now, Mairtin.
> Mairtin. I won't be.
> Mick. Not when you're handling the departed, now. (*SC* 105)

He is in fact totally indifferent and irreverent to the dead as the way he digs up and smashes the bones suggests. The audience knows that Mick is no more respectful than Mairtin because in the previous scene he himself cursed in the graveyard, telling Mairtin: "Get back to fecking work, so and start filling that" (*SC* 93). These exchanges display both Mick's and Mairtin's total lack of consideration or respect for the dead.

The townspeople dislike the idea of exhumation, an unease reflected by Mary when she says that Mick takes on a "filthy occupation" every autumn (*SC* 66). Similarly, Thomas criticizes Mick for carrying out the exhumation business:

> Thomas. Awful morbid work this is, Mick.
> Mick. It's work to be done.
> Thomas. Awful ghoulish though…I'm certain there are other ways. Encouraging cremation is what the church should be. Not all this. (*SC* 89)

Mick defends himself with the fact that this job was assigned to him by Father Welsh. Father Welsh often drops by the graveyard to supervise the process, as Mick says: "Doesn't the Country pay for the job to be done if it's such a filthy job? Doesn't the priest half the time stand over me and chat to me and bring me cups of tea? Eh?" (*SC* 66). Moreover, Mick claims that he carries out the job in a sensitive manner:

> Mary. Is that right what you said that you hammer the bones to nothing and you throw them in the slurry?
> Mick. What I do with the bones, both the priest and the guards have swore me secrecy and bound by them I am…

> Mary (*standin*g) Michael Dowd, if you do not answer, bound or not bound, I shall leave this devil-taken house and never darken its…!
> …
> Mick. I neither hammer the bones nor throw them in the slurry, Mary. Sure what do you take me for?...I seal them in a bag and let them sink to the bottom of the lake and a string of prayers I say over them as I'm doing so…I gently eased them. (*SC* 73-4)

Mick is actually lying in this dialogue because during Scene Three, the audience sees him hammering the bones. Father Welsh visits the graveyard "half the time", but he is not aware of how Mick behaves the rest of the time. Father Welsh's kindly supervision is ineffective when dealing with a hardened blasphemer like Mick.

Irreverence to the dead is a recurrent motif in *The Lonesome* as well. Mairtin's profane attitudes in the graveyard in *A Skull* are paralleled in the opening scene of *The Lonesome* with Coleman's display of irreverence on the occasion of his father's funeral. Coleman and Father Welsh have just returned from the funeral when the following interchange occurs:

> Coleman. You'll have a drink with me you will?
> Welsh. I will Coleman, so.
> Coleman (*quietly*). A dumb fecking question that was.
> Welsh. Eh?
> Coleman. I said a dumb fecking question that was.
> …
> Welsh. Don't be swearing today of all days anyway, Coleman.
> Coleman. I'll be swearing if I want to be swearing.
> Welsh. After us only burying your dad, I am saying.
> Coleman. O aye, right enough, sure you know best, oh aye. (*LW* 129)

Like Mairtin, Coleman is also warned about swearing on an occasion which supposedly requires solemnity and sensitivity. However, he does not take Father Welsh's warning seriously. His main concern is in fact with the fellow townsmen at the funeral:

> Coleman. A pack of vultures only coming nosing.
> Welsh. Come on now, Coleman. They came to pay their last respects.

> Coleman. Did seven of them, so not come up asking where the booze-up after was to be held, and Maryjohnny then "Will ye be having vol-au-vents[53]?" (*LW* 130)

Coleman seems to be deeply offended by the manners of people who attended the funeral. His accounts imply that the people who came to the funeral were only interested in the refreshments offered after the burial. Ironically, Coleman himself is only interested in the refreshments, as observed when he and Valene have just returned from Father Welsh's funeral talking about what was offered after the funeral:

> Coleman. They are nice vol-au-vents
> Valene. You can't say the Catholic Church doesn't know how to make a nice vol-au-vent now. (*LW* 179)

Funeral rituals and feasts are in fact supposed to hold metaphysical importance. In the Catholic tradition, it is believed that prayers and activities of the living could serve to shorten one's term of purgatorial suffering, and thus the ceremonies and rituals surrounding death can take major cultural significance (Stannard 98). In Leenane, however, it seems that these rituals have been stripped of their otherworldly connotations. "There is neither real fear nor celebration of the dead, just feigned empathy, tokenism and indifference" (Jordan 69).

Another noteworthy element in relation to the simulacrum of God is Valene's devotion to his plastic figurines in *The Lonesome.* As the play opens, "(a) long row of dusty plastic figurines, each marked with a black 'V'" is seen under "a large crucifix" (*LW* 129). The display of figurines seems to be a display of religiosity. This impression however is refuted as the play develops; the plastic figurines, just like other religious symbols and images, only refer to themselves "in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 6).

Valene is first seen entering "with a carrier bag out of which he takes some new figurines and arranges them on the shelf" (*LW* 131). Valene keenly collects figurines of saints and attaches great importance to them and for this reason he

[53]Small pies or appetizers.

considers anything that is, he thinks, disrespectful against his figurines as "against God". For instance, when Coleman curses in front of them, he firmly warns him:

> Coleman. Ah for feck's sake…
> Valene. Don't be cursing now, Coleman. Not in front of the saints. Against God that is. (*LW* 143)

Valene does not concern himself with religious and moral matters but only with his figurines. For example, he acted as a false witness on behalf of Coleman, lying to the jury with his statement that Coleman killed his father accidentally. In this way, he is an accessory to his brother's violation of the commandement, "Thou shall not kill", besides lying, which is also an infringement of religious codes. Moreover, Valene is mean and egotistic, and he does not share his food and possessions with Coleman. He thus violates another biblical commandement: "Thou shouldst share your bread with him who is hungry (Isaiah 58.7). Thus, while he is expressing some sort of faith on the level of images, truly religious matters and moral conventions "become mere games to play: they have certain superficial formal rules that can be followed and abandoned at will" (Lanters 218).

As Baudrillard points out, icons are images through which "God himself can be simulated, that is to say can be reduced to the signs that constitute faith" (*Simulacra* 6). This aptly explains how Valene's worship of his figurines represents no religious or moral sensitivity. In Scene Six, while arranging his new figurines, he says:

> Hmm, we'll put the new St Martin over here, so it balances out with the other St Martin over there, so's we have one darkie Saint on either side, so it balances out symmetrical, like. (Pause.) I am a great one for shelf arranging I am…Forty-six figurines now. I'm sure to be getting into heaven with this. (*LW* 171)

Valene is convinced that he will somehow go to heaven not through virtue, but through his extensive collection of figurines alone. The icons are thus perfect simulacra, "forever radiant with their own fascination. They stand for the death of the divine referential" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 5).

Valene and Coleman often quarrel over trivial matters and try to hurt each other by abusing each other's weaknesses. The most severe quarrel between them occurs when Coleman melts the figurines in Valene's stove in order to upset Valene. Valene in a comic scene of distress wails: "He cooks me figurines in me stove! (*Looking into bowl*.) That one was blessed be the Pope! That one was given me mammy be Yanks! And they're all gone! All of them! They're all just the fecking heads and bobbing around!" (*LW* 156). When Father Welsh tries to console him, Valene claims Coleman's act is unforgiveable blasphemy: "Melting figurines is against God outright!" (*LW* 147). Valene's fury reaches murderous heights as religious fury can do, and he attempts to shoot Coleman. He is overly attached to his figurines so he does not consider the possible murder of his brother to be a biblical sin. Valene's zeal and fury which resemble the responses of religious fanatics are based on his possessive attachment to his figurines; like all fanatics he is preapared to commit the ultimate (and biblical) crime of killing. Morever, he adds to the sin in attempting to kill a brother, an act reminiscent of the biblical first fratricide, the murder of Abel by Cain.

Father Welsh is the main symbol of Catholicism in the trilogy. In fact, priests have been essential parts of Irish rural culture for a long time. McCaffrey in his 1973 article, "Irish Nationalism and Irish Catholicism", describes the earlier position of priests in their societies:

> The church and her ministers have always been an essential part of Irish life. In the bad days priests were close to the people, sharing their poverty and degradation…They were the only educated leaders in rural peasant com-munities. Laymen accepted them as advisors and authorities on a wide range of topics. Because of their influence, nationalist politicians recruited the priests as agitators and organizers. (532)

Father Welsh has nothing to do with the qualities listed above as he, like other Catholic elements in the plays, fails to represent a transcendental reality. Further, as Kurdi observes, Father Welsh "has lost meaningful contact with his flock amidst the godlessness of the Leenane microcosm where religion has ceased to be a spiritual power (73).

Some of the casual references to the current corruption of the clergy in the trilogy could be misleading. For instance, in *The Lonesome,* Coleman refers to child abuse while he is trying to convince Father Welsh that he is not a bad priest: "Ah there be a lot worse priests than you, Father, I'm sure…Number one you don't go abusing five- year olds so, sure, doesn't that give you a head-start over half the priests in Ireland?" (*LW* 135). Coleman's intent here is not so much to criticize the clergy, but rather to console Father Welsh who is upset about the ongoing violence in Leenane which he, as a man of religion, is failing to prevent. As Paul Murphy argues, Coleman's throw-away comment undermines the seriousness and complexity of the problem of pedophilia, through implicitly comparing it with the mundane naughtiness of Welsh's flock ("The Stage Irish" 81). Actually, McDonagh does not take an overall critical stance in relation to the clergy. He rather aims to show the dysfunction of religion in Leenane. For this he uses the character of Father Welsh who proves to be kind, generous and touchy, and unable to survive in Leenane's harsh, ruthless and amoral world.

Father Welsh is a complex character and an outsider in his society. He is mentioned in *The Beauty Queen* and *A Skull,* but appears on stage only in *The Lonesome.* There is an ongoing confusion in relation to his name in all three plays. His name is first referred to in *The Beauty Queen,* in Scene Two, when Ray tells Mag that he is planning to buy Father Welsh's car:

> Ray. Oul Father Welsh-Walsh- has a car he's selling, but I'd look a poof buying a car off a priest.
> Mag. I don't like Father Walsh-Welsh- at all. (*BQL* 9)

"Welsh-Walsh"[54] in this exchange is not a momentary confusion. All through the trilogy, whenever a character refers to the Father, he/she cannot decide if he is called Walsh or Welsh. This uncertainty about his name introduces his vulnerable position in his society. As a matter of fact, until his death in *The Lonesome,* he never feels integrated in the community, failing to be a religious advisor and authority or a moral example. He is extremely disappointed with this situation,

[54] McDonagh's choice of this name for his character is also meaningful in consideration of the position of Father Welsh in Leenane. "Welsh" coming from a Germanic root means 'foreigner' or 'outsider'. 'Walsh' is a variant of the same word.

and complains, "(n)obody ever listens to my advice. Nobody ever listens to me at all" (*LW* 163).

Welsh suffers from the fact that he stands for a so-called higher authority which does not exist in Leenane. He knows this well, as shown in his comment to Coleman in Scene One: "I'm a terrible priest, so I am. I can never be defending God when people go saying things against him, and sure, isn't that the main qualification of being a priest?" (*LW* 135). Furthermore, he himself does not find belief to be uncomplicated. His frustration in fact comes from the conflict between his occupation as a priest and his real, undecided stance towards God. This point is a laughing matter for the townspeople. For instance, in Scene One, when Valene sees Father Welsh looking sad, he asks Coleman:

> Valene. He's not having another fecking crisis of faith?
> Coleman. He is.
> Valene. He never stops, this fella. (*LW* 136)

In the same scene, Girleen, visiting the Conors, exclaims: "He's not having another crisis of faith is he? That's twelve this week. We should report him to Jesus" (*LW* 138).

Welsh wants to reform his society, but not through religious teachings. Although he complains about the profanity of townspeople, he does not believe that there is a supreme transcendental being that he is serving. He resorts to the Bible only once, in order to persuade Valene to share his poteen with him, and he quotes it inaccurately:

> Welsh (sighing.) You wouldn't be sparing a drop of that poteen would you, Valene? I have an awful thirst…
> Valene. Ah, Father, I have only a drop left and I need that for meself…
> Welsh. You've half the bottle sure…
> Valene. And if I had some I'd spare it, but I don't, and should priests be going drinking anyways? No they shouldn't, or anyways not on the night…
> Welsh. Thou shouldst share and share alike the Bible says. Or somewhere it says…(*LW* 154)

Even in this case, Welsh is not confident about his biblical references, which shows his indifference to religious writings. This probably stems from the fact that he himself does not take them seriously although he is a man of religion.

Welsh is much more disappointed in the townspeople because of their crimes, insensitivity and self-destructiveness than because of their indifference to religion. For instance, when he learns that Thomas has committed suicide, he feels disappointed not because Thomas has acted against Catholic teachings, but because the townspeople, including himself, are indifferent to each other's problems:

> If the world's such a decent place worth staying in, where were his friends when he needed them in this decent world? When he needed them most, to say "Come away from there, ya daft, we'd missed ya, you're worthwhile, as dumb as you're." Where were his friends then? Where was I then? Sitting pissed on me own in a pub. (*LW* 153)

Welsh's biggest concern is the hostility between Coleman and Valene. He shares this concern with Girleen: "Val and Coleman'll kill each other someday if somebody doesn't do something to stop them. It won't be me who stops them anyways" (*LW* 162). Welsh tries to urge the brothers to stop quarreling and love each other instead, but Valene and Coleman never take him seriously, and remain antagonistic towards each other.

Father Welsh actually turns out to be a mock-Christ figure. When Valene pulls a gun on Coleman after Coleman has melted his figurines, Father Welsh in despair commits a self-sacrificing action to stop Valene:

> (He) stares at the two of them dumbstruck, horrified. He catches sight of the bowl of steaming plastic beside him, and almost blankly, as the grappling continues, clenches his fists and slowly lowers them into the burning liquid, holding them under. Through clenched teeth and without breathing, Welsh manages to withhold his screaming for about ten or fifteen seconds until, still holding his fists under, he lets rip with a horrifying high-pitched wail lasting about ten seconds, during which Valene and Coleman stop fighting, stand, and try to help him". (*LW* 159)

This action hints at Jesus' self-sacrifice for the salvation of humankind. His action proves to be fruitless, however, because it fails to shock or even move, let alone transform anyone (Kurdi 34). Coleman and Valene stop fighting momentarily, but the hostility between them continues, to Welsh's great disappointment.

Bitterly distressed with the fact that he could not ensure brotherly love between Coleman and Valene, Welsh commits suicide, leaving behind a letter for the brothers. This is his final act of self-sacrifice. In his letter, he expresses his reason for suicide:

> I am leaving tonight, but I have been thinking about ye non-stop since the night I did scald me hands there at yeres. Every time the pain does go through them hands I do think about ye, and let me tell you this. I would take that pain and pain a thousand times worse, and bear it with a smile, if only I could restore to ye the love for each other as brothers ye do so woefully lack, that must have been there some day. (*LW* 169)

Welsh still holds a bit of hope that they may change their behavior towards each other, a change that might be triggered by his death. He thus asks them to confess to each other the wrongdoings that they have committed and then to forgive each other:

> Couldn't the both of ye, now, go stepping back and be making a listeen of all the things about the other that do get on yere nerves, and the wrongs the other has done all down through the years that you still hold against him, and bereading them lists out, and be discussing them openly, and be taking a deep breath then and be forgiving each other. (*LW* 170)

His suicide and his demands for their confession and forgiveness confession refer to three of the central features of the Catholic Church: A belief in the redemptive power of suffering, the sacrament of confession and the power of God's forgiveness that the priest can invoke after confession (Lonergan 38).

Welsh's final act of self-sacrifice also proves to be futile since peace cannot be restored between the brothers even after Welsh's death. Coleman and Valene try to change, and follow the advice in the letter, and by the end of the play a mock-confession scene takes place; however, it is not reformative at all, but instead makes things worse. They begin to confess their wrongdoings in a peaceful

manner, each time apologizing; but after a while it turns into a sort of competition over who did the worst thing, as Coleman shows when he says in joy, "I'm winning" (*LW* 125). Lonergan states that just as the sacrament of confession is meaningless unless there is genuine repentance, so is Valene and Coleman's attempt to step back and forgive each other revealed to be pointless, because neither brother really regrets his actions (39). Thus, this Catholic ritual also assumes the quality of a simulacrum. Eventually, they are so offended by each other's wrongdoings that they attempt to kill each other, Valene with a knife and Coleman with a gun. By the end of the scene, they stop fighting and comment on Father Welsh's will:

> Valene. Father Welsh is burning in hell, now because of our fighting.
> Coleman. Well did we ask him to go betting his soul on us? No. And, sure, it's pure against the rules for priests to go betting anyways, never minding with them kinds of stakes… And what's wrong with fighting anyways? I do like a good fight. It does show you care, fighting does…
> Valene. I do like a good fight, the same as that. (*LW* 194)

At the end of the play, Valene sets fire to Father's Welsh's letter, but after a couple of seconds he blows the flames out and pins it on to the crucifix (*LW* 196). Thus, the letter like the crucifix will exist in the house as an image without any real function.

Father Welsh is the only character in McDonagh's Leenane who feels dissapointed about the lack of depth and loss of meaning in the comunity. With his crises of faith, fragmentation and alienation from both his environment and his religion, he is the only modernist mind left in this postmodern society. As such, he cannot survive and he is eliminated from the universe of Leenane.

4.4 Bolger's Mystical Dublin

> Jerome: God should be like the measles, a short childhood illness we can't get twice. He went out with black and white TV. But, can't you feel it around you? Something good or diabolical or both. Something in this flat, watching us.
> (*PJ* 35)

The treatment of religion in Bolger's plays is comparable to that of McDonagh in that they both present a Catholicism that has lost its effect as an essential constituent of Irishness. Bolger's approach to this loss is, however, different from McDonagh's. Although Bolger reveals the lack of spiritual depth prevailing in Irish society as McDonagh does, he does not linger on this point. He takes a step further to explore what would happen if the spirit could still survive in Celtic Tiger Ireland. In a way, he attempts to reconcile spirituality with Celtic Tiger values. While doing this, however, he avoids identifying spirituality with Catholicism**.** He instead challenges "narrow concepts of Irishness as understood and legislated by Catholicism" without compromising spirituality (Pramaggiore 124).

Given that Bolger focuses on the possibility of spirituality, a Baudrillarian analysis does not apply to his plays. His plays will be analyzed within the context of a constructive postmodern approach to spirituality as discussed in, though not limited to, the various works of David Ray Griffin on the interaction between postmodernism and religion. As Vanhoozer points out, there is no such phenomenon as postmodernity, but there are postmodernities (3). In this context, there are definitely different postmodern approaches to spirituality and religion, one of which is constructive postmodernism[55] where postmodernism does not necessarily point to a loss of spirituality. In this view, the percieved erosion of the religious world has not been a destruction but a purification in order to be able to reconsider issues of faith and religion (Tilley vii).

[55] Griffin refers to four types of postmodern approaches to religion: (1) constructive, (2) deconstructive (3) liberationist and (4) restorationist.

Postmodern spirituality is a shift away from modern spirituality[56] which began as a dualistic, supernaturalistic spirituality, and ended as an antispirituality. Postmodern spirituality, involves a return to genuine spirituality, and it incorporates elements from premodern spiritualties. Although it retains and expands many features of the modern world, it reverses modernity's mechanistic view of nature, individualism and nationalism, its subordination of humanity to the machine and its subordination of social, moral, aesthetic, religious and ecological concerns to economic interests (Griffin, "Spirituality" 2).

The mechanistic view of nature implies a denial of divine immanence. Any immanence of God in the human mind is also denied (Griffin, "Spirituality" 4). God cannot be naturally in the human mind since the senses cannot perceive God. God, then, can only be known through a supernatural revelation as long as people accepted supernaturalistic theism. In other words, a divine reality is a matter of belief, not direct experience. This understanding was prevalent in early modernity while the move to complete atheism took place in its later stages of modernity. This move also saw the transition to secularism, which was accompanied by a disenchantment with the world, which involved the rejection of myth and magic (Griffin, "Spirituality" 4-5).

The transition from supernaturalism to atheism is accompanied by the rise of materialism, which claims that human beings have no soul or mind setting them apart from the rest of nature. This argument led to worldviews like nihilism, relativism and determinism (Griffin, "Spirituality" 6). Vanhoozer asserts that the deconstructive or nihilist versions of postmodernity are actually the culmination of these modern tendencies (22). Correspondingly, Griffin states that these

[56] Modernity is commonly defined in terms of the values of the European Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, telling a story of how Enlightenment thinkers overcame ignorance and superstition due to critical methods, or how modern science has resulted in greater health and wealth for humanity (Vanhoozer 9). Modernity emphasizes the centrality of individualism which philosophically means the denial of the idea that the individual person is significantly constituted by his or her relation to other people, to institutions, to nature, to the past, even perhaps to a divine creator (Griffin, "Spirituality" 3). Individualism generally characterizes modern spirituality in relation to society and its institutions while the term dualism refers to modern spirituality's relationship with the natural world. In dualistic thinking the human soul was felt to be completely different from the body and from the rest of the creation and nature. Dualism thus regards nature as devoid of power of perception; this is a mechanistic picture of nature which provided the ideological justification for modernity's drive toward unlimited domination and exploitation of nature, including all other living species (Griffin, "Spirituality" 4).

versions of postmodernism take the modern worldview further to an anti-worldview: they deconstruct or eliminate the ingredients necessary for a worldview, such as God, self, purpose, meaning and a real world. In a theological context, Griffin thus calls the deconstructive version of postmodernism "ultramodernism" (*Primordial Truth* xii). Leenane as analyzed in McDonagh's plays reflects this kind of an ultramodern worldview in terms of faith and spirituality.

According to Griffin, the only way to recover spiritual depth is to challenge modern and ultramodern worldviews (*God and Religion* 61). This is possible on the basis of a postmodern worldview that overcomes modernity's substantive assumptions about the dominance of reason (*God and Religion* 61). Constructive postmodernism is relevant at this point. Constructive postmodernist theology does not comply with traditional theism and the generic idea of God in monotheistic religions. "The postmodern celebration of faith, not a historic faith but faith as a general condition, stems from a refusal of orthodox Christian doctrine[57]" (Vanhoozer 18). Charlesworth argues that contemporary theology must come to terms with a new theological truth since postmodernism has shown us that all so called authentic knowledge is contextual or situational (163, 167).

Constructive postmodern views in general go beyond the modern idea of sensory perception (Vanhoozer 17-8). Griffin explains this as following:

> This nonsensory form of perception is said not only to occur which is shocking enough to the modern mind but also to be our fundamental mode of relating to our environment, from which sensory perception is derivative. This affirmation challenges one of the main pillars of modern thought, its sensationism, according to which sense-perception is our basic and only way of perceiving realities beyond ourselves. (*God and Religion* 4)

According to Vanhoozer, the constructive postmodernist perspective has enabled the recovery of the two neglected forms of religious discourse- the prophetic and the mystical- that seek, in different ways, to invoke spirituality; it rejects a crude materialism (19). It is based on panexperientialism, in which feeling and intrinsic

[57] Religious conceptions and theories in this study are limited to the context of Christianity.

value are attributed to all elements that comprise nature. For instance, dogs, cells, and molecules are said to be real in the same sense in which we are real (*God and Religion* 5). In this context, creativity is another related key term. Creativity is, in fact, considered the ultimate reality, which is embodied by all elements of existence, from God to electrons. In this context, God could not possibly be the sole possessor of creative power, and cannot interrupt or unilaterally control events in the world (Griffin, *God and Religion* 5).

This constructive postmodern worldview makes it natural to regard the world as an essentially spiritual matrix, and the urge to be in harmony with it pulls individual humans away from materialism (Griffin, *God and Religion* 67). O'Reilly says that many contemporary approaches to spirituality are interested in stressing its relational aspects, aspects which define the person in relation to self, others, the cosmos and the sacred. This pushes the parameters of spirituality beyond the confines of traditional religion (7).

Bolger's plays follow an approach to faith and spirituality that is similar to this constructive postmodern understanding. Bolger does not simply point to an experience of shallowness. He instead attempts to show the possibility of a spiritual dimension that exists in spite of the materialistic values of the Celtic Tiger. He clearly introduces this materialistic worldview and loss of depth just as McDonagh does, and also shows that individuals sometimes reject compliance with the institutionalized forms of religion, be they Catholicism or any other religious sects. However, for Bolger this does not necessarily mean that they have to indulge in shallow and materialistic lives. Their dissociation from religious matters might be a tactful decision - unlike McDonagh's characters -, and a spiritual dimension might still exist in their lives, replacing traditional religious beliefs.

Bolger's characters are mostly pushed to create their own spirituality and shape it in their own ways. Therefore, Bolger shows that religion should not be considered context-free, and no specific religious order can provide ultimate and absolute explanations (Charlesworth 155). Accordingly, Catholicism can no longer be an ultimate religious identity defining Irishness. Bolger offers a fresh

perspective to observe an Irishness in which the close bond between Catholicism and nationality has been dissolved, and this also reflects his postnationalist outlook. The possibility of spirituality overcoming the demands of Catholicism is represented through the persistence of religion, though taking a different form from traditional understandings, and through the presence of the otherworldly in the characters' mundane lives.

Bolger does not ignore that Celtic Tiger society seems to have no room for Catholic values. Before dealing with the possibility of spirituality in such a society, Bolger first occupies the audience with the question: "Does the Celtic Tiger represent an improvement in our overall quality of life, or moral bankruptcy and spiritual dereliction" (Kuhlig and Keohane 4). Like McDonagh's Leenane, his Dublin is dominated by violence, crime, egoism and materialism. In Act One of *The Lament,* an attempt to attribute Catholic values to Irish society is immediately complicated. The Friend, acting the role of a politician, is giving a public speech about Ireland's urge to integrate into European society. She first refers to Ireland's past glory:

> Friend (*in smooth politician's voice*). Although we are a small nation in this great community, our heritage abounds with saints, with poets, with dreamers…Through all of the Dark Ages we have gone forth to spread the word of God among you, (*Others bless themselves.*) (*LAC* 7)

The Friend here implies that Ireland's distinctive feature is its devotion to God. As a strictly Catholic society, the Irish have been highly conservative. However, towards the end of her speech, the Friend refers to Dublin's night life as well, saying: "And now my fellow minister will give a brief discourse on night life in Dublin" (*LAC* 8). The speech is then interrupted, and the scene changes to a night club environment. The Frontier Guard playing the role of a bouncer is in front of the club. He is talking to the Porter who is acting as a drunkard who is curious about the inside of the club:

> Porter: What's it like inside, mister?
> *The Frontier Guard speaks slowly as if to a child but also like a seedy doorman.*

> Frontier Guard. Everything you dreamt of. Girls hot for it, lining the walls, leather-mini skirt, things like long stalks of barley waiting to be harvested. (*LAC* 8)

The images of women described by the Frontier Guard are contradictory to the images of women expected in a conservative Catholic society. They defy the role attached to women by the Catholic Church where unmarried women should take the Virgin Mary as a role model and keep their chastity. By juxtaposing the politician's speech with the night club scene, Bolger represents one side of the modernized Irish society, which now prefers "sex, drugs and rock'n roll", as already quoted from O'Toole, to Catholic values. This side of the society is often ignored by nationalistic speeches, but has always been there.

The criminal life of Dublin is also portrayed in episodic scenes. For instance, in the same night club scene a couple, having left a theatre hall, find that their car has been stolen. In the following acts, there are scenes referring to the drug trafficking controlled by Deignan, the drug baron. While trying to convince Arthur to collaborate with him, Detective Lynch describes the underworld of current Dublin in the following way:

> This isn't the messing you and your friends got up to. This isn't a crate of beer fecked off a lorry, or a fistfight in a lousy cinema. There is a woman back there lying in a pool of her own blood-they went for her handbag and took half of her arm. There is an old man down at the traffic lights with a piece of glass stuck in his eye where the bastard broke the window of his car. That was never your scene, Arthur. I've known you since you were mitching from the school. Are you with them, Arthur, or are you with me? (*LAC* 54)

The Detective portrays a depressing, harsh and merciless society. Arthur is blind to this recently growing crime culture since he has been away for ten years. He is now being pressured to work for Deignan, but he ignores his implicit threats because he does not believe that Deignan is powerful enough to harm him. Although people around him like the Detective and Katy try to caution him, he also ignores their warnings. The fact that he cannot survive in Dublin highlights the power and dominance of the criminal culture.

The portrayal of the criminal culture in this play overlaps with that in *The Passion,* in which the setting (Ballymun) also shows the moral bankruptcy of the society. Ballymun, a suburban area of Dublin, is infamously known for its high crime rate. It hosts mostly socially disadvantaged people like criminals, outsiders and the poor. This is suggested when most people around Jerome thinks that he has been attacked by thugs although he was wounded by stigmata. Jerome is really attacked by three thugs in the flat in Ballymun towards the end of the play, which further indicates the crime and violence underlying the world of Dublin. As a matter of fact, as Dumay puts it, in Ballymun Jerome finds himself "thrust into a meaningless world and brutally confronted with hooligans, destitute people and all the down-and-outs for whom he cared very little before" ("Ballymun" 292). This brutal world surely does not seem to be compatible with any religious values.

Bolger also draws attention to the spiritual dereliction and the weakening of the power of religion in Dublin society. For instance, in *The Lament,* after his return, Arthur finds out that a prefabricated church building which he knew in his childhood has been demolished. He reveals his feelings to Kathy:

> Arthur. It was the strangest thing.
> Kathy *(looks up.*) What?
> Arthur. The church. Near the flats. There was such an overspill of people living there that they put up a temporary one. The tin one they called it-a sort of huge prefab. Inside as a child you'd hear the rain splattering against the corrugated tin roof. I'd forgotten that sound till one winter in a Dutch factory...sleeping in those long iron dormitories…I'd wake at night and remember...like it would always be there, a part of me...to return to. (*Stops.*) The first night I got home I went walking, past buildings boarded up, new names over shops. I came to the lane where the church had been. There were just the girders of the church left and everything else still smouldering, waiting to be shifted. Hadn't been there or in any other church since I was fifteen. But it was in my mind as something to come home to that would never change. (*LAC* 27).

Previously, people attended masses in such great numbers that an additional building had to be put up. The demolition of the church suggests the recent waning of people's interests in church services. As a part of the current generation, Arthur's visit was not motivated by religious concerns but by his

nostalgic feelings. He went there to refresh his childhood memories, which shows that the church is only a cultural artifact for Arthur, too. This exemplifies the phenomenon mentioned by Keogh:

> During the second half of the twentieth century Ireland maintained very high mass attendance figures relative to other Catholic countries such as Italy, Spain, Portugal and Belgium. By the late 1990s those figures had collapsed and religious observance in Ireland looked very much like that in other European countries. (364)

Therefore, in this play a strict form of religious observance and piety is shown no longer a distinctive feature of Ireland. Before returning to Dublin, Arthur thought that the church building would remain intact, but he only finds the girders left. Of course, there are other church buildings in Dublin. Nevertheless, in the world of the play, the girders symbolically stand for the present situation of Catholicism in the society, still existing but in a dormant and stripped-down way.

In *Blinded*, Bolger dwells further on people's denial of religious identification, which is represented vividly in the person of Mick who is moving away from Catholic dogmas. In Act One Scene Two, in the morning after the night which Mick and Siobhan have spent together, Siobhan asks Mick how he is feeling:

> Siobhan. How do you feel?
> Mick. Like the song said, my head hurts, my feet stink and I don't love Jesus[58].
> Siobhan. (*turning to leave*). I doubt if you love anything.
> Mick. That's not fair. I love St Mairtin, Patron Saint of Hopeless Causes.
> Siobhan. St Jude is hopeless causes.
> Mick. All foreign bodies look the same to me. Anyway, you wouldn't want to rely on living when you follow Shelbourne Football Club. (*BL* 140)

Mick here displays his indifference to the Catholic faith by mentioning the saints casually. In a way, he makes fun of religious issues since they are not significant for him, all the saints being "foreign" to him. Mick's rapid move to the topic of football is also meaningful. The only thing associated with Ireland and with which

[58] A song by American singer Jimmy Buffet.

Mick expresses affiliation is the Irish football team. This shows that young people and youth culture are more interested in things other than religion, just like the youth in McDonagh's plays.

There is only one person whom Mick accepts as a saint, and this is the Greek philosopher Diogenes. Diogenes is of course not a saint in the Catholic calendar, but for Mick, he is "the patron saint of Mickonia" (*BL* 163), his own universe. Mick's world-view is more responsive to Diogenes's philosophy. Like Diogenes, Mick wants to reject subjection to any national and religious restraints. He expresses this to Lily from the Legion of Mary: "I was only ever in the Shelbourne Supporters Club... And I left that when I was eight… I've a life-long aversion to joining anything" (*BL* 160).

In *Blinded,* institutionalized religion is clearly ridiculed. Mick's attitude towards it is dramatized through his funny and somehow farcical dialogues with Mormons who want to convert Mick, and with Legion of Mary people who try to counter the Mormons' attempts. The Mormons first visit Mick in Act One, Scene Two:

> Elder Osborne. We are from the Church of Latter-Day Saints of Jesus Christ! (*Mick looks blank.*) Mormons.
> Mick…Actually I'm not really religious. So nothing personal, but…
> Elder Osborne. Oh good! You're the very person we want to talk to so. (*BL* 145)

Mick's explanation that he is not a religious person only makes the Mormons more enthusiastic to convert him to their order. Here it is important to note that Mormonism is a religious order associated with Protestantism. Also, it really is a "foreign" religion coming from the USA and with few (if any) followers outside the States. This reveals that Bolger's aim is not simply to problematize Catholicism, but to question the compatibility of all institutionalized religious orders with the Celtic Tiger Ireland.

Mick is against the idea of religion in general. He explains his reason in the following way:

> Mick. Religion's a dangerous business lads. Why not just take the weight of your feet and enjoy the hot water?
> Elder Osborne. What possible harm could it do you?
> Mick. Look at Cyril Knowles' brother[59]. Gave up playing for Wolves that season they could have won the Cup. (*BL* 147)

Mick once again changes the topic to his chief interest, football. It is shocking for him to abandon playing football in order to join a religious order. Seeing the example of Peter Knowles, Mick claims that devotion to religion can prevent people from fulfilling their potential and from pursing their interests. Here he is also teasing the Mormons, knowing that this juxtaposition of football against religion will shock them.

Mick values his privacy above everything else. As Pelletier puts it, "[p]oor Mick simply wants to be left alone in his bedsit to get on with his reading and recreational drug-taking" (254). The Mormons believe that Mick is in need of the light which they promise to bring to his life with their teachings. They insistently declare that they are there "to lead [him] back to the light of God" (*BL* 148) although Mick replies that "[they]'re barking up the wrong tree (*BL* 148). Herein lies the ironic overtone of the title of the play. Mick is being pestered by people coming with claims to help him find the light, but they do more harm to him than good, by disturbing his privacy. Mick implies this when he feels overwhelmed with people who want to help him: "God, save me from those who want to do me good" (*BL* 205).

The Mormons leave some books with Mick in spite of his resistance: "Listen lads… I've lot of reading of my own to get through" (*BL* 149). The Mormons never seem to care about what Mick really needs, as is seen in the following dialogue:

> Elder Stanford…what do you want from life?
> Mick…I don't know how to break this to you but I'm actually happy in my life. Okay, may be one day I'll get to spend all my time reading half-cracked philosophers and watching Italian football from the bed. But it's not that bad as it is. (*BL* 156)

[59] Mick refers to Peter Knowles, an English football player who abondened football after he joined Jehova's Witnesses, a dissident Christian sect.

Elder Stanford asks Mick what he wants from life but does not pay attention to his response. He is just centered on imposing what he believes to be true on Mick. Mick, however, wants to live as he likes, to do what he likes and to study what he likes.

Not only the Mormons but also the Legion of Mary people pester Mick. When Mick's landlord, Mr Lewis, realizes that Mick is being frequented by an anti-Catholic sect, he decides to send two of his friends from the Legion of Mary to him, seeing it as a favor for Mick: " 'tis about your visitors. They seem fierce fond of you boy, fierce fond indeed. Oh I know Mickey, I was your age once. 'Tis an age when the oul doubt begins to creep in, especially for a young country lad like yourself cut off from your family and your native place" (*BL* 157). In Act One Scene Four, then, the Legion of Mary people, Lily and Jack, visit Mick for the first time. Like the Mormons, they think that Mick is in need of them, as Lily says: "You poor young fellow, caught in here like a rabbit in a trap. Sure how could you have known where to come for help" (*BL* 159). All through scene Four, Lily and Jack talk nonstop, giving Mick no chance to air his own opinions. Like the Mormons, they are only interested in winning more people over to their order.

Dissociation from institutionalized religion is also represented in *The Passion,* which has much in common with *The Lament* in its representation of spiritual dereliction and moral bankruptcy. Inglis argues that the waning of religious identification is closely related to an increase in the significance of other forms of personal identities, most of which stem from the growth of the capitalist market and the commodification of social relations ("The Religious Field" 129). This is clearly exemplified in the representation of Jerome Furlong. Jerome was educated as an architect, but he works in advertising, in his lover Clara's words, "composing jingles for cars and banks" (*PJ* 9). As an advertising executive, Jerome is one of the true buttresses of the capitalist consumer society. He is successful in his job, and has an ensured position of financial security and esteem. He is ambitious to earn more money; as his wife Penny puts it, "[m]oney, money, money, that's the only god you've had…" (*PJ* 48). Jerome defines himself as an

atheist believing only in "[his] own eyes…logic…reason" (*PJ* 29). He also avoids revealing his emotions and feelings since when confronting them he "hate[s] feeling so powerless" (*PJ* 47). He and Penny lost their baby girl seven years before when she died of lung disease; Jerome denies that he has been suffering since then; he has dedicated himself to his job and to making money in order to suppress his emotions and feelings. In a way, he has lost touch with his soul.

Bolger portrays the spiritual shallowness and moral bankruptcy in the materialist Celtic Tiger society, but he does not represent it as a reason for the weakening of traditional Catholicism. Instead, he regards this weakening as a possible way to spiritual reconstruction, which suggests his constructive postmodernist view. For instance, Mick rejects identification with any forms of institutionalized religion. He tries, instead, to create his own spirituality according to his own values and commitments. In this context, Griffin argues that everyone embodies spirituality, be it a nihilistic or materialistic spirituality ("Spirituality" 2). By means of representing insistent and pestering behavior from the Mormons and the Legion of Mary, Bolger questions the institutionalized religions in their denial of "pluralism and variety in favor of universal, abstract systems" (Charlesworth 155). They are shown as seeing societies as homogeneous unities and thus believing that their teachings would appeal to everybody in the same way, although young Irish people like Mick clearly no longer see Catholicity as part of their identity. He wants to organize his life based on Diogenes' philosophy which constitutes Mick's way of experiencing spirituality. Obviously, in the play the erosion of the religious world has been not a destruction but a reconstruction (Tilley vii).

Although Bolger seems to picture the temporal and mortal world embodied in a gloomy and crude urban reality as an external and finite socio-political reality, "it is constantly disturbed by the inner voice of the transcendent and the infinite" (Dantanus 298). This is suggested especially in the coexistence of life and death in his plays. Griffin states that the constructive postmodern worldview that involves a new animism, makes life after death a priori possible (*God and Religion* 88). In *The Lament,* Arthur wanders around Dublin, but whether he is alive or dead is left

an open question. Many times it is implied that Arthur is already dead. The passport control scenes suggest Arthur's liminal position as in the following example:

> Arthur…What country have I come from? I can't remember! I can't! Which one?
> Frontier Guard. One you cannot return. (*LAC* 58)

The Frontier Guard exceeds his position as a frontier guard and suggests that Arthur is now dead and has entered the otherworld. Thus, there is some confusion concerning whether or not the play's universe is this world or the otherworld. In addition to the border scenes, Arthur enters into a dialogue with his dead mother and talks to her about past days. He is surprised that his mother can talk to him even though she is dead:

> Arthur…Why am I talking to you, Ma? The dead cannot talk.
> Friend. They can, son. But only among themselves. (*LAC* 32)

This example also indicates that Arthur is already dead.

As Pelletier points out the play is timeless, creating a dream world of its own (250). The stage directions at the opening of the play encourages this possibility:

> *Stage goes to blackout. Over the music comes a sharp banging of sticks on the drum and the walls…In the sudden silence and growing dim light we discern the three figures each holding a death mask over their face and standing poised with sticks raised. As each one speaks they slowly converge on Arthur who now lies with Kathy sleeping uneasily under a white cloth beside the box.* (*LAC* 3)

After this, the Frontier Guard appears and is directed to say "menacingly", "[d]ecide Arthur. With me or against me" (*LAC* 3). This opening scene actually represents Arthur's murder scene, and the Frontier Guard's utterance foreshadows Deignan's attempt to force Arthur to work for him. Thus, from the very beginning, Bolger puts Arthur in an in-between situation.

In *The Lament* Bolger blends external and internal realities, thereby challenging crude realism and materialism. However, here there is no quest in terms of faith and religion in this play. This quest is included in *Blinded* and *The Passion*. In these plays, Bolger focuses on "a longing for a spiritual dimension to

replace or accompany traditional religious faith" (Paul Murphy, *Shattered Mirror* 46). In *Blinded,* as we have seen, Mick refuses to join any religious order, but Bolger does not present a rough individualism or materialism in Mick's rejection of institutionalized religion. Instead, he adds a surreal and mystical dimension to his life. As soon as Mick manages to get rid of the Mormons and the Legion of Mary people, his privacy is invaded in a different way by the Head of the Irish Saint Oliver Plunkett[60]. Mick's neighbors leave a box containing the Head of Oliver Plunkett in Mick's room. They have stolen the Head from St. Peter's Church in order to get a ransom from the Church. They ask Mick to keep the parcel for a couple of days:

> Ollie. We're leaving a wee tad of a parcel, Mick. We'll collect it when we're back down in a few days' time.
> Mick (*confused*). What? You're leaving what?
> Ollie. Don't be bother opening it, just leave it under the bed. But look after it and don't go showing it to anybody. (*BL* 171)

Although his friends warns Mick not to open the parcel, out of curiosity he opens it, and recieves a shock:

> *Standing to one side, he slowly cuts through the tape holding the box together, then carefully lifts the lid. A look of horror covers his face as gradually a crooked human head is revealed. He backs away, tossing the lid of the box away from him in terror and blesses himself.*
> (Mesmerised, speaking with difficulty.) The Head of Oliver Plunkett! (He looks at the closed door and shouts.) You stole the head of Saint Oliver Plunkett. (Pause, then a shout of great indignity.) And you left the shaggering thing with me! (*BL* 172)

When Mick lights a cigarette nervously, the Head begins to speak, to ask for a cigarette for himself:

> The Head. Well, don't offer them around. Can you no see I've a mouth on me too?
> *Mick shudders, his whole body convulsed with terror. Slowly, Mick takes the cigarette from his mouth and, as if in a dream, reaches slowly over to place the cigarette in the mouth of the Head.* (*BL* 173)

[60] Sir Oliver Plunkett is one of the sacred images of Irish national resistance and Catholic martyrdom. He was executed by the English as a Papsist traitor in 1681. His head is preserved in St. Peter's Church in Drogheda, Ireland (O'Toole, "Frontier" xi).

From this moment the Head begins to haunt Mick's life. However, unlike the other people who have invaded Mick's room, the Head does not want Mick to join any religious group. He just wants Mick to keep him company. In the opening of Act Two Scene One, he gives a long sermon in order to convince Mick that he is a real saint so Mick should not harm him in any way. Mick is extremely scared and instantly assumes that he is being asked to convert to a religion, which he accepts:

> The Head… I have come with a mission in which you must play your chosen part.
> …
> Mick (*cowering*) Master, give me your words. Though the world declare me mad I'll stand on Dublin's bridges and preach to whoever will listen. (*BL* 178)

However, this is not a true, heartfelt and lasting conversion, and when he overcomes his fears he decides to question the Head. He reads about Saint Oliver Plunkett's life and asks the Head some questions:

> Mick. What was your mother's Christian name?
> The Head. You never asked your mother personal questions in my day.
> Mick. Then the name of your mother's cousin who became Bishop of Ardagh and Meath?
> The Head (*in difficulty*). Ah… Paddy?
> Mick (checking the book) A lucky guess. When did your sister Clare enter the convent in France.
> The Head. When…she attained the age of puberty, my son.
> Mick…(*He snaps the book shut in triumph*.) I'm rid of you. You never had a sister Clare. (*BL* 182)

Upon this ridiculous interrogation, the Head confesses that he is not really the Head of Saint Oliver Plunkett, but of George MacSpracken, a thief who was executed on the same day and mistaken for Saint Oliver, as he says "I was just a thief. He was a good man" (*BL* 184).

Mick warns the Head that priests from the Cathedral will immediately begin to search for it:

> Mick. Ah now, don't be getting too comfortable. The nationwide hunt will start soon. I'm surprised they've managed to keep it quiet. They must have closed the cathedral.

> The Head. Not at all. Sure they've three papier mache replicas of me. Often they stick one in when they bring me away for a hoover. (*BL* 185)

When Mick is surprised by the Head's revelations, the Head further claims that "(t)he clergy can be men of surprisingly little faith" (*BL* 185). As in Father Welsh's case, Bolger's clergy may not have a solid faith. In fact Bolger's drama as a whole reimagined the roles and functions of Catholicism and its clergy, refashioning both through his writing (Paula Murphy, "Dermot Bolger" n.pag.). The Head's revelations suggest that the clergy is not a homogenous group consisting of truly devoted men of religion.

Mick is almost sure that the Head will try to convert him to a specific sect or religion, like other people around him. However, the Head just wants to enjoy the moment and so does Mick:

> Mick. Well, come on then.
> The Head. Come on what?
> Mick. Proffer me advice. Everybody else does.
> The Head (*dismissively*). I will in my bollocks. You can dance through the streets in a kimono for all I care.
> Mick. Convert me then. Let's get it over with.
> The Head (*puzzled*). Convert you to what?
> Mick. Communism, Catholicism, whatever you're having yourself…Aren't you worried for my welfare? Don't you wish me well?
> The Head (*evil grin*). I wish you'd roll another joint.
> Mick (*grins suddenly*) You know, I could get like to you. (*BL* 189-190)

Mick begins to like the Head only after he understands that he will not force him into doing anything.

After enjoying the Head's company, Mick decides to put aside his concerns not to offend the Mormons and the Legion of Mary people; when they visit Mick in the last scene, he at last protests against them, saying, "You are like vultures around my neck" (*BL* 200), and he decisively declares that he wants to live as he likes and to believe in his own way:

> Elder Stanford. Had you found your way to God?

> Mick. No! And I'll find it by my shagging self. You're all the same, Mormons, Jehovahs, Catholics, Moonies, circling around, looking for weaknesses. That's what you want, people too terrified to make decisions…Don't tell me about sin. I'll tell you, I've lied and cheated, I'd ride a nun's arse through a church railing, but whatever the fuck is out there when I keel off this planet I'll face It, Him or Her or Nothingness in my own way my own way my own way. (*BL* 200-1).

Mick wants to build his own faith through his own quest, and even if he decided to believe in God, it should be an independent belief, not depending on belonging to any religious orders or groups.

The Head offers a realm of transcendence, being a body which continues to live after death, and thereby violating the line between life and death. Inserting this realm into Mick's life, Bolger symbolically shows the possibility of the spiritual of existing without the impositions of traditional formalized metaphysics. Moreover, Bolger's positioning of the Head against the Mormons and the Legion of Mary people can be considered as a challenge to traditional religious sensibilities by means of a representation of "the normally voiceless sections of society" (Shortt 119). In one sense, the Head is quite similar to (McDonagh's) Valene's saints, existing only on the level of simulacra. The authenticity and originality of religious images are thus put into question "by revealing the precious relic as a fraud" (Wald 22). Nevertheless, this problematizing leads to a more genuine and liberated way of experiencing spirituality.

In both *The Lament* and *Blinded* Bolger is in quest of the spiritual life which seems to be lacking in urban Ireland, and which resists conventional religious forms. In *The Passion,* this search is deepened with Jerome's experiences of the stigmata and a ghost appearing in the middle of his secular and materialist world. Bolger reveals that when writing *The Passion* he was thinking of the affluent Dublin men and women who were benefiting most from the Celtic Tiger. He wondered what could cause the most upset and devastation to their world. He decided that it would be either a tidal wave or the experience of God. He chose the latter (qtd. in O'Reilly 235). In spite of his wealthy and prosperous life, Jerome is afflicted with spiritual dryness. He is one of those who have profited

most from the Celtic Tiger. As Trotter puts it, through Jerome, Bolger actually shows the spiritual costs of urban development on those making the most profit from it (*Irish Theatre* 182).

Having experienced the stigmata, Jerome is distraught because he cannot make sense of what is happening to him. He adheres to his strict atheist worldview for a while. For instance, while he is in hospital to have his hands treated, he meets Rita, a woman living in Ballymun whose granddaughter, Jacinta, is about to die from cystic fibrosis. Rita is a religious person waiting for God to rescue her granddaughter. According to Jerome, she is waiting in vain:

> Rita … If it's God's will, a donor organ will be found. Is it any wonder that half the time I can't even pray ?
> Jerome. Don't bother. You might as well be talking to the speaking clock, except at least the speaking clock answers back.
> Rita (caustically) Is that right? So what do you believe in, Smarty-pants?
> Jerome. My own eyes … logic … reason. The objects can't move by themselves, wounds don't keep reopening. (*PJ* 29)

Jerome here reflects his disbelief in God, and what Griffin defines as the mechanistic view of nature. In this respect, Jerome represents a modern mind since he rejects miracles, even though his own words contradict themselves (he can see that his wounds do keep reopening).

It does not take long however for Jerome to break with his strict mechanistic world view. He realizes that he is experiencing something metaphysical. Even if he cannot fully make sense of what is happening to him, he describes his experience to Clara in the following way: "Something entered my bloodstream last night. It's there still, pumping round my head" (*BJ* 35). Clara first thinks that Jerome is hallucinating under the effect of cocaine:

> Clara. Cocaine.
> Jerome. God.
> Clara. What?
> Jerome. Or the devil or some manifestation I don't understand but which shouldn't be here. God should be like the measles, a short childhood illness we can't get twice. He went out with black and white TV. But, can't you feel it around you? Something good or diabolical or both. Something in this flat, watching us. (*BJ* 35)

Although Jerome believes that he has totally eliminated God from his life, he is now astonished at the supernatural things happening around him, which he cannot explain through pure reason.

According to Clara, if not suffering from the influence of cocaine, Jerome must be going through a nervous breakdown: "You're having a nervous breakdown. It's nothing to be ashamed of. We can get help...You're simply not well" (*PJ* 35). Like Jerome, Clara represents the modern mind. After Jerome turns away from his strict atheism and starts to see the event as a metaphysical one, Clara tries to change his mind, saying half-mockingly: "Religion is a dangerous thing. I'm glad we did French and computers instead. We never felt the need to tie ourselves up in chains…Things like that don't happen, they're only metaphors" (*PJ* 64). As Trotter observes, a child of the high-tech, Celtic Tiger generation, Clara resists what she considers as a throw-back to Catholic beliefs from the previous generation (*Irish Theatre* 181).

Rita, however, is not a modern mind; as soon as she hears what has happened to Jerome she thinks that Jerome's experience has a metaphysical dimension:

> Jerome. No cable. I woke up in McBride Tower around midnight to see a boy in a blue jacket leaning over me, just for the flick of an eyelid. "Play Jesus for me," he said. 'Play Jesus'. Then the bastard was gone and there was a burst of pain as nails were hammered into my flesh.
> …..
> Rita….You should see a priest.
> Jerome. I don't like priests, I don't believe…Look tell me again that I'm stark raving mad. Say it's lunacy to believe that these could somehow be the wounds of Christ! (*PJ* 30)

Rita appreciates the event within a Catholic context and believes that Jerome has been assigned a religious mission to help people:

> Rita. I believe God has chosen you.
> Jerome. Why?
> Rita. He chose fishermen and labourers, people who could never explain why He has chosen them. Don't you see?...
> Jerome. Then what do I do with these stupid wounds?
> Rita. Heal.

> Jerome. What?
> Rita. Look around you, Mister. If ever a healer was needed then here and now is the place.
> Jerome. I can't heal anyone.
> Rita. No. But God can...through you. (*PJ* 55)

Therefore, Rita wants Jerome to pray for her granddaughter, and when Jerome refuses, she insistently says: "You can't run away from it, Mister. You don't know what you can do till you try. I asked you to pray for my granddaughter...Why do you think we met? I'd been praying for a sign in the hospital chapel, for some glimmer of hope, then suddenly there you were in the waiting room" (*PJ* 55-6). Although Jerome is not convinced with Rita's arguments, he is still sure that he has encountered something that transcends his materialist and secular world.

Jerome gradually comes to self-recognition. He begins to see that his life so far has been meaningless and without spiritual depth; he says, "Everything I've done for years is a mockery" (*PJ* 37). On the other hand, Clara now thinks that he is just suffering from guilt because of the secret affair between them:

> Clara. I know it's logical to feel guilt, even years afterwards.
> Jerome. What has logic to do with anything. Explain this with your logic. (*undoing the bandage on one hand*.) Tell me I'm sufficiently neurotic to inflict this on myself. (*PJ* 38)

Jerome realizes that his arrogantly dry logic cannot explain everything. At this point he denies the impositions of the modern mind. He begins to ask, "what if God plays by different rules?" (*PJ* 38). However, he cannot convince Clara who still believes that "[t]here is no God, only guilt. There are delusions and drugs to cure them" (*PJ* 38).

In order to face this "beyond" Jerome once again goes to the flat in Ballymun. He has some doubts: maybe there is no ghost there, but he is making it up. He challenges the ghost: "You are not here, kid, are you? I'm talking to myself (*He sits down and takes a slug*.) Clara's right, I'm having a breakdown...Guilt and the cocaine did the rest. It's time for home with my tail between my legs" (*PJ* 42). Just at that moment, strange things begin to happen in the room:

> He smiles bitterly and takes another slug. Suddenly the bottle is tugged from his mouth and smashes against the wall. The packing case he sits on tumbles over, throwing him on his knees, while other objects get thrown about in one continuous motion. Jerome looks around in terror, then raises his freely bleeding hand as if protecting his eyes against a brilliant glare. (*PJ* 43)

Thus, Jerome has ascertained, in great fear, that the room is really haunted, and he has been stigmatized: "Why have you chosen me, Christ? Why does it have to be me?" (*PJ* 43). After this brief fit of resentment, he comes to terms with this mysterious power. He tries to describe what he has experienced to Penny in the following way:

> Jerome...On Thursday night I thought there was just the boy's presence there. But last night there was another presence. Outside, not in a radiance pressing against the balcony window, hovvering like a sword of light under the door, desparate to reach him.
> Penny. What are you saying?
> Jerome. Call it God, the Devil, call it what you will, but it was like a throbbing wave of heat. The very feel of it against the glass scorched my soul before it vanished and that terrible coldness returned, the sense of a child hanging from the neck alone. (*PJ* 45)

Penny does not believe Jerome and thinks that he has been attacked by someone. Jerome is very disappointed because he thought that Penny, a religious Protestant, could understand him:

> Jerome. I thought you were the one believed in God?
> Penny (*flustered*). This isn't about God. (*PJ* 46)

Penny has also grown up in a modern world so that there is no room for miracles in her world either; as she declares "I'm no use to either of us by believing in fairy tales" (*PJ* 48). Jerome, however believes that "[j]ust for once in [his] life [he]'s trying to deal with the truth" (*PJ* 46). He also states that "All day I've tried convincing myself I'm crazy, but I see things with a clarity I haven't known since childhood" (PJ 36). He thus wants to follow this newly found spirituality. He decides to leave the arrogant, materialist and hypocritical life he has been leading for years. As Trotter puts it, "[a]lthough Jerome is an atheist, the stigmata destroys

his aloof attitude towards community in both his Dublin and Ballymun lives, and connects him to a tradition of religious belief, personal responsibility, connection, and healing that he does not want" (*Irish Theatre* 181).

Jerome's first step is to consent to pray for Rita's granddaughter, which he had previously refused to do. He asks to be left alone with the sick girl, and then he prays to God: "Just give me this chance to atone. Give me this girl's suffering. Strike me dead or dumb or crippled if you wish, just let her breathing come easy...Let my suffering have some purpose" (*PJ* 58). Jerome thinks that he does not know how to pray, and thus he decides to talks to God quite naturally, without following a ritual pattern, as seen in his prayer.

In his prayer, Jerome also discloses the pain he felt for his own daughter. The hospital where Jacinta, the sick girl, is being treated is the one where Jerome's daughter died seven years ago. In his prayer, he refers to her as well: "You owe me one, you bastard, bringing me back here, making me relive every memory ... I've seen my daughter struggle into this world, then curl up into a small stiff ball" (*PJ* 58). Jerome talks to God in, what many people would consider an improper way, calling him a bastard, for instance, but he expresses his feelings frankly, and he is quite sincere in his wish to take on Jacinta's suffering.

Jacinta dies at the end, but in peace and feeling the prayer of Jerome. Rita relates to Jerome the last moments of her granddaughter:

> She woke ... Her eyes seemed to wake me, so blue. (*A child's voice*.) 'I saw a man, Gran. I had a dream. The carriageway down to the library was empty. The roundabout empty, everywhere empty. And this lovely piebald horse came galloping down from the standing stones on the slope. Galloping towards me, with great friendly eyes. And he was upon it, Gran, some man with blood soaking from his hands. "It's all right, Jacinta," he says, "you can let go now, your Mam will be okay and your Gran too without you. It's all right to let go this pain if you want." Then he disappeared, but he left the big piebald horse there...(*Own voice*.) She closed her eyes, settling back into sleep, but I knew she was dying...I'd forgotten what Jacinta looked like when not in pain. Yet I never saw her as content, that blip, blip, blip on the machine till it stopped. (*PJ* 85-6)

In Jerome's case, Bolger rewrites Jesus's passion and the Christian themes of suffering and redemption. Yet, Jerome is not a mock-Christ figure like Father Welsh. Although Jacinta dies, Jerome's suffering and praying are not abortive because Jacinta died without suffering, which also comforts Rita. Furthermore, Jacinta's vision of Jerome implies a geninue metaphysical intrusion into her experience.

Jerome's experience is also redemptive for his own life: he confesses his betrayal to Penny though he knows that Penny will leave him; and he confronts his suffering about his daughter. Although he loses his present prosperous and seemingly enviable familial and social life, he is content now to have the chance to rebuild his life in a more honest way. In this context, O'Reilly explains that self-destruction and self-realization cannot be separated in this play. Jerome's own self-destruction is the very site for his transformation (187). Jerome reveals this to his brother at the end of the play: "I don't know. I should feel scared. But there's a presence, beating within the beat of my heart. I'd forgotten that it used to be there when I was a child. I don't deserve to feel it, a puny scared-shitless nobody like me" (*PJ* 87). Derek understands that Jerome is about to leave, and asks him where he will go. Jerome's answer confirms that he is now on the threshold of a new life: "To start again as myself" (*PJ* 88). In Griffin's view, the world is a spiritual matrix, and when Jerome decides to live in harmony with this in his own way, he overcomes his spiritual dereliction and his distant and insincere way of life.

Bolger brings together the atheist views of Jerome and Clara, the Protestantism of Penny and the Catholicism of Rita. All of these views fail to explain Jerome's experience because his newly found spirituality is a personal one which cannot be explained with the help of universal and abstract systems. It supports Griffin's view of a constructive postmodernism that is not only more adequate to our experience but also more genuinely postmodern. Through its return to organicism and its acceptance of nonsensory perception, it opens itself to the recovery of truths and values from various forms of premodern thought and practice that had been dogmatically rejected by modernity (*Primordial Truth* 13).

4.5 Conclusion

The plays of McDonagh and Bolger represent the Celtic Tiger society, a society defined by the concepts of late capitalism such as competitive individualism, consumerism and materialism. As they depict it, this society is less spiritual and unwilling to be oriented by Catholic impositions. Both playwrights represent a weakened bond between Irishness and Catholicism, but they do so in dissimilar ways. McDonagh places Catholic imagery and rituals "in a world long abandoned by God" (O'Toole, *Critical Moments* 193). Although their lives are surrounded by religious motifs, McDonagh's characters constantly act against religious teachings, and they do not abstain from sins specifically forbidden by the Bible. Therefore, religious elements all exist on a level of simulacra which refer back to themselves rather than a transcendental beyond.

Bolger, on the other hand, goes beyond the representation of spiritual depthlessness. He represents the loss of religious values and moral bankruptcy in Dublin society realistically, but his realistic representation is disrupted by supernatural elements like ghost-like figures, the experience of stigmata and a talking Head. All these elements add a mystical dimension to the portrayal of Dublin society, and suggest the possibility of spirituality in its materialistic world. Moreover, in Bolger's plays the dysfunction of Catholicism leads to a more pluralistic reconfiguration of spirituality. Although they deny any kind of religious identification, Bolger's characters are mostly pushed to create their own spirituality and shape it in their own ways.

Patrick Hanafin calls Irish nationalism "a theocratic nationalism" for its close connection to Catholicism (2). Catholicism is one of the anchoring points of Irish nationalism. However, McDonagh and Dermot Bolger reveal the erosion of this anchoring point. Thus, they enforce a necessary redefinition of a former stability, thereby disclosing their postnationalist perspectives.

CHAPTER 5

FAMILY

Family and familial values are integral concerns of all nationalist discourses. In all types of nationalisms, a nation is basically regarded as the metaphorical and sociological extension of the families which constitute it. Smith states that the metaphor of the family is indispensable to nationalisms, that is, the nation is depicted as one great family. In this way the family of the nation overrides and replaces the individual's family but evokes similarly strong loyalties and vivid attachments. (*National Identity* 79). Therefore, the image of a family can be used as a microcosm of the nation-state and as a guardian of the unity and integrity of the national community.

Irish nationalist discourse is not an exception to this perception and use of images of the family. The idea of a well-defined and stable family representing Irishness has long been an important part of Irish nationalist discourse, particularly during the early post-independence years. Irish political and cultural nationalists were closely involved in defining and framing what was to become the image of an ideal Irish family. They aimed at "securing a home not only in the sense of a self-determining Irish nation but in the sense of a stable, cohesive, more or less monolithic community organised around a single value and belief system" (Hanafin 11). The family was supposed to be the core and repository of that system.

The central place ascribed to the family was officially recognised in the Irish Constitution of 1937: "The State recognises the Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society, and as a moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights, antecedent and superior to all positive

law."[61] It was De Valera who led to the incorporation of the image of an ideal family culture into the Constitution. De Valera believed that a firm moral foundation was a key to upholding the integrity of the State, and that the family played a central role in developing the moral personality of the individual and, therefore in ensuring the preservation of the Irish nation (Keating n.pag.). The family was considered to be the provider of the future morally upright generations needed for national sustainability.

The concept of Irish family and related domestic values were definitely associated with the two other constituents of Irishness discussed so far in this study, land and religion. What was conceived as an ideal Irish family was one largely defined by rural and Catholic elements:

> Ireland was to be celebrated as a preindustrial nation; its identity was to be found in its rural character. The sanctity of the family was to be preserved, the [Roman Catholic] Church was to remain a central social institution second only to the family, and the farm was to serve as the backbone of a healthy, thriving society. (Prager 42)

Catholicism's former power, even domination, over Irish social life gave it a definitive influence on the family. The Church accepted the family as a site in which Catholic values could be preserved and transferred from generation to generation. In his 1933 book, *The Old Love of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Ireland*, the Reverend Cassidy suggested that the Irish family should be devoted to the Mother of the Holy family, and such a devotion would encourage the preservation of those domestic virtues which were the fundamental props of wholesome nationhood (qtd. in Meaney 13).

The Constitution-sponsored ideal of the family was designated as "a particular, two-parent, heterosexual single residential patriarchal family form" (Kuhling and Keohane 21). Legal regulations before and after the 1937 Constitution were mostly directed at the organization and preservation of that kind of family. The 1935 Criminal Law Amendment Act made it illegal to import or sell contraceptives, and the 1935 Conditions of Employment Bill set a limit on the

[61] Article 41.1.1

number of women workers in industry, and married women were banned from most jobs. The 1937 constitution banned divorce (Howes 135). These regulations show the state setting out to outline and control sexuality and gender roles within the family; the embedding of gender roles within the concept of a national identity was very deep. According to Meaney, "[i]n post-colonial Southern Ireland a particular construction of sexual and familial roles became the very substance of what it meant to be Irish" (6).

McClintock states that all nations depend on powerful constructions of gender, and they have historically amounted to the sanctioned institutionalization of gender difference (61). The main symptom of this in some nations can simply be detected in a general tendency to identify the nation with the image of a mother or father and to define it as a Motherland or Fatherland. In the case of Irish nationalism, the association of the nation with mother imagery was quite strong, thereby both reflecting and creating a cultural iconography situating women as mothers and home-makers. This also constituted the ideological ground for confining women within the boundaries of home, which was confirmed constitutionally as well:

> In particular, the State recognizes that by her life within the home, woman gives to the state a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.
> The State shall, therefore, endeavor to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labor to the neglect of their duties in the home.[62]

The rhetoric of Irish nationalism was patriarchal, as reflected in 1937 Constitution. A woman operating outside of the home was regarded as unnatural, or even traitorous as she deprived the State of the key support for the common good, that is, the family (Eldred *Culture* 61).

Motherhood was considered as the most important duty of Irish women. The Irish mother image was utterly stripped of sexuality. In relation to this mother image, Irish womanhood was conceived through the negation of female sexuality and the elevation of the concept of virginity. "Woman became a national symbol,

[62] Articles 41.2.1 and 41.2.2

the custodian of tradition; [. . . and] motherhood was central to the image of women. As desexualized mothers, women became the repositories of private morality within the triumphant patriarchal nuclear family" (Aragay 58).

However, the realization of the Catholic image of an ideal Irish family was, in practice, bound to remain a forlorn cause. The nationalist discourse was always seeking to define this ideal situation against the real-life conditions. Hanafin argues that the new state was in a very real sense unreal, a melange of myths and stories (15), and the ideal Irish family was one of the myths which Hanafin refers to. The Irish nationalist discourse aimed to create an image of the unified and stable Irish family without reference to social diversities such as class and urban/rural divisions. There were, however, different types of families in a wide variety of social layers. Furthermore, it was clearly impossible to sustain a homogenous and stable family ideal within an ever changing society like Ireland. Following the takeover of Lemass in 1959, economic developments set in motion a social transformation that gradually began to open up fissures in what had previously been a monolithically dominant discourse on national identity, gender and sexuality (Aragay 60). During the Celtic Tiger period economic and social changes continued to influence and transform the private life as well as the social life of Irish people. Individualism, mobility, flexibility and competitiveness were prompted both as personal attributes and as dominant cultural values thereby displacing conventional nationalism's demands to prioritize familial values (Kuhling and Keohane 5).

5.1 Family in Irish Theatre

Familial issues have always been widely represented in Irish plays. In early nationalist drama images of women primarily came into focus in representations of the family; at the same time, Ireland as a woman was the dominant trope in the early Abbey plays. In relation to this trope, the ideal woman within the structure of an ideal family was represented either as a chaste, submissive virgin or as a wise old woman. These images, defined by the masculinist patriarchal imagination, were basically inspired by both Celtic and Catholic motifs. Women

were associated with either the goddess Cathleen ni Houlihan[63] or the Catholic Virgin Mary, which resulted in the emergence of an iconography of pure and self-sacrificing women.

The combination of the paradigms of Cathleen and the Virgin Mary specified women's function as guardians of an untainted essence of Irish identity. Women were expected to maintain their own chastity, to bear Irish children within the confines of the ideal Irish family, and to preserve the domestic interior as an inviolable shrine to national identity (Harris, *Gender* 68). Kearney points out that the male counterpart of the Cathleen/Virgin Mary image is Cuchulain[64] or the martyred Christ (118). The Cuchulain-like hero is bravely willing to sacrifice himself for the woman character, who symbolizes Ireland. The woman counterpart accepts the sacrifice of the valiant hero, and thus fulfills the role of transforming that death into a rebirth (Harris, *Gender* 68). For instance, in *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*[65] (1902), co-written by Yeats and Lady Gregory, Cathleen appears as a wise woman whose four green fields have been stolen by a stranger. She gets back her fields and turns into a young girl with "the walk of a queen", following Michael's sacrifice of his life for her (*Cathleen ni Houlihan* 88).

To put aside these idealized images, familial and related gender issues have, in fact, rarely been represented in such a simplistic way in Irish drama. Although, the nationalist rhetoric took for granted the family as a unified, homogeneous and seamless whole, Irish playwrights usually avoided idealistic representations of Irish family and images of charming, proud and motherly women or virginal figures or courageous and sacrificial men. In their plays, families were, instead, treated like mirrors reflecting Ireland's turbulent years during nation-making and then in its periods of modernization and then globalization.

Taking the brunt of harsh nationalist criticisms for not representing an ideal Irish family, playwrights like Synge and O'Casey tried to reveal realistically what

[63] As referred to on page 9

[64] See page 9

[65] See page 9

they saw as problematic in relation to the family: issues such as alcoholism, poverty and inter-generational conflicts. To illustrate, Synge's *The Playboy of Western World* focuses on the conflict between a drunk and offensive father and his once submissive son, Christy Mahon. Christy's resentment of his father results in his leaving his family to arrive in "a village, on a wild coast of Mayo" (*The Playboy* 10). There he mesmerizes the locals, telling them that he has killed his father. It turns out, however, that the father was only wounded. At the end of the play, Christy is reconciled with his father on the condition that he will be accepted as the rebellious son that he has claimed to be. As Richards puts it, Christy, and by implication Ireland, frees himself from the past and starts out on his journey of liberation ("The Playboy" 39). The intergenerational conflict is one of the central tropes of the nationalist/postcolonial Irish drama. It mainly functions to symbolize the colonial relationship and struggle for independence, as it does in the *The Playboy of the Western World.* In this conflict, the son eventually asserts his adult masculinity either in action or by emigrating (Fitzpatrick 177).

Nationalistically-conceived gender roles in the family were also contravened by the Irish playwrights. In the plays of O'Casey, for instance, strong, brave and hardworking father figures were scarce, as were obedient, submissive and passive motherly figures. "Ireland's sluggish economy, [and] the Free State's cautious, ultra-stable economic policies" had led to unemployment, poverty and a consequent alcoholism, which hit Irish families severely (Howes 135). As the reflection of this situation in the theatre, Kiberd explains, the Irish father was portrayed as having "retreated into a demeaning cycle of alcoholism and unemployment. [He] was often a defeated man, whose wife frequently won the bread and usurped his domestic power, while the priest usurped his spiritual authority" (380). Kiberd further points out that "O'Casey is famous for his juxtapositions of industrious mothers and layabout fathers" (381). For instance, in *Juno and Paycock,* he portrays a working-class Dublin family experiencing the ill-effects of the Irish Civil War. Juno is a dominant and strong mother who tries to keep her family together despite the indifference of her husband, 'Captain' Jack Boyle. Jack is a drunken, lazy but boastful man. Juno works hard to support her

unemployed husband, her daughter and her son who lost an arm during the Civil War. Mr. Boyle, on the other hand, is unwilling to work. He instead fiddles around with his parasitic friend, Joxer Daly. In contrast to the indifference of nationalistic discourse to class and urban influences over a family, O'Casey attempts to reveal the impossibilty of talking about idealistic families within the context of the harsh living-conditions of working-class people. Thus, "[h]is sort of realism was a shift away from a merely symbolic representation of Irishness that achieved such success in plays like *Cathleen ni Houlihan"* (Frawley 15).

In the later periods of Irish drama, playwrights continued to display discontent with ideal images and criticism of the realities of Irish family life. Impotent or tyrannical father/husband figures remained on stage. Kiberd argues that in societies undergoing transformation, the relation between fathers and sons is reversed. In the Irish context, this was revealed through the revolt of angry sons against discredited fathers (*Inventing Ireland* 380). As has already been mentioned, in Friel's *Philadelphia Here I Come*[66], Gar experiences a great lack of communication with his father, one of the main reasons which lead to Gar's decision to leave Ireland.

As another example, in *A Whistle in the Dark* (1961) Tom Murphy portrays the life of an emigrant family living in England. Of all four brothers, only Michael Carney has a proper job while others make money through pimping and other corrupt dealings. The authoritative father, Dada, seemingly a powerful and brave man, is admired by all the sons except Michael. As the play develops, Dada turns out to be a coward when there is a risk of a fight with a rival Irish clan. He runs away from the fight. Like O'Casey, Murphy also avoids picturing an ideal Irish family, instead he represents a shattered family with a failed father figure.

These examples imply that, accepted as a microcosm of Irish society on stage, the Irish family has mostly been used to reflect the problems and ills of that society. When it comes to the Celtic Tiger period, Irish playwrights were still dealing with problematic familial issues. In this period there was also a demythologizing, indeed a deconstruction, of the very idea of an ideal, stable and

[66] See page 14

homogenous family. The following parts of this chapter will look into the treatment of the family and familial issues by McDonagh and Bolger, who both discredit the family as a constituent of Irishness. In their plays, familial roles and relations are problematized through abject representations. Therefore, before the analysis of their plays, the chapter will briefly introduce the ideas of the Kristevan abject and abjection, and their relevance to this study. Unlike in the previous chapters, the same theoretical ground will be used for both playwrights, since abjection is common to both sets of plays, and distinctively used in their handling of familial issues.

Abjection is basically a psychoanalytical concept which aims to explain how subjectivity is constituted, that is, how a person comes to see himself or herself as a separate being with his or her own borders between self and other (McAfee 45). In order to see himself or herself as a separate being, the subject must differentiate itself from others by shedding everything which culture perceives as unclean, disorderly, asocial or antisocial. This process is termed abjection, and all the assumed improper stuff which the subject aims at casting off constitutes the abject (Cavallaro 199). For Kristeva, the process of abjection is necessary for the construction subjectivity because "[i]n our fantasy of an autonomous selfhood, we normally imagine our subjectivity to be identified with the uniqueness and separateness of our individual bodies. We draw an imaginary line around the perimeters of our bodies and define our subjectivity as the unique density of matter contained within that line" (Mansfield 82).

In order to theorize the concept of abjection, Kristeva revisits Lacan's psychoanalytical theories in relation to the construction of subjectivity[67]. She differs from Lacan in that she suggest that the infant's separation from the

[67] According to Lacan, subjectivity starts to be established when the infant catches a glimpse of himself/herself in the mirror and takes the image to be himself/herself. This is a false identification; however it helps the infant develop a sense of unity and wholeness. While previously there have been a series of experiences and sensations, now there is an idea that the self is a unitary being, a subject separate from others (McAfee 46).

maternal body begins earlier than the mirror stage[68]. According to her, even before this stage, the infant begins to separate itself from the motherly body in order to develop borders between "I" and Other, and this process of separation is achieved through abjection. Abjection is necessary for the infant to separate itself from the mother and to develop subjectivity. Therefore, in order to achieve subjectivity, the first thing to be abjected is the mother's body.

Later abjection rejects more things: "[t]he abject is what one spits out, rejects, almost violently excludes from oneself: sour milk, excrement, even a mother's engulfing embrace" (McAfee 46). Bodily wastes, such as excrement, vomit, menstrual blood and urine are also abjected since they are a threat to a clean and proper idea of self. Dirt and defilement are closely associated with the abject. In the seminal work *Purity and Danger,* which Kristeva often referred to, Mary Douglas argued that "dirt is essentially disorder … Dirt offends against order" (2). She further stated that "[r]eflection on dirt involves reflection on the relation of order to disorder, being to non-being, form to formlessness" (5). In relation to Douglas's argument, Kristeva states that "[e]xcrement and its equivalents (decay, infection, disease, corpse, etc.) stand for the danger to identity that comes from without" (*Powers* 71). Thus, by means of their abjection, one could reinforce his/her identity. Kristeva argues that the corpse is the most sickening of wastes (*Powers* 3). Unlike excrement and its equivalents, the corpse challenges identity by blurring the border between life and death. "If dung signifies the other side of the border, the place where I am not and which permits me to be, the corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything" (*Powers* 3).

According to Kristeva, what is abjected is excluded but never totally expelled. It continues to challenge one's own tenuous borders of selfhood, and thus remains as both an unconscious and a conscious threat to one's own clean and proper self (McAfee 46). Kristeva says "from its place of banishment, the abject does not

[68] The mirror corresponds to the ages of six months to 18 months, a stage when the infant begins to recognize his/her image in the mirror (not a literal mirror but rather any reflective surface, for example the mother's face) (Homer 24).

cease challenging its master. Without a sign (for him), it beseeches a discharge, a convulsion, a crying out" (*Powers* 2).

The theory of abjection has a social dimension as well, which makes it relevant to this part of the study. There is a parallel between the construction of subjectivity and that of a bounded, social body. The notion of abjection, referring to that which is rejected as not being a part of the conceptualized self, might be extended to all social systems. That is, social orders operate in a similar manner to the construction of the individual subject in attempting to expel that which is deemed impure (Hanafin 21). The abject is then not only something that threatens a clean and unified self but also what disturbs the social system and order, it is "[w]hat does not respect borders, positions, rules. [It is t]he in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (Kristeva, *Powers* 4).

As in the formation of a unified, autonomous and stable subjectivity, there is in nationalist discourses a tendency to create a stable, clean and undisturbed social order, which may be attained through the exclusion of what disturbs the social system, that is, the exclusion of "those representing what is considered unacceptable, unclean, or anti-social" (Grosz 86). Kristeva suggests that "abject and abjection are my safeguards. The primers of my culture" (*Powers* 2). Abjection underlies the creation and protection of social systems, and in this regard it works in the construction of nations. Abjection may be used to designate the national Other and to expel it from the national unity. The construction of a subject of national self-identification thus entails the rejection or expulsion of certain groups from the national family (Hanafin 13). The family unit can be considered as the source of this imaginary national family: "If the [family] cell is stable, so too are the social institutions built upon it ... Instabilities must therefore be constructed and treated as foreign—not only to the family, not only to one's political position, but also to the nation as a whole" (Conrad 10).

Nationalist causes, then, may deploy abjection in order to claim pure and homogeneous social orders. However, McDonagh and Bolger resort to abject representations in a subversive way, by placing the abjected entity in the very core of Irish society, that is, the family as it is traditionally imagined. Booker asserts

that abject images in literature carry a powerful transgressive potential (125), and the analyses below will show that McDonagh and Bolger draw upon this transgressive potential of the abject by using it to challenge the myth of the ideal Irish family, and thence of "the concept of a homogeneous shared world" (McMullan 90).

Pease explains that whereas nationalist discourse is based on the elimination of differences for the sake of the self-sameness of its ruling assumptions, postnationalist discourse dismantles this opposition (4). In line with Pease's argument, McDonagh and Bolger, through abject characters and images, challenge the idea of a homogeneous social community, while introducing unconventional representations of domestic and familial experience. Pease further states that the postnationalist view understands every social category as the site of an ongoing antagonism between internalized models and external forces. As such, they suggest "an internal divide (the contamination of the excluded/external), whereby the structures underwriting the stability of the national narrative can undergo transformations" (5). In this context, McDonagh and Bolger offer postnationalist responses to the image of the family, by presenting alternative literary projections of family units and familial relations to create a more fluid notion of Irishness. These projections trouble the anticipated organic bond between the nation and the family.

5.2 Family in McDonagh's Leenane: Caught in Abjection

Maureen: I suppose now you'll never be dying. You'll be hanging on forever, just to spite me.
(*BQL* 17)
Valene: I wouldn't cry hard if I lost me only brother. I'd buy a big cake and have a crowd round.
(*LW* 152)

As the previous analyses have shown, McDonagh's Leenane is characterized by hatred, violence and disorder, and these features essentially originate in the families constituting the Leenane community. It is almost impossible to find a

clear example of a nuclear family in Leenane when the familial environments of the main characters are considered. First of all, at least one member of the core family is always missing. In *The Beauty Queen* a father figure is absent in Folans' house and is never referred to throughout the play. In *A Skull* Mick lost his wife seven years before and he has no children. In *Lonesome* the Coleman brothers have lost their father just before the action of the play starts, and a mother figure is never mentioned. The nuclear family concept is thus incomplete and imperfect in these plays. This formal imperfection is extended to the dysfunctional relationships between family members, and is, in turn, transmitted through unhealthy, immoral situations and images of deterioration, decay and death. McDonagh thus undermines the concept of a harmonious, pure and clean Irish family, and its extended version, the rural Irish community, by means of abject family relations, gender roles and familial environment.

In *A Skull* Mick's abject occupation which is defined as "filthy" (*SC* 66) is actually a metaphor for the collapse of family in all three plays. While removing and crushing the bones of the dead, Mick literally demolishes people's family members, as emphasized by Mary's interrogating what Mick has done with the bones of their community members:

> Mary. Questions about where did he put our Padraig when he dug him up is the kind of question, and where did he put our Birgit when he dug her up is the kind of question, and where did he put my poor ma and da when he dug them up is the biggest question!
> Mairtin. Where did you put all Mary's relations, Mick, then, now? The oul bones and whatnot. (*SC* 72)

When it is time for Mick to dig up his own wife's grave and do away with her bones, he sadly says that "Oona left those bones a long time ago, and that's the only thing that they are now, is bones" (*SC* 78). Family members are here equated with bones which Mick has already destroyed. As Kristeva notes, the corpse is the ultimate form of abjection because of its indissolubly close association with death. Portraying family members as dead bodies, McDonagh implies both the fragility and the decay of family structure, and the felt need to reject parts or all of it, which the following analyses of some familial relations will show.

In *Trilogy* familial relations are appallingly destructive, treacherous and devouring. The family is actually "a site for psychological and even biological warfare" (O'Toole, "Murderous" n.pag.). In *The Beauty Queen* the mutually devastating relationship between the mother and daughter has already been presented in the previous chapters. Although Mag has two other daughters, Annette and Margo who left Leenane years ago, they do not show any love or consideration for their mother. The only indication that they might care about her is the dedication they claim to have sent to a radio programme to be announced on Mag's birthday. Mag looks forward to hearing this dedication, but it is not aired: "The dedication Annette and Margo sent we still haven't heard. I wonder what's keeping it?" (*BQL* 3). The dedication is heard at the end of the play, but Mag can never hear this because she is already dead. This gives the reader a hint of the disconnection between family members. Maureen reproaches her sisters for their lack of practical help: "Feck…(*Irritated.*) … Do you see Annette or Margo coming pouring your Complan or buying your oul cod in butter sauce for the week?" (*BQL* 2). Overwhelmed by the drudgery of looking after her demanding and whining mother single handedly, Maureen holds a bitter resentment against her liberated sisters. Later, she reflects her resentment in her imaginary speech to Pato: "Me sisters wouldn't have the bitch. Not even a half-day at Christmas to be with her can them two stand" (*BQL* 50). Maureen is hurt by the unfairness of this situation, so she is furious and vengeful all the time. Thus, her intimacy with Mag is more distressing than her sisters' detachment from their mother. Mag and Maureen are involved in mutual abjection; each rejects and feels disgusted by the other. Their relation also appears as an abject one on the stage, being unhealthy and disturbing.

Maureen hates her mother, and expresses her rejection and disgust of her, that is, "abjects" her many times, using a degrading rhetoric: "You're oul and you're stupid and you don't know what you're talking about. Now shut up and eat your oul porridge" (*BQL* 6), "senile oul hen" (*BQL* 28), "Bitch" (*BQL* 50). She also dreams of her death:

> Maureen. 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 with him at his place after.
> …
> Mag. Well that's not a nice thing to be dreaming!
> Maureen. I know it's not, sure and it isn't a dream-dream at all. It's more of a day-dream. Y'know, something happy to be thinking of. (*BQL* 16)

Her daydreaming reflects Maureen's deeply-felt rejection of her mother. It is also disturbing that she dreams of a man beside her to flirt with in her mother's funeral. Her wish reveals Maureen's sexual frustration; although she is forty years old, she has never had a satisfying emotional or sexual relationship, which she sees as due to her being tied to her mother's care. Therefore, she needs to get rid of her mother (in a way abject her mother) in order to assert her essential individuality.

Maureen's dream comes true only through her own actions; her abjection of her mother culminates in her murdering Mag. Maureen kills her mother and then turns into her very image. She takes Mag's place in her rocking chair and starts to behave like her. This is recognized by Ray at the end of the play, when he visits Maureen after Mag's funeral and catches the similarity between the dead mother and the daughter who now replaces her:

> Maureen. Will you turn the radio up a biteen too, before you go, there, Pato now? Ray I mean…
> …
> Ray. The exact fecking image of your mother you are, sitting there pegging orders and forgetting me name! (*BQL* 60).

In this scene, the borders between self and Other are blurred. This ambiguity is in line with the characteristic of the abject that it always posits a threat to the proper and clean body and to social order. In this sense, there is always the risk of changing into what is abjected, as in the case of Maureen, which suggests the fluidity and instability of both subjectivity and social orders.

The problematic relationship between parent and child is also referred to in *The Lonesome,* although it is not shown on stage. When the play opens, Coleman and Father Welsh are seen to be back from Coleman's father's funeral. Father Welsh, thinking that Coleman must be sad, tries to share his grief: "This house, isn't it going to be awful lonesome now with yere dad gone?" (*LW* 131). As the first indication of the lack of love and affection in the family, Coleman's response to Welsh's question is a sharp "[n]o" (*LW* 131). It is later revealed that he shot his father because he had insulted his hairstyle. When Valene reveals this to Father Welsh, it appears that the murder was not due to only this momentary annoyance but that Coleman had held a grudge against his father since childhood: "[D]idn't Coleman dash out, pull him back be the hair and blow the poor skulleen out his head, the same as he'd been promising to do since the age of eight and da trod on his Scalecrtix[69], broke it in two…" (*LW* 157). Here McDonagh actually parodies the traditional trope of intergenerational conflict in the earlier Irish plays. In nationalist/postcolonial Irish plays, as shown above, the conflict stands mainly for a struggle for liberation on the part of the younger generations. As a result of this struggle the young person, a boy in most cases, is expected to assert his individuality. However, in *The Lonesome* the intergenerational conflict turns into a farcical strife over trivial, childish matters. As in *The Beauty Queen,* the conflict ends with a murder, but the reason for the murder is quite absurd, in turn, it is equally shocking and abhorrent. Moreover, Coleman does not put an end to this conflict by asserting his "own adult masculinity" as expected from the traditional trope (Fitzpatrick 177). Like Maureen, he remains stuck in his abject familial environment, as the further analysis will show.

Fraternal abjection is also a recurrent theme in *The Leenane Trilogy.* In *A Skull* Thomas and Mairtin are brothers but their relationship is a tense one. Thomas continually humiliates his brother. When he first refers to Mairtin, it is certainly not in the terms that audiences would expect a loving brother to use:

Thomas…Where is the young shite anyways?

[69] A brand of toy car racing sets.

> Mick. Gone up to the church. I told him to ask the priest is it right the Church hands out the willies of the dead to passing tinker children to play with
> Thomas. And he hasn't gone?
> Mick. He has gone.
> Thomas. O he's as thick as five thick fellas, the fecker. (*SC* 90).

Thomas degrades his brother calling him a shite, and when he learns that Mick has mocked his brother he does not even defend Mairtin. He shows his low opinion of his brother. Later in the graveyard scene, Thomas pushes Mairtin two times into a grave and kicks dirt at him (*SC* 93, 99). When Mairtin protests, Thomas goes on humiliating him:

> Mairtin. You've always ganging on me, the fecking two of ye.
> Thomas. Ah, the baby's going crying now. (*SC* 93)

Evidently, the relationship between Thomas and Mairtin is not grounded in respect and trust.

Thomas tries to discipline Mairtin by lying to him. For instance, in order to keep him away from the road he lies to him:

> Mairtin…Didn't oul Marcus Rigby kill twins with his tractor, and him over seventy?
> Thomas. No he did not.
> Mairtin. Did he not. Who was it killed twins with his tractor so? It was someone.
> Thomas. No. That was just something I told you when you was twelve to mind you kept out of the road with your bicycle when you saw a tractor coming.
> Mairtin (pause) There was no twins at all?...So all those years I drove my bicycle through hedgrows and banks of skitter and all on account of them poor mangled twins I had on me mind, and it was all for nothing?!
> …
> Thomas. You're still alive anyways, is the main thing (*SC* 97-8).

Although Thomas's lies seem to have been made in order to protect Mairtin, they still create abjection in a Kristevan sense. Kristeva asserts that the traitor, the liar, the criminal with a good conscience, and the killer who claims he is a savior all create abjection (*Powers* 4). Likewise, in his relationship with Mairtin, Thomas is both a traitor and a liar but he claims to be a savior.

Fraternal abjection is noticeable in *The Lonesome* as well. Valene is stiflingly thrifty to the point that he almost leaves no living space to Coleman, as he reveals in the following statement: "This stove is mine, them figurines are mine, this gun, them chairs, that table's mine. What else? This floor, them cupboards, everything in this fecking house is mine, and you don't go touching, boy. Not without me express permission" (*LW* 141). Valene attaches more importance to his belongings than to his brother, and he insistently checks if Coleman has used any of his belongings. He sees his brother as his enemy although there is no apparent reason for this. Coleman is equally offensive. He keeps using Valene's belongings although Valene prohibits him from doing so, which is the main reason for the many disputes between the brothers. Although they try to abject each other in order to assert their individualities, they are caught in a cycle of mutual abjection; they hate and harm each other, but they go on living together.

In the last scene, Valene and Coleman confess the offenses they have committed against each other and apologize to each other in order to obey Father Welsh's last wish. The confessions reveal that their relationship has been characterized by sinister and scheming thoughts since early boyhood, as in some of the examples below:

> Valene…Do you remember that holiday in Lettermullen as gasurs [boys] we had, and you left your cowboy stagecoach out in the rain that night and next morning it was gone and mam and dad said 'Oh it must've been hijacked be Indians'. It wasn't hijacked be Indians. I'd got up early and pegged it in the sea.
> Coleman (pause) I did love that cowboy stagecoach.
> Valene. I know you did, and I'm sorry for it.
> Coleman (pause) That string of gob I dribbled on you on your birthday. I didn't try to suck it back up at all! I wanted it to hit your eye and I was glad. (Pause.) And I'm sorry for it.
> …
> Coleman. D'you remember when Pato Dooley beat the skitter out of you when he was twelve and you was twenty, and you never knew the reason why? I knew the reason why. I did tell him you'd called his dad mammy a hairy whore.
> …
> Valene. I did pour a cup of piss in a pint of larger you drank on time, Coleman. Aye, and d'you know what, now? You couldn't even tell the differ.

> Coleman (pause) When was this, now?
> Valene. When you was seventeen, this was. D'you remember that month you were laid up in hospital with bacterial tonsillitis. Around then it was. (Pause.) And I'm sorry for it, Coleman. (*LW* 184-6)

These confessions show that Valene and Coleman have always been motivated by spite and grudges against each other, and have tried to harm each other for no reason. This also implies that the Conors' home has never been a safe and peaceful environment. Their confessions do not result in reconciliation, either. Although they apologize after each confession and seem to forgive each other, the tension between them gradually escalates and reaches its peak when Coleman confesses that it was him who cut the ears off Valene's beloved dog: "To the brookeen [brook] I dragged him, me scissors in hand, and him whimpering his fat gob off 'til the deed was done and he dropped down dead with not a fecking peep out of that whiny fecking dog" (*LW* 189). When Valene does not believe him, Coleman brings out the proof of his crime: a "slightly wet brown paper bag" in which he has kept the dog's ears (*LW* 190). After this abject revelation of the dog's ears, the delicate peaceful atmosphere between the brothers totally disappears and Valene attempts to kill Coleman, pulling out a "butcher's knife" (*LW* 190). Valene and Coleman, having deceived and betrayed each other at every opportunity, create an abject fraternal relationship challenging what is conventionally expected of a brotherly relationship.

McDonagh also problematizes, by means of abject representations, the traditional Irish cultural iconography of women. Mag is an old motherly figure, but she is not the nurturing, supporting or devoted mother of the nationalist literature, and subverts the wise old woman trope. She is a monstrous figure embodying sinister actions, destroying and exploiting her daughter's life. Mag's monstrous image is extended with her obsession with food. She is presented as a "stoutish" body sitting in her rocking chair occupying the kitchen/living room, and asking for Complan, porridge, biscuits or tea one after another (*BQL* 1). She is constantly eating something just as she is devouring her daughter's life. As Magistrale puts it, the monstrous signifies the abject because "it violates cultural

categories, disrespects organizing principles, and generally serves to present a chaotic alternative to the place of order and meaning, socially as well as biologically" (7). Similarly, Mag subverts all cultural expectations in relation to a motherly figure, and turns the Folans' kitchen into a chaotic, disorderly place. Domestic space is the domain of the mother in nationalist discourse, as McMullan states when she notes that "[w]omen, in their traditional roles as mothers and home-makers, are central to the concept of home. In Irish iconography, women have been associated both with homeland, as Mother Ireland, and with the domestic space, particularly the kitchen" (72). Even though Mag is situated at the center of the kitchen, she is definitely not in harmony with this supposedly motherly space.

The motherly figure in the nationalist drama, as mentioned, represents Ireland. "The body of the woman is inviolable and she can therefore provide the Irish subject with a clean genealogy and an uncomplicated pedigree" (Harris 11). The motherly figure of Mag, however, is inconsistent with the idea of a clean genealogy to meet nationalist expectations. Mag has a deformed and diseased body. While she is complaining to Maureen that she is unable to prepare Complan for herself, she brings forward some of her illnesses:

> Mag. Don't I have a urine infection if I'm such a hypochondriac?
> Maureen. I can't see how a urine infection prevents you pouring a mug of Complan or tidying up the house a bit when I'm away. It wouldn't kill you.
> Mag. Me bad back.
> Maureen. Your bad back.
> Mag. And me bad hand... (*BQL* 2)

Mag's unhealthy body contributes to her abjected position which destabilizes the so-called peaceful kitchen space.

Mag provokes feelings of disgust and loathing with her abject habit of pouring urine into the kitchen sink, which creates a repulsive smell in the kitchen. There are some implications in the first three scenes that Mag performs this action regularly although she has promised Maureen not to do it. In Scene One, the audience hears for the first time about the bad smell in the kitchen:

> Maureen. (sniffs the sink a little, then turns to Mag.) Is there a smell of this sink now, I'm wondering.
> Mag (defensively.) No … No smell at all is there, Maureen. I do promise, now. (*BQL* 3)

At this point, what smell Maureen is talking about remains unclear. Ray names it in another scene saying: "This house does smell of pee, this house does" (*BQL* 40). The action itself is shown at the opening of Scene Four when Mag is seen "carrying a potty of urine, which she pours out down the sink" (*BQL* 25). The repugnant effect of the urine in the kitchen sink is suggested in the following dialogue between Maureen and Pato:

> Maureen. Come over here a second, Pato. I want you to smell this sink for me.
> …
> *Pato leans into the sink, sniffs it, then pulls his head away in disgust*… Pato. What is that now? The drains?
> Maureen. Not the drains at all. Not the drains at all. Doesn't she pour a potty of wee away down there every morning…And doesn't even rinse it either. Now is that hygienic? And she does have a urine infection too, is even less hygienic. (*BQL* 28-9)

When Pato learns the reason of the terrible smell in the kitchen he is too disgusted to drink his tea, as instructed by the stage directions: "[He] takes his tea, sipping it squeamishly" (*BQL* 29), but he cannot go on drinking it and "pours his tea down the sink, rinses his mug and washes his hands" (*BQL* 30). He explains his disgust to Maureen:

> Maureen. Okay, Pato. Did you finish your tea, now?
> Pato. I didn't. The talk of your mother's wee, it did put me off it.
> Maureen. It would. It would anybody. Don't I have to live with it? (Sadly.) Don't I have to live with it? (*BQL* 32)

Insistent references to the urine and its smell reinforce the image of the kitchen as a filthy, unhealthy and disgusting place. In this sense, Mag's diseased body and her urine disturbs the image of a healthy and stable family environment. The disturbance comes from the core of that very environment itself, not as an outside threat, which puts the concept of ideal family into question.

In the character and actions of Mag, McDonagh subverts the mother's association with homeland as the Old Mother Ireland figure as well. He subtly

undermines Mag's relation to figure of Mother Ireland when Mag protests against an Irish song on radio:

> Mag…An oul fella singing nonsense.
> …
> Maureen (pause). It isn't nonsense anyways. Isn't it Irish?
> 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 are saying.
> Maureen. What country are you living in?
> …
> Mag. Galway.
> Maureen. Not what county!
> Mag. Oh-h…
> Maureen. Ireland you are living in!
> Mag. *Ireland.*
> Maureen. So why should you be speaking English in Ireland?
> Mag. I don't know why…Except where would Irish get you going for a job in England? Nowhere. (*BQL* 4-5)

Obviously, Mag has no nationalistic sentimentalities, and it is Maureen, though of the next generation, who adopts a nationalist rhetoric. (However, she does this just to oppose her mother since, as the play develops, it appears that she also does not care for Ireland, and she dreams of leaving it). Mag is motivated only by self-interest, which contradicts the traditional sacrificing mother image. Knowing or speaking Irish brings nothing to her, so what's the use of sticking to nationalist ideals? Here Mag actually abjects 'the Motherland', which again casts an unpromising light on a new Mother Ireland image. As Elred suggests "[i]f Mag represents, in some way, Ireland, then she shows an Ireland that has lost touch with itself, and is becoming a shell, meaningless—emptied out, even, perhaps, for the Irish themselves." (Eldred 85).

While McDonagh subverts the Old Mother Ireland trope he does not leave out the pure virgin trope, "idealized female figures who are gentle, passive, and beautiful young virgins" (Quinn 40). Maureen is a distorted version of this pure, virgin figure. She is an abject figure in her community, creating feelings of dislike and loathing among locals. Ray reveals this while he is chatting with Mag:

> Ray…I saw her there on the road the other week and I said hello to her and what did she do? She outright ignored me. Didn't even look up.
> Mag. Didn't she?
> Ray. And what I thought of saying, I thought of saying, 'Up your oul hole, Mrs', but I didn't say it, I just thought of saying it, but thinking back on it I should've gone ahead and said it and skitter on the bitch…She does wear horrible clothes. And everyone agrees. (*BQL* 39)

In *Lonesome,* Coleman's description of Maureen also underlines her abject image: "Maureen Folan looks like a thin-lipped ghost, with the hairstyle of a frightened red ape" (*LW* 185).

Maureen is a virgin but very far from one of the *comely young maidens* envisaged by De Valera. As a middle-aged virgin, who has had no extended romantic relationship, she is bitter and resentful, and shows this when quarreling with her mother:

> Mag. Young girls should not be out gallivanting with fellas…!
> Maureen. 'Young girls out gallivanting'. I've heard it all now. What have I ever done but kissed two men the past fourty year?
> Mag. Two men is plenty [...]Two men is two men too much!
> Maureen. To you, maybe. Not to me.
> Mag. Two men too much!
> Maureen. Do you think I like being stuck up here with you? Eh? Like a dried up oul...
> Mag. Whore!
> Maureen. 'Whore'? (Pause.) Do I not wish, now? Do I not wish? (*BQL* 15)

Mag abjects Maureen by referring to her as a *whore*. Maureen, however, is not so much offended by being called a whore than by the fact that she is not really one. She wishes she could have a sexual relationship, but even when she was younger her plans for a sexual encounter did not come to anything, as we learn in *The Lonesome* when Valene confesses that Maureen once asked Coleman to go out with her, a message Valene never conveyed to his brother out of spite: "Maureen Folan once asked me to ask you if you wanted to see a film at the Claddagh Palace with her, and she'd driven ye and paid for dinner too, and from the tone of her voice it sounded like you'd've been on a promise after" (*LW* 185). Similarly,

in *The Beauty Queen,* a possible sexual relationship with Pato is destroyed by Mag burning the letter in which Pato asks Maureen to go to Boston with him. Obviously, Maureen's is not a willing chastity, but it is an enforced frustration, for her attempts to form love relationships have all been thwarted through the malevolence of others. It is seen, in this way, that Maureen ironically resists the nationalist virgin image in her virginal situation because she is not content with her situation and regularly reveals the real sexual frustration, physical desires and emotional needs.

Maureen reveals her sexual desire mostly to her mother who is always accusing her of being a whore. She asserts her sexuality, sometimes quite mildly and sometimes hyperbolically. For instance, when she learns that Pato has invited her to a party she provokes her mother saying: "I think I might pick up a nice little dress for meself". Then "[she] looks across at Mag, who looks back at her, irritated" (*BQL* 18). In the following scene, after her night out with Pato, Maureen comes home with him. It seems that she has bought the dress she was talking about; she is "in a new black dress, cut quite short" (*BQL* 19). In Mag's sense of morality, which also represents the obsolete Church morality (which was discussed in the previous chapter), a woman should not be immodestly dressed. Thus when she sees the dress the following morning, Mag, as the stage direction suggests, "picks it up disdainfully", and talks to herself disapprovingly: "That dress is just skimpy. And laying it around then?" (*BQL* 25). In order to further upset her mother, Maureen comes to the kitchen "wearing only a bra and slip, and goes over to Pato" (*BQL* 27). She sits on Pato's lap and kisses him at length while Mag watches in disgust. Her conversation with Pato claims that she has had sex with him: "You'll have to be putting that thing of yours in me again before too long is past, Pato. I do have a taste for it now, I do…" (*BQL* 28). It is later revealed that Pato and Maureen have not had sex, but Maureen carries on the pretense with her extended uses of sexual innuendo:

> Mag. I do want a shortbread finger.
> …
> *Maureen gives Mag a shortbread finger, after waving it phallically in the air a moment.*

> Maureen. Remind me of something, shortbread fingers do.
> Mag. I suppose they do, now.
> Maureen. I suppose it's so long since you've seen what they remind me of, you do forget what they look like.
> Mag. I suppose I do. And I suppose you're the expert.
> Maureen. I'm the expert…I'm the king of experts. (*BQL* 45-6)

Maureen indeed needs to abject her mother in order to gain her independence. She tries to achieve this by creating an image of herself as a sexually assertive woman, which her mother would detest. In this way, she herself ends up being abjected. By making Maureen appear half naked on stage and talk bawdily, McDonagh creates an abject woman image, an image contrary to the Catholic nationalist perception of the modest woman.

Girleen in *Lonesome* is similar to Maureen in openly asserting her sexuality while, like Maureen, she is never shown to have lost her virginity. Unlike Maureen, she is young (seventeen years old) and attractive. Thus, she is seemingly more suitable to stand for the idealized woman image; the passive, young, lovely virgin. However, she shatters this image as soon as she appears on stage. Like Maureen, she uses vulgar language, in fact she uses it even more than Maureen does. She calls in on the Conors to sell poteen to Valene and enters into the obscene dialogue with Coleman, referred to in the previous chapter. In fact, almost all of Girleen's discourse is based on slang and sexuality. For example, when she notices that Valene has intentionally given her less money than the price of her poteen, she again uses obscenities: "You've diddled me out of a pound, Valene… You're the king of a stink-scum fecking filth-bastards you, ya bitch-fech, Valene (*LW* 138). Father Welsh tries to warn her that she is transgressing social boundaries:

> Welsh. Will you stop now?! Will you stop?! Isn't it enough for a girl going round flogging poteen, not to go talking of whoring herself on the top of it?!...
> *She fluffs her fingers through Welsh's hair. He brushes her off.* (*LW* 138)

As indicated by the stage directions, Girleen does not take Welsh seriously and continues her transgressive attitude by teasing the priest.

Girleen willingly puts herself into an abject position, a position in which she goes beyond the prescribed womanhood of the nationalist construction of Irishness, "which seeks to contain and hide female sexuality within the private realm of marriage and family" (Lanters 19). This is also evident in her rejection of her Christian name, Mary, because "[s]he never got anywhere for herself. Fecking Mary" (*LW* 165). She adopts instead a strange name which suggests sexuality and virginity at the same time, while heralding her rejection of compliance with the Virgin Mary image. The play does not allow the audience to know if Girleen is as sexually promiscuous as she claims. She seems to choose to perform the part of an immoral woman, as she reveals to Father Welsh:

> Welsh. You have no morals at all, it seems, Girleen.
> Girleen. I have plenty of morals only I don't keep whining on about them like some fellas. (*LW* 162)

In his portrayal of Girleen, who might well be a virgin, McDonagh blurs the boundary between the constructions of virgin and whore, and thus challenges the totalizing identity categories which are resorted to by grand narratives like nationalism.

Alongside womanhood, McDonagh also problematizes the concept of masculinity, and creates abject male figures. A problematic masculinity does not fit neatly within the discourse of nationalism since it threatens the reproduction of the heterosexual family cell (Lanters 17), and it thus should be abjected from the national order. McDonagh, however, puts problematic masculinity within the core of the family unit. Abject masculinity is clearly observable in the representation of the Conor brothers in *The Lonesome.* Coleman and Valene, two middle-aged bachelors, are marked by their awkward attitudes to sexual matters. They reveal this in their homophobic and misogynist language and in questioning each other's sexual experiences. In their spiteful relationship, Coleman and Valene mention homosexuality in their conversations in order to insult and abject each other. The brothers regularly make innuendos about homosexuality, no matter how irrelevant it is to the topic of conversation. For instance, during a conversation about Pakistanis, Coleman ridicules Valene while strongly implying that he is gay:

> Coleman. Them darkies. On them carpets. Them levitating darkies.
> Valene. Them's Pakies. Not darkies at all!
> …
> Coleman. It seems like you're the expert on Paki-men!...You probably go falling in love with Paki-men too, so! Oh I'm sure.
> Valene. Leave falling in love out of it.
> Coleman. What did you get shopping, Mister, 'I-want-to-mary –a-Paki-man'? (*LW* 142)

Moreover, Valene is keen on reading women's magazines like *Woman's Own* and *Take a Break,* and this is also taken as a sign of homosexuality by Coleman: "Only women's magazines is all you ever go reading. Sure without doubt it's a fecking gayboy you must be" (*LW* 173). Coleman teases Valene for being sexually inexperienced as well, as he says to Father Welsh: "Do ya see that 'V' on his stove, Father? Do you think it's a V for Valene? It isn't. It's a V for Virgin, it is" (*LW* 149). Similarly, Valene taunts Coleman with misogynist language and hints of sexual inexperience. While they are discussing a newspaper report about a girl born with no lips, Valene seizes the opportunity to tease Coleman:

> Coleman. That girl'll never be getting kissed. Not with the bare gums on her flapping.
> Valene. She's the exact same as you, so, is she'll never be getting kissed, and you've no excuse. You've the full complement of lips.
> Coleman. I suppose a million girls you've kissed in your time. Oh aye.
> Valene. Nearer two million.
> Coleman. Two million, aye. And all of them aunties when you was twelve.
> Valene. No aunties at all. Proper women. (*LW* 173)

Although they are middle-aged men, Coleman and Valene seem like adolescents in their immature approaches to and distorted perceptions of sexuality.

As Lonergan observes, the brothers "are eager to display their knowledge of gender and sexuality, but they show themselves more anxious than experienced" (210). Thus, they put themselves in situations that are both comical and pathetic. For instance, in Scene Two, Coleman asserts that he has a "sex appeal" which is firmly rejected by Valene: "Sex appeal? You? Your sex appeal wouldn't buy the phlegm of a dead frog" (*LW* 145). In order to convince Valene, Coleman implies that he recently had an affair with Girleen: "This afternoon there she came up and

a fine oul time we had" (*LW* 148). However, Father Welsh is also present when Coleman say this, and he refutes his claim saying that "Girleen's been helping me … all day, never left me sight" (*LW* 148). Their awkwardness also makes them objects of derision in the eyes of other characters. For instance, Girleen implies that Coleman and Valene are sexually inactive: "Valene and Coleman'd get no use of them [condoms], unless they went using them on a hen…And it'd need to be a blind hen" (*LW* 167). Like Girleen, Valene and Coleman present ambiguous sexual behavior. Whether or not they are sexually inert remains to be uncertain although each claims the other to be sexually inactive, and Girleen implies the same. What is important here is that they shatter nationalist expectations of Irish masculinity, being "a long away from forms of representational masculinities that are firm agents of patriarchy or significant benefactors of its dividends – including the material, status and the honour, prestige, and the right to command" (Jordan 68). In this context, they violate borders drawn by nationalist definitions of proper gender roles as well.

5.3 Family in Bolger's Dublin: Liberated through Abjection

> Clara: I'd have liked a child by you to raise in my own way, without that family shite we all had to go through. (*PJ* 64)

Like McDonagh, Bolger complicates the concept of the family by means of abject representations. However, his handling of abjection is quite different. While McDonagh presents characters stuck in a chain of abjection, and in that way underlines the impossibility of the concept of a unified and harmonious family, Bolger looks into the liberating influences of abjection that can help characters to escape the limitations of the family unit. What Kristeva's theory implies for Bolger's plays is that

> abjection both threatens and worries us because it lays bare the insecurity of our subjectivity and the possibility of its loss, but it also offers us freedom outside of the repression and logic that dominate our daily practices of keeping ourselves in order. The ordered subjectivity is a comfort, but it is also a burden, and we try endlessly to see what may be beyond its limits. (Mansfield 87)

This benefit of abjection is related to the opportunity to go beyond the claims of hegemonic discourses, nationalist discourse being one of them.

Keating explains that nationalist familial discourse is patriarchal, advocating obedience and self-abnegation among its members. It also leaves no room for the independence of its members, and insists upon passivity and conformity. The family relations within this framework were thus designed to include a sense of duty and dependence rather than individuality or self-reliance (n.pag.). Bolger, on the other hand, foregrounds individuality and self-reliance. As in McDonagh's plays, traditional nuclear families are rare in Bolger's plays, there being only a couple of examples, and even these are problematic families and stifling for their members. As an alternative to the socially prescribed family unit, Bolger presents alternative unions and life styles, which are not in compliance with the nationalist familial discourse and thus create abject zones. These abject zones also show heterogeneity in the society which resists the old nationalist demands to create a homogeneous community.

In *The Lament,* the union of Arthur and Kathy defies social expectations and turns into an abject relationship. Arthur himself is an abject character being an outsider to his society. All through the play his ghost wanders around Dublin suggesting his in-between situation. He is reluctant to accept the social and economic changes that took place during the fifteen years of his absence, and refuses to adapt to Dublin's new life style. Kathy finds Arthur's emotional and nostalgic way of talking quite strange, and reveals her unease saying: "Arthur, I don't want to hear… you scare me, I don't always understand you…you don't talk like real people" (*LAC* 28). Kathy is aware that Arthur is living in his own world, a world which is inconsistent with the present reality of Dublin. The abjection of Arthur in this play can be explained in the terms of Ferguson whose work *The Ghost in the Irish Psyche* focuses on the abundance of ghosts in contemporary Irish literature. Ferguson notes that "the ghost is abject because it exists outside of the sphere of the living individual and attempts to define borders with its own self-knowledge. It is projected into the nebulous non-space of the ghost, the displaced space, because it does not fit into the constrictive limits of nation-space" (17). Arthur, likewise, tries to makes sense of present-day Dublin by means of his outdated self-knowledge, but fails to fit into the changing world of it, and he is dragged into a non-space.

Although Kathy is aware of Arthur's misfit position in the society, she believes that her relationship with him could be liberating for her. She reveals this to a close friend of her:

> All the way home, felt like throwing myself from the bus. I came in, Sharon, saw my father, just sitting, staring at the television And I remembered a man who feared no other, a brown wage packet left on an oilskin table. If he could only cry, I could stay with him, but his kind were never taught how to show grief. I need to learn to breathe. Sharon, I need Arthur…I can't breathe here, Sharon. (*LAC* 33-4)

Kathy does not want to be confined to life in the family home, and thus she leaves it and begins to live with Arthur. She expresses the differences between the two homes in her lament: "I had a room with fresh linen / And parents to watch over me / A brown dog slept at my feet / I left them for Arthur Cleary" (*LAC* 34). Her

life at home has actually been a safe and satisfactory one but she does not want to indulge in passivity and conformity. She wants instead to lead her life as she likes.

People around Kathy oppose her relationship with Arthur, and they promote an ordinary married life. For instance, Kathy's close friend does not approve of her relationship, and she reproaches Kathy for insisting on living with Arthur: "We were never good enough for you, isn't that right? […] You'll beg for one of these houses one day. You'll settle for a squalling brat and Yellow Pack bread and a thrill off the fridge, if you're lucky. Just like the rest of us (*LAC* 33-4). Her friend believes that Kathy is looking for adventure and one day she will regret not being satisfied with an ordinary life. The friend's reaction stems from that she finds this relationship unusual because there is a huge age gap between Arthur and Kathy, and Arthur is a weird man, as she further says: "For God's sake, Kathy, your man's a fossil and he doesn't need to breathe" (*LAC* 34)

Kathy's father also opposes Kathy's relationship because he thinks that Arthur will not be able to support his daughter financially. In an extended conversation, he tries to persuade her to leave Arthur:

> Porter[70]. Well, whatever he is, he's too old for you. Can't you see child. He has no job, he's got nothing. Good Christ, I worked hard enough all these years to try and get you something, to try and lift you up. Where's he going, where can he bring you? Some corporation flat. You're only a child yet. You're throwing your life away for him.
> Kathy …. It's just that he's … different. There's something …
> Porter. Different! ... How could he build a life for you like I've tried to build for your mother? Tell me that? A knacker in a leather jacket … and the rattle of his bike waking the street at every hour of the night. What is so special about him then?
> Kathy. He's not dead! He's not beaten! (*LAC* 29)

Kathy's father holds a traditional, patriarchal concept of marriage. In such a marriage, gender roles are definite: the husband as the bread winner should support his family and the wife should be passive, and she should accept the supportive function of the husband. Kathy, on the other hand, does not want to lead an ordinary life with a mediocre marriage. She implies that she is interested

[70] In this dialogue the Porter takes the role of the father.

in Arthur because Arthur has not been assimilated by the demands of the society. Therefore, she and Arthur can go beyond a traditional married life.

Kathy is an assertive and self-confident woman. She does not want to take on a dependent role in her relationship with Arthur. She protests when Arthur reveals his resentment at not having a proper job to support Kathy:

> Arthur. It was easier by myself. I didn't mind the bad days. Just take to the bed, take them in my stride. But now…
> Kathy. Don't, Arthur, please.
> Arthur. You know I'm trying love…I want to look after you.
> Kathy (screams). Stop! Can't you see? You'll become like them, you're sounding like my da… I'm not fragile. I'm not some ornament made of glass. I'm flesh and blood. I don't need looking after- I need to live.
> …
> Arthur. I just want to give you…things.
> Kathy. I didn't come to you for things. I came to you for hope. (*LAC* 48)

Kathy does not expect Arthur to assume the supportive role of a traditional husband. She firmly asserts this saying: "Listen, you're different Arthur and I don't mind if we starve, just don't change, not for me" (LAC 48).

Disrupting social expectations, Arthur and Kathy become an abject couple and they are happy about this. However, they somehow irritate people around them. For instance, in the following dialogue two neighbors, represented by masks, talk about Arthur and Kathy, and one of them criticizes them for their careless behavior:

> First Mask. That's her there, Phyllis! Moved in with him bold as brass … The young ones now. Would you be up to them? Never had that class of yoke here before he came back.
> Second Mask….And sure what harm are they doing? Isn't it good to see somebody smiling in this place?
> First Mask. I don't know. A fool's paradise never lasts long. It's easy to smile without two children bawling, it's easy to smile when you don't have to sell you soul to that wee bastard every time an ESB bill comes in … (*LAC* 46)

The neighbor is in fact offended that Arthur and Kathy do not lead a conventional married life but are nevertheless happy together. She is not satisfied with her own life at all, having too many children to care for and bills to pay, but still this is the

only way of life she knows. Thus, she abjects Kathy and Arthur by calling them fools who have not faced real life yet.

In *The Lament*, Arthur and Kathy are disconnected from their families, but this does not suggest resentment, hatred, grudge or spite, unlike the families in McDonagh's plays. Kathy wants to leave her home simply because she wants to live an independent life. When she says that she loves Arthur since "[h]e's not beaten!" her father gets offended thinking that Kathy wants to leave him because he is old and unable to support his family. Kathy tries to correct this misunderstanding:

> Porter. Like I am, is it? Beaten?
> […]
> Kathy. You looked after us well Dad. You still do.
> Porter. Feel so useless, love. I wish I was dead sometimes. You'd have the insurance then at least.
> Kathy…Daddy, don't say that. Don't wish it. You're the best.
> Porter…I've good hands. I can make things with these. Give me wood and I'll make it. Tables, chairs, shelves. I never thought I'd be idle with these. A skill for life they said. (*LAC* 29- 30)

The suggestion is that Kathy's father used to be a good carpenter, but as an old man he cannot practice his profession any more. Therefore, he no longer conforms to the image of the bread-winning male figure constructed by the patriarchal nationalist discourse. However, Kathy does not care about this; she still loves her father, but still she needs to assert her individuality.

Similarly, Arthur left home years ago just to enjoy the freedom offered by the changing social and economic conditions, as he explains to his mother's ghost: "I wasn't running from you, Ma. You know that, don't you? ... It was just … the time. So easy to drift between jobs and places, it just seemed right to wander off for a while and then wander back" (*LAC* 32). Arthur and Kathy's relations to their families show that families are subject to changing life conditions, and young people do not want to be ruled by senses of duty and dependance claimed by the family unit. Instead, they want to affirm their independence and self-reliance at the cost of being abjected by the society.

Hanafin states that Kristeva's notion of abjection could be extended to include within its compass socially excluded and marginal groups because the construction of a subject for national self-identification entailed the rejection or expulsion of certain groups from the national family (22). In this context, in *Blinded,* Bolger presents other life styles instead of traditional family life. Mick lives alone in his bed-sit. He and the friends who frequently visit him are marginal characters of the sort likely to be expelled from a well-defined healthy nationalist-approved body. Mick is lazy and disorderly, as can be seen through his reply when Siobhan asks for breakfast after she has spent the night with him:

> Siobhan. Food. What do you have for breakfast?
> Mick (sighs) A cigarette, a shite and a good look around.
> Siobhan. Be serious
> Mick. Sorry, I generally dine out. I'm a bit disorganized (*BL* 136-7)

Mick is happy and content with his lifestyle which he defines with cynicism as explained in the previous chapter. As a cynic, Mick defies all the social norms and dependencies introduced by society. He is keen on smoking joints and reading stolen library books whose covers he uses to roll his joints. He also steals other miscellaneous objects from the street. For instance, at the beginning of Act One, Scene Three, he enters with "two estate agent's signs, one large and the other small. He throws them down near the fireplace, into which he throws a half-packet of firelighter's and, taking up an axe, begins to chop up the smaller sign and pile the pieces into the grate" (*BL* 150). He seems to meet his daily needs with stolen things instead of purchasing them.

Mick's friends are also strange characters with their own peculiarities. There is Shay who is paranoid, believing that he is being followed by the police, while friends try to persuade him that nobody is after him, as can be seen his dialogue below with Mick:

> Mick…Listen Shay, I don't know how to break this to you.
> Shay (*worried*) What? Have you seen someone? I knew your man wasn't sheltering from the rain at that bus stop across the road last week.
> Mick (slowly as if to a foreigner with little English) Nobody is opening your mail. Nobody is tapping the telephone. Nobody is

> watching the house the great wide world out there doesn't know who you are and it doesn't give a shite. (*BL* 139)

There is also Pascal who cannot speak without swearing but he weirdly uses "bucking" instead of "fucking". For instance he swears at the rain saying: "Ah, buck it…bucking oul rain bucking down" (*BL* 142). He uses this word because his mother "made him swear on Saint Oliver Plunkett's head that a curse would never pass his lips" (*BL* 142). He naively believes that he remains true to his word when he says "bucking". All these odd characters in *Blinded* would not be found in a conventional nationalist drama. Countering such models of cultural homogeneity and crowding his play with marginal characters, Bolger in fact celebrates plurality and diversity against the idea of families around single value and belief systems.

Bolger adds to this marginal group of people a marginal historical character. The Head, a petty thief that everyone thought was Saint Oliver Plunkett's, appears at the end of Act One to haunt Mick's bedsit. Two marginalized characters from different periods of history thus come together in Mick's room. The Head says: "We're two of a kind Mick. The little men of history, unimportant, overlooked, just getting on with living as best as we can. You've only been hounded for three weeks. I've been hounded for three centuries. But it's a great rest we'll have now" (*BL* 209). Booker states that "oppressed and marginal groups are systematically identified with aspects of existence (death, excrement, etc.) that are deemed unpleasant by the dominant group, which in turn seeks to distance itself from such facts of life through oppression and rejection of the group with which those facts are identified" (Booker 13). Similarly, Bolger puts a marginal character into an abject image of head without body, but this time not to repress it but to bring it to the fore. The two marginal figures brought together in a domestic setting which is supposed to be the domain of a proper family unit disrupt the nationalist claim to unity and homogeneity.

The relationship between Mick and Siobhan also defies the claims of a traditional family unit which expects women to be involved in sexuality only as wives and only for reproduction. Siobhan meets Mick one night on her way to by some milk. Mick brings her to his bedsit with a false promise of showing her his

expensive car. Mick of course has no car, and what he mentions is just a toy car. Nevertheless Siobhan is not upset to learn this because "[she] never cared if [Mick] did [have a car]. [He was] on [her] way home" (*BL* 133). She spends the night with him just because she wants to, which shows that she enjoys her sexuality freely. Like Kathy, she is self-confident and independent.

Expected gender roles are also twisted in their relationship. Mick is confined to a domestic space (although this is his free choice) whereas Kathy is in a mobile position. She comes and goes, and in her visits she telephones Mick's workplace to report that Mick is sick because Mick does not want to go to work, for which Siobhan criticizes him half in jest: "How do you get to be so lazy" (*BL* 143). Obviously, Mick does not create an assertive masculine image, and Siobhan takes on the traditionally male active and breadwinning roles.

Siobhan in fact fascinates Mick precisely because she does not conform to a typical or conventional female role. She displays knowledge of and interest in football, for instance, which Mick did not expect from her. When he hears her talking about football and displaying her knowledge, he asks in astonishment: "Are you a vision or real?" (*BL* 140). The longest and most meaningful dialogue which Mick has with Siobhan is about football.

> Mick…Anyway, you wouldn't want to rely on the living when you follow Shelbourne Football Club.
> Siobhan (pausing at the door in surprise) Shelbourne? Good God, you are a romantic. Ben Hannigan?
> Mick. (lifting himself up on elbow in surprise) Ben Hannigan? What do you know about Ben Hannigan? (*BL* 140)

This conversation goes on to include many old Irish footballers and past matches. Although theirs is a one-night stand, after this extended dialogue on football Mick wants to meet Siobhan again another time. When Siobhan leaves, he thinks that he is in love with her: "Love. It must be love…Nobody can be that nice" (*BL* 143). Thus, a kind of intimacy begins to bud between Mick and Siobhan. Their relationship is also an abject one since it goes beyond the limits of the traditional family structure.

Bolger deals with familial issues in a different way in *The Passion.* In this play familial relationships are more problematic, and the influence of these relationships upon individuals is more devastating. In Jerome's case, this stems from family members who try to comply with social expectations in order not to be abjected from the social order. Jerome and his family lived in Carlow, a decent neighborhood in Dublin. As Jerome tells to Clara, his father was an alcoholic, and his mother tried hard to cover this up in order to maintain their position in Carlow society: "[A]ll about hiding bottles in the wardrobes or fearing he'd discover the money hidden for food or he'd raise his voice so the neighbors would hear. Mummy didn't want us to lose our place amongst the Carlow intelligentsia" (*PJ* 41). Similarly, Jerome's father joined the Church chorus to play the organ, which would bring them some reputation in the society: "Da huffing and puffing at that organ. I knew it was a sham he joined in, so me and Derek could become respectable citizens" (*PJ* 46). Jerome's parents tried to keep up the appearance of the family, and they expected their children to do so, too. Derek never took this expectation seriously whereas Jerome did. Derek reveals this when Jerome accuses him of being too wayward: "You were always too bloody good for the rest of us. Mammy's fucking boy living out Mammy's fucking dreams" (*PJ* 15). Indeed, Jerome worked ambitiously and became a successful businessman whereas Derek has no proper job yet.

Although Jerome was tired of his family he still tried to prove himself to his parents. Thus, he now feels that he has always carried the burden of his family on his shoulders, as he confesses to Penny: "I wanted to belong somewhere else, to walk in from that porch and leave all the petty responsibilities and weight of my parents' hopes behind" (*PJ* 71). In his present life, Jerome continues to keep up appearances. He is a successful businessman and has a seemingly decent and happy married life with Penny. He lives with his wife in Malahide, a prestigious district of Dublin. However, this life is perfect only in appearance, because Jerome and Penny lost their baby girl six years ago and since then they have lost the ability to communicate. Jerome has suppressed his grief because "[he] hated feeling so powerless" (*PJ* 47). He has given himself over to his career and has had

an affair with his colleague Clara. Jerome's case shows that even family units that seem to be seamless can be problematic and defective; members of the family may insist on sticking to a family life which does not function.

Jerome is haunted by the ghost of a boy who committed suicide as a result of depressing family relations, that is, the boy's father was an alcoholic and violent towards his mother. All ghosts are abject, as mentioned above, and the ghost of the boy is no exception. McMullan states that one function of ghosts in theatre is to reveal that the world depicted on stage cannot accommodate the ghostly characters. Likewise, when his world fails to accommodate the boy, the boy turns to the abject world of death (83). Although the boy's problems were somehow different from Jerome's problems in the past, the boy still seems to stand for Jerome's childhood, and when he asks Jerome to save him, it is a kind of call for Jerome to confront his past. In the Ballymun flat, Jerome speaks "in a child's scared voice" (*PJ* 82), which suggests both his own voice and the boy's voice. He describes how he is suffering: "I want my mother, want my father…want us to be happy, I want the shouting to stop, the drinking…I want somebody to play Jesus for me, to suffer, to die, to rise again, to bring me with him" (*PJ* 82). As Pelletier puts it, Jerome's wounds begin to heal after he has freed the boy's soul and confronted his own past (255).

After he experiences his stigmata, Jerome is abjected from his society. At first people think that he is a saint but later on they begin to be disgusted by him because, as the priest explains: "[Jerome is] a freak. People are frightened of freaks and no one likes being frightened…" (*PJ* 69). In his abject situation Jerome faces his present familial problems. Middeke argues that the abject has but the one function, which is to confront us with our limitations and anxieties (222). The abject upsets or threatens the stability of social and individual systems. Likewise, in this play Jerome confronts his past and the fragility of his seemingly perfect life. When his daughter died he denied that he was suffering. However, in his abject situation he admits and accepts that he suffered greatly, because the pain of the stigmata has revived his feelings: "When I tried to all tears were gone. Nothing left inside me but an arid desert where coyotes and prairie dogs roamed.

That's the most shocking thing about these wounds. They're like wells springing up through the barren sand. I deserve this pain multiplied by a hundred times" (*PJ* 72). After this recognition he confesses to Penny that he is in an adulterous relationship, and leaves the comfort of his life to start a more honest life, to go "to a space of considering a more purposeful existence" (Trotter, *Irish Theatre* 88). Jerome leaves the conformity of his life just as Kathy and Arthur had done, but only after the painful experience of the stigmata.

Jerome's abject situation turns into a liberating force for women in the plays as well. Clara is similar to McDonagh's female characters in that she openly asserts her sexuality, but unlike them she is represented as involved in a satisfying and full sexual relationship, whereas in McDonagh's plays it is unclear if women are sexually active or not. The play opens with Clara and Jerome "both writh[ing] in the throes of sexual abandonment" (*PJ* 4). It seems that Clara is sexually experienced, as she says: "You know something? You are the only man who's ever made me come like that" (*PJ* 4). In the society depicted within this play, Clara is an abject figure because of having a sexual experience in spite of being unmarried, and because of having a sexual relationship with a married man; in both ways she poses a threat to the traditional and idealized family order.

Clara does not, however, become a victim to her abject position. Jerome's stigmata leads her, also, to face herself. First, she confesses that she loves Jerome: "I was never your mistress, Jerome. Didn't you notice? I was your lover" (*PJ* 63). Nevertheless, she is ready to give up her relationship with Jerome because she now believes that it is wrong and immoral: "Go back to Penny. I feel bad about it now, whereas before I felt that if you didn't care why should I?"(*PJ* 64). Like Jerome, she decides to make a new start, to start again as herself.

Penny, at first, appears to be in a pitiful situation, a passive character deceived by her husband. Jerome's abject situation thus also frees Penny. Harradine states that the embodiment of abjection helps the subject to go beyond the oppressive and restrictive identity categories (75). In line with this, Penny begins to articulate herself, and it appears that she is not a passive and obedient woman at all. First, although she cannot understand the reason for Jerome's situation, she wants to

help him. She tells him that she is ready to leave her life in Malahide and live in Ballymun if Jerome wants to do so. However, Jerome is not aware of her strength:

> Jerome. This tower block is dangerous. You weren't reared to live here.
> Penny. I wasn't reared in a glass case either, you just put me in one. I'm capable of living anywhere, once I'm with the man I love. I was happy in that bedsit in Fitzwilliam Square, remember? I never asked for a big house in Malahide, you insisted on giving me one […] All I ever wanted was you. I don't honestly know what is wrong with your hands. But if this flat is where you want to be then it's good enough for me. (*PJ* 73-74)

This conversation reveals that Jerome has never known his wife well, and only tried to satisfy her with material things. Like Kathy, Penny explains that she has never sought only material support from her husband. Penny just wants to share things with her husband and she also reveals that after their daughter's death their relationship deteriorated until it was destroyed: "Don't tell me that I can't cope with living in Ballymun, because we haven't been living for years, Jerome. We've suffered in silence till we cracked apart. Now this flat is as good as anywhere to start again from scratch" (*PJ* 75). Jerome's abjection has transformed Penny from "a void, an absence" (Aragay 9) into a speaking subject, and she begins to express her feelings: "If you're mad, then maybe that's what I've been for seven years too […] I felt things that I could never tell you because I know you'd just mock them, like you mocked everything" (*PJ* 74). She also attacks Jerome's physical masculinity. She discloses that they did not have another child after their daughter's death because of a physiological problem with Jerome:

> Penny. Penny at home, Penny for no thoughts of her own. Penny who cursed you too that your cock couldn't pass muster. All the complicated answers from the specialists, always holding out the vague hope of another fluke, but all the time your balls were simply too small.
> Jerome. That wasn't my fault.
> Penny. May be not, but there were nights when I'd have fucked anything, I'd climb up on the fucking tomcat if it could have got us our daughter back.
> Jerome. Don't curse.
> Penny. I'll curse just fine. (Sings.) 'Hitler had only one big ball, Jerome had two but very small…' (*PJ* 75)

When abjected and excluded from the social order, all of Jerome's efforts to create a successful and powerful male subjectivity also begin to fail, and Penny's words show the fragility of his masculine image.

Penny believes that she and Jerome can now make a fresh start in sharing their feelings more frankly: "I just know that you're in pain and so am I. Maybe at least here we can share that openly" (*PJ* 75). But Jerome explains that "there are other things that [she doesn't] know" (*PJ* 76). He then confesses his relation with Clara. Upon this, Penny is extremely angry and she reacts with verbal insults: "You cunt! You pox-ridden self-righteous jumped-up cock-sucking little Papist Carlow bogman prick. Stop it or I'll drill holes in parts of you that Christ never dreamt of!" (*PJ* 77). Here she has completely discarded the linguistic and behavioral restrictions imposed by the role of a polite and genteel wife, in openly expressing her anger and using obscenities. This marks the moment when Penny has shattered illusion of a happy marriage, which proves to be the start of an improvement in both their lives. At the end, the socially approved traditional family union is dissolved, but this is a liberation for the characters.

5.4 Conclusion

McDonagh and Bolger problematize, undermine and subvert the traditional image of the family through abject representations. Provoking feelings of disgust, loathing or repulsion, the abject has conventionally been used in nationalist discourses to separate undesirable elements from the national body, and thus to create a unified self in distinction to all abjected national Others. At the same time, however, the abject has a transgressive power, and it can show alternatives to what is socially prescribed and imposed. McDonagh and Bolger bring the abjected into the heart of their family units and draw on this transgressive power of abjection to destabilize the image of a pure and stable family cell, which by implication also destabilizes conventional nationalist discourses.

McDonagh portrays abject family relations which depend on hatred and violence. Kristeva states that abjection reaches its apex when death, which, in any case, kills a person, interferes in his or her living universe which is a context that

is supposed to save him or her from death (*Powers* 4). Similarly, in McDonagh's plays violence, torture and death interfere in people's lives in the very family unit which is supposed to save them from these dangers. Kristeva further states that abjection is immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady (*Powers* 4). As the analyses show all of these qualities spring from within family cells in Leenane. McDonagh thus challenges most of the positive family-related concepts such as motherly affection, parental respect and fraternal love.

Bolger, on the other hand, uses abjection to reveal alternative relationships that are in some ways opposed to the traditional family unit. He also puts socially marginalized characters into domestic spaces which are supposed to belong to conventional family units. There is only one conventional marriage in his plays, that of Jerome and Penny, but this marriage is only seemingly regular. Thus, Bolger shows that insistence on preserving a socially expected family union might lead to unhappiness, insincerity and hypocrisy. As a result, abjection can be a way to assert independence and find self-reliance.

Both playwrights put into question the idea that nationhood can be a pure and unproblematic conception. They do this by shattering the idealized images of a stable and monolithic family unit that are associated with images of the nation. If the family units in their plays are microcosms of Ireland, Ireland, then, should be a rotten, chaotic and disorderly place, and this image is contrary to that presented by the nationalist discourse. After land and religion, another component of the nationalist construct of Irishness is thus undermined, which contributes to the playwrights' postnationalist outlook.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The social, political and economic changes undergone by the Republic of Ireland since the late 1980s resulted in critical changes in the perception of Irish national identity and nationalist ideology. This was a period when Ireland began to be referred to as the Celtic Tiger due to the unprecedented expansion of its economy. It was a paradoxical period seeing both great economic prosperity and deep social complications brought by the changing characteristics of Irish society. It was possible to identify the society with concepts that have been associated with late capitalism such as cultural depthlessness, spiritual exhaustion and fragmentation, which somehow resulted from the development of individualism; and consumerism and materialism. Given all these transformations, it was no longer possible to imagine a stable, unified and coherent Irishness.

Irish Theatre, having always been an arena for the exploration of possible ways to represent "true" Irishness and for examination and discussion of national issues, also reflected changes in the perception of Irishness during the Celtic Tiger period. This study is based upon the idea that in their plays of this period Martin McDonagh and Dermot Bolger subvert the constitutive elements of Irishness - land, religion and family - and thus they problematize the concept of the nation. The main argument of the study was that postnational studies provide a framework to clarify these playwrights' attempts to revisit the changing status of Irishness.

A general overview of the course of Irish theatre throughout the twentieth century in terms of its relation to national issues was provided in the first chapter. This was considered necessary to contextualize McDonagh and Bolger within the Irish dramatic tradition. In this part, by referring mostly to the classifications of Christopher Murray and Fintan O'Toole, three main phases in Irish theatre were identified. The first phase includes the works of W. B. Yeats, Lady Augusta

Gregory, John M. Synge and Sean O'Casey. These formative years of Irish drama are closely associated with the Abbey Theatre. The second phase covers a time period between the 1950s and late 1980s and includes playwrights such as Tom Murphy, Brian Friel, John Keane and Thomas Kilroy. The third phase begins in the late 80s and has yet to run its course, with its most prominent contributors being Sebastian Barry, Conor McPherson, Martin McDonagh, Marina Carr, Billy Roche, Dermot Bolger and Marie Jones. Although this may seem to be a simplistic and schematic categorization, the outlining of these phases offered a convenient and accurate overview of changes in the national consciousness in Irish theatre in different periods of the twentieth century. In addition, it proved to be useful to the analyses of the plays, as a point of reference. In each analytic chapter, these phases were referred to in order to introduce how McDonagh and Bolger differ from the earlier playwrights in their representations of land, religion and family.

This part of the study put forward that theatre occupied a central position in cultural nationalist activities in Ireland during the nation-building process. The playwrights of the first phase attempted to define a kind of stable, and unified Irish national identity based on positive perceptions of the Irish past and rural origins which would also overcome the derogatory connotations of the Irish that had been represented on English stage for centuries. With this aim, playwrights like Yeats and Lady Gregory looked back to a cultural, historic and mythic past and Irish folklore. With the exception of Sean O'Casey, they wrote peasant plays exalting the Irish peasant and the life in the rural western Ireland which they considered as the representative and source of the authentic Irishness.

The first phase of twentieth-century Irish theatre drew to a close towards the end of the 1950s. This was also the beginning of the Lemass era, which marked the beginning of Irish modernization. The nation-making process was nearly over, and now it was time for the opening up of Irish economy and politics to the world. Plays written in this period, especially those of Friel and Murphy, reflected the playwrights' anxieties in the process of redefining the society in relation to the global socio-economic concerns with which it was now involved. They mostly

focused on the conflicts that resulted from a traditional way of life being exposed to the influences of modernity.

The third phase, that included McDonagh and Bolger, began to emerge in the late 1980s. Instead of focusing on the throes of modernization and globalization, most playwrights of the third generation chose to create in their plays universes in which traditional elements of nationalism were subverted and rendered inefficient. The major difference of the third generation playwrights from those of the second generation is that their subversion disclosed the constructedness of national identity, which is revealed to be like any other identity category in this respect. Furthermore, the critical approach of the second generation gave way to embracing a postmodern collapse of identity.

Taking this contextualization into consideration, this study attempted to reveal that McDonagh and Bolger, as third period playwrights, destabilize attempts to reach firm and unproblematic definitions of Irishness, and their plays open themselves to a postnationalist reading. In order to be able to develop this argument, it was important to understand the nature of Irish nationalism and to draw clearly the outlines of the concept of postnationalism, which would be discussed in the Irish context. To this aim then, in the second chapter a brief survey of different approaches to the concepts of nation and nationalism was provided. It was concluded that modernist nationalist ideas which discuss nations as imagined communities best explain the Irish nation-building process when the nationalist elites and artists tried to imagine a unified and stable concept of Irishness. However, Irish nationalism entered "an overt phase of crisis and contradiction" (Llena, "Contemporary Redefinitions" 117) in the Celtic Tiger period. The Irish society was now being characterized by the diversity and complexities that undermined attempts to imagine a single, stable and unified society. This study discussed this situation within the context of the postnationalist arguments which basically assert that former national identity constructs have been put into question under the pressures of globalization. Two postnationalist lines of arguments were referred to in the second chapter: the Enlightenment cosmopolitanist line and the postmodern postnationalist line. The

Enlightenment cosmoplitanists argue that now that nation-states are in a state of bankruptcy we need a set of universal laws to connect people. On the other hand, postmodern postnationalists focus on the multiplicity, uncertainties and instabilities brought by the declining power of nation-states.

It was strictly maintained in this study that postnationalism is not a total denial of nations. The move into postnationalism enables writers to criticize previous formulations and structures of nationalism, without abandoning either the foundations of national identity or that of the nation-state (Bell 140). Therefore, postnationalism, which has informed this study, is a condition of transcending the national, being at the same time rooted in it. The continued rootedness is implied, in the simplest terms, in this study being able still, and meaningfully, to refer to the "Irish" theatre and "Irish" plays, which suggests an acknowledgement of nationality as a real and discernible entity. However, postnationalism rejects nationalism's claims of a homogeneous community organized around a single set of values, and constructions of homogenizing identity. Postnationalist identity is fluid, inconsistent and fragmented. In a contradictory period like that of the Celtic Tiger, Irishness can no longer be seen as an unproblematic and homogeneous notion. Therefore, it needs a redefinition with insistence on diversity, contingency and fluidity.

Postnationalism also refers to an intellectual space, as it is defined by Kearney, an imaginative space overcoming the limitations of national boundaries. Literary texts can provide the authors with this space in which they can put forward alternatives to look into the idea of nation. This study has shown that McDonagh and Bolger wrote their plays within this postnationalist space.

In the first analytic chapter, the significance of land as one of the constitutive elements of Irish nationalism was introduced, and how McDonagh and Bolger challenged the assumed organic bond between land and Irishness was discussed. In his representation of Leenane, McDonagh challenges the mystification of rural life and the peasant as romantic symbols of the Irish national character and non-materialistic Irish life. Although it seems to be a small, isolated town, Leenane is a good example of a postmodern pastiche, a pastiche of the global modern and the

traditional. Media images have great influence on characters to make sense of their lives and to cope with the dull and boring life in Leenane. This analysis indicates that an unspoiled authentic peasant life is undermined in McDonagh's Leenane.

The gloomy and confining atmosphere of Leenane and the violent and monstrous relationships between its inhabitants directed the analysis to a search for Gothic elements and their implications. In its traditional form, the Gothic is used to create a national Other and to show what is monstrous to one's nation. The findings of this analysis, however, revealed that

Gothic elements are involved in a subverted way in Leenane, by means of which Irish peasants are represented as monstrous, and a representative of traditional and rural Ireland is shown as a dark and isolated town characterized by a tense atmosphere, mysteries and death. Focusing on the subverted Gothic elements in McDonagh's plays thus offered another perspective to look into the bond between Irishness and land. When considered from a postnationalist view, they contributed to the problematizing of the Irish nationalist ideology which recognizes the west of Ireland as a home for a homogeneous community consisting of individuals who live up to an elevated nationalist ideal.

Unlike McDonagh, Bolger deals with the urban and suburban experiences, which have been less often represented in Irish theatre. Those of his plays that were analyzed are set in different suburban areas of Dublin. In the analysis of his plays, a carnivalesque spirit was detected because he brings together conflicting voices from different layers of the society, and intermingles incongruent elements like the sacred and the profane, the present and the past and life and death. In this way, he puts forward diversity and fluidity in therepresentation of the city. Although he widely portrays the ugly sides of urban life, like crime, poverty and drug use, his plays are not dominated by rhetorical seriousness or a crude realism. The analysis of his representation of Dublin indicated the impossibility of an ordered and consistent conception of a place to be associated with national identity, which is very similar to the conclusion drawn from the analysis of McDonagh's plays.

In the second analytic chapter, the focus of analysis was religion, particularly Catholicism, another essential component of Irish nationalism. Therefore, first, the power of Catholicism in creating and preserving a sense of unity and belonging among Irish people was introduced. McDonagh and Bolger subvert the bond between Irishness and Catholicism, and portray the decreasing power of religion in Irish people's lives. McDonagh's plays were analyzed in the context of the Baudrillardian concepts of hyperreality and simulacrum. In McDonagh's Leenane Catholic elements continue to exist, but they were shown to exist only on the level of symbols, words and icons which do not have any transcendental meaning. Inhabitants of Leenane lead spiritually shallow and materialistic lives. Bolger's Dublin is also characterized by spiritual shallowness and a materialistic way of life. However, Bolger's treatment of religion was analyzed in the light of the constructive postmodern approach to spirituality, and it was concluded that Bolger shows the possibility of a spiritual dimension existing in spite of the materialistic values of the Celtic Tiger Ireland. Going beyond the restrictions of Catholicism and other institutionalized forms of religion, Bolger's characters construct their own spiritual positioning in their own ways.

In the third analytic chapter, McDonagh's and Bolger's treatment of the family unit was put under scrutiny. In this chapter the same theoretical ground was used for both playwrights, and abject representations of familial roles and relations in their plays were put under scrutiny. Like the Gothic, the abject may also serve the nationalist discourse to claim a pure and homogeneous national order by designating elements to be eliminated from the national body. However, it was concluded that McDonagh and Bolger undermine the idea of a pure and unified community by means of abject representations within the core of the Irish family unit. In McDonagh's Leenane, families are characterized by hatred and violence, and all familial relations are destructive and treacherous. Therefore, what disturbs an ordered family unit is not an outside threat but the family members themselves. In this way, McDonagh goes against the idea of a stable and harmonious family unit that backs up Irishness. Bolger, on the other hand, uses abjection to go beyond the boundaries of traditional conception of family. He presents the

collapse of the traditional family as liberating for characters, and enabling them to lead more sincere lives.

Taking all these analyses into consideration, McDonagh and Bolger, challenging the constitutive elements of Irishness, lay bare the constructedness of the idea of nation. In other words, they empty elements of their cultural significances thereby exposing the very shallowness of this construction (the Irish nation as conventionally portrayed). In their plays all elements constituting the nation have already gone bankrupt. On the other hand, while presenting a chaotic universe, they do not offer a new moral basis which will lead to any kind of reconciliation with the constituents of Irishness or with the idea of nation-state. This indicates their postnationalist responses.

In "Who the Hell Do We Think We Still Are?", Declan Hughes argues that the Irish should confront themselves in the present. He boldly states that "foolishly, we think that fear is better avoided than embraced" (12). He further states that he would "like to see Irish Theatre embrace the profound change that has occurred: that we are barely a country any more, never have been and never will be that most nineteenth century of dreams, a nation once again; that our identity is floating, not fixed" (13). Strategies used by the playwrights under scrutiny in this thesis reveal that they try to show this floating identity and go beyond the limitations of national identity embodied in the concept of Irishness.

The analyses of their plays also revealed that although both McDonagh and Bolger deal with the perceived breakdown of national certainties, they differ in their approaches to their subject matters. McDonagh's trilogy pictures worlds characterized by lack of depth and loss of inwardness. In this context, as Diehl argues, McDonagh does not articulate visions of hope for an altered future, but instead remarks on the emptiness of older social structures (107). His postnational picture is a pessimistic one, and he seems to take pleasure from this picture. On the other hand, Bolger explores the disintegration of the idea of nation and reveals the instability and constructedness of national identity formations by drawing attention to different social and political issues and by laying bare the cultural processes that Irish society experiences. However, he represents this

disintegration as a life-affirming and transforming power that opens up to new possibilities. At the end of each play, there are new possibilities for the characters. His postnational picture thus seems to be optimistic.

This study is limited to three plays written durin or close to the 1990s. In the 2000s Martin McDonagh was no longer writing "Irish" plays set in the west of Ireland. After *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* (2001) he began to set his plays outside Ireland. For instance, *The Pillowman* (2003) is set in an unspecified totalitarian dictatorship, and *Behanding in Spokane* (2010) is set in an imaginary town in America. In these plays, McDonagh also deals with more universal subject matters. For instance, in *The Pillowman*, he focuses on the artist's situation in a totalitarian regime and the meaning of the act of writing. The implications for Irish theatre of this shift in setting and the subject matter could be further analyzed in future studies. Bolger, on the other hand, continued to use similar settings with similar subject matters. *From These Green Heights* (2004) and *The Townlands of Brazil* (2006) are set in Ballymun. In these plays, Bolger again blends past and present, and adds supernatural elements. Therefore, his later plays could be analyzed in a further study using the methods of analysis of this study and extending the frames of reference in accordance with developments in Bolger's writing.

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APPENDICES

A. CURRICULUM VITAE

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Surname, Name: Örmengül, Seda
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2015 Ph.D., English Literature, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey.
2008 M.S., English Literature, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey.
2005 B.A., Department of English Language and Literature, Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey.

WORK EXPERIENCE

2006-present Research Assistant, Dept. of Foreign Language Education, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey.

FELLOWSHIP

Visiting Graduate Student, University of Texas at Austin, Department of English, Texas, Austin, USA.

FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Advanced English, Intermediate German

PUBLICATIONS

"Lost in the Freeplay of Signifiers: A Derridean Analysis of 'Loving Tülsü' by Aziz Nesin" *Forum for World Literature Studies.* Vol.4 No.3 December 2012, 501-509.

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B. TURKISH SUMMARY

İRLANDALILIĞI OLUŞTURAN TEMEL UNSURLARIN POSTMİLLİYETÇİ AÇIDAN ALTÜST EDİLMESİ: MARTIN MCDONAGH VE DERMOT BOLGER'IN OYUNLARINDA TOPRAK, DİN VE AİLE

Bu çalışma, 1980'li yılların sonu ve 1990'lar boyunca eserler üreten İrlandalı oyun yazarlarının oyunlarında, İrlandalılık kavramının ele alınışı üzerine yoğunlaşmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma kapsamında oyunları incelenen yazarlar Martin McDonagh ve Dermot Bolger'dır. Çalışma, McDonagh ve Bolger'ın oyunlarında İrlandalılığı oluşturan temel kavramları altüst ettiklerini ve İrlanda toplumuna postmilliyetçi bir bakış açısıyla yaklaştıklarını savunmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, McDonagh ve Bolger'ın İrlanda tiyatro geleneğindeki yerini belirlemek amacıyla çalışmanın ilk bölümünde İrlanda Milli Tiyatrosu'nun kuruluşunda günümüze geçirdiği aşamalar incelenmektedir. Bu incelemede tiyatronun millet ve milliyetçilik kavramları ile ilişkisi üzerinde durulmaktadır.

Tiyatro eleştirmenleri ve araştırmacılar, 20.yy İrlanda tiyatrosunu çeşitli evrelere ayırmışlardır. Çalışmanın ilk bölümünde, bu eleştirmenler ve araştırmacılardan Fintan O'Toole ve Christopher Murray'ın çalışmaları temel alınır. Bunun nedeni, O'Toole ve Murray'ın diğerlerine göre daha net ve belirgin bir sınıflandırma yapmış olmalarıdır. Buna göre, modern İrlanda tiyatrosu Abbey Dönemi, İkinci Rönesans Dönemi ve Üçüncü Dönem olmak üzere üç bölümde incelenir.

Bu üç dönem detaylıca açıklanmadan önce, Abbey öncesi dönemden kısaca bahsedilmektedir. Abbey öncesi dönemde de ulusal meselelere değinen oyunlar yazılmıştır. Bu oyunlar genellikle, özellikle İngiliz tiyatrosunda İrlandalı karakterleri sahnede küçültücü ve aşağılayıcı şekilde tasvir eden bir tiyatro geleneğine karşı yazılmıştır. 19.yy'da yazılan İrlanda melodramları bu geleneğe karşı koymaya ve olumsuz özelliklerle temsil edilen İrlandalı karakterlere olumlu

özellikler kazandırmaya çalışmışlardır. Bu melodramlardan en ünlüleri Dion Boucicault'un *The Colleen Bawn* (1860), *Arrahna Pogue* (1864) ve *The Shaughraun* (1874) adlı oyunları ile J.W Whitbread'ın *Lord Edward or '98* (1894) ve *Wolfe Tone* (1898) oyunlarıdır.

19.yy melodramları ulusal meselelerin tartışılması için yolu açmış olsalar bile, tiyatronun ulusal kimlik inşası için önemli bir araç olarak görülmesi, 1899 yılında Yeats, Lady Gregory ve Edward Martyn tarafından İrlanda Edebi Tiyatrosu'nun kurulması ile başlamıştır. Bu tiyatronun temeli 1892 yılında Yeats tarafından kurulan Ulusal Edebiyat Derneği'ne dayanır. 1899 yılında dernek Abbey Tiyatrosunu almış ve bu dönemden sonra İrlanda tiyatrosu kısaca Abbey olarak anılır olmuştur.

İrlanda'da ulusal tiyatro hareketi, Kelt Uyanışı ya da Kelt Şafağı adlarıyla da anılan geniş kapsamlı kültürel bir hareketin bir parçasıdır. Bu kültürel hareket, Kelt medeniyetinin İngiliz baskıları sonucu yok edilmesini önlemek amacıyla çeşitli kültürel faaliyetlerin hayata geçirilmesini amaçlamıştır Bu faaliyetler arasında İrlanda dilinin, sporunun ve edebiyatının canlandırılması gibi çalışmalar yer almaktadır. İrlanda Tiyatro hareketi de Kelt Uyanışının önemli bir parçası olarak görülmüştür.

İrlanda Ulusal Tiyatrosu'nun kurucuları, İrlandalıları diğerlerinden ayıran içkin bir İrlandalılık kavramının var olduğuna gönülden inanmışlar ve bu İrlandalılığı ortaya çıkarmaya çalışmışlardır. İrlanda tarihine, mitlerine halk geleneklerine bakarak gizli kalmış, manevi bir İrlandalılığın izini sürerek, ulus inşası sürecince aktif bir rol oynamışlardır. Böylece, Abbey döneminde İrlanda mitleri ve destanları popüler hale gelmiştir. Bu mitlere ve destanlara dayanan birçok oyun yazılmıştır. Dönemin, yaygın oyun türü Batı İrlanda'nın kırsal yaşamını idealize ederek sunan köy oyunlarıdır. Daha az yaygın olan oyun türü de dönemin sosyal ve politik olaylarını ele alan kent oyunlarıdır. Abbey'nin kurucuları, kırsal yaşamın İrlandalılığın özü ve İrlanda köylüsünün de bu özün temsilcisi olduğuna inanmışlardır. Dönemin oyun yazarları, Sean O'Casey haricinde, romantik ve cennet gibi bir kırsal hayat tasviri üzerinde durmuşlardır. Özellikle Yeats ve

Synge, İrlanda köylüsünü Kelt geleneğinin ataları olarak görmüştür. Böylece, yerel halk kültürünü ve halk geleneğini öne çıkarmaya çalışmışlardır.

Dönemin önemli oyunları arasında Yeats'ın *Cuchulain* oyunları sayılabilir. Bu oyunlar, bir İrlanda mitolojik kahramanının epik öykülerine dayanmaktadır. Yeats ayrıca, İrlanda'yı temsil eden önemli bir sembol olan Cathleen karakteri üzerine de oyunlar yazmıştır. Bu oyunlardan bazıları *Countess Cathleen* (1892) ve Yeats'ın Lady Gregory ile birlikte yazdığı *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* (1902) adlı oyunlardır.

Yeats ve Lady Gregory gerçek İrlandalılığı epik bir ulusal geçmişte ve mitlerde aramış ve bunu idealize edilmiş bir kırsal yaşam fikriyle birleştirmişlerdir. Öte yandan, Abbey döneminin diğer bir önemli ismi olan Synge farklı bir yol izlemiştir. Synge köy yaşantısını gerçekçi bir şekilde tasvir etmek istemiş ve bu nedenle 1898 ve 1902 yılları arasında Aran ve Mayo adalarına çeşitli ziyaretler yapmıştır. Bu ziyaretler neticesinde, idealize edilmiş bir köy yaşantısı fikrinden uzaklaşarak, köy yaşamının zorluklarını gösteren, gerçekçi oyunlar yazmayı amaçlamıştır. 1907 tarihli *The Playboy of the Western World* bu oyunların en ünlülerindendir.

Abbey döneminin ikinci kuşak yazarlarından O'Casey ise öncüllerinden tamamen ayrılarak Dublin'de yaşayan işçi sınıfının yaşantısı üzerine yoğunlaşmıştır. İrlanda tarihinin çalkantılı yılları sırasında işçi sınıfının yaşadığı zorlukları kahramanlaştırıcı tasvirlerden uzak bir şekilde yansıtmaya çalışmıştır. Ünlü üçlemesinde yer alan oyunlardan *The Shadow of a Gunman* 1919-1921 İngiliz-İrlanda savaşını, *Juno and Paycock* bu savaşı takip eden iç savaşı ve *The Plough and the Stars* ise 1916 Paskalya ayaklanmasını ele almaktadır. O'Casey idealize edilmiş temsillerden uzaklaşarak İrlanda'yı en gerçekçi şekilde temsil ettiğine inanmıştır çünkü O'Casey'e göre bir oyun yazarının asli görevi ülkesini gördüğü şekilde temsil etmektir.

1950'li yılların sonlarına kadar köy oyunu geleneği Abbey'i etkisi altında tutmaya devam etmiştir. 1960'lı yıllara gelindiğinde, İrlanda'da tiyatro anlayışında belirgin bir değişim yaşanmaya başlamıştır. Bu dönem, Murray'ın "ikinci rönesans" olarak tanımladığı yeni bir dönemin de başlangıcıdır. Dönemi

temsil eden yazarlar arasında Tom Murphy, Brian Friel, John B. Keane, Thomas Kilroy ve Hugh Leonard sayılabilir.

1960'lı yıllardan itibaren ülkede yaşanmaya başlayan ekonomik, sosyal ve kültürel değişimlerin neticesinde, İrlandalılık ve milliyetçilik algısında önemli değişimler gözlenir. Artık İrlanda toplumu tek-tip bir topluluk olarak tanımlanmanın ötesine geçmeye başlamıştır. Bu değişiklik tiyatroya da yansımıştır. Bu dönemde oyun yazarları dar ve kısıtlayıcı bir milliyetçilik anlayışına karşı çıkmışlar ve o zamana kadar Abbey'i etkisi altında tutan köy oyunu geleneği içinde yazmayı reddetmişlerdir. Özellikle Friel ve Murphy oyunlarında toplumun hızla dönüşmesinden kaynaklanan kaygı ve rahatsızlıkları, modernleşme sürecindeki geleneksel bir toplumda ortaya çıkan çelişkileri ele almışlardır.

İlk dönem oyun yazarlarının temel uğraşı gerçek İrlandalılığın özüne ulaşmak olmuştur. İkinci dönemde ise, yazarlar basit ve tek bir İrlandalılık kavramının mümkün olmadığını anlamaya başlamışlardır. Böylece, bu dönemde yazarlar parçalanmış bir ulusal ve kültürel kimlik imgesi ve bunun bireyler üzerindeki etkisi üzerinde durmuşlardır. Bu bağlamda, dönemin yaygın temaları kültürel yurtsuzluk, yabancılaşma, göç, sürgün ve geri dönüş gibi temalar olmuştur. Bu temalar aracılığıyla yazarlar, dönüşüm halindeki bir toplumda yaşanan sancıları ifade etmeye çalışmışlardır.

İkinci dönem yazarları 1980 ve 1990'lar boyunca da önemli eserler vermeye devam etmişlerdir. Öte yandan, 1980'lerin sonu itibariyle İrlanda tiyatrosunda yeni bir dönem başlamıştır. Üçüncü dönem, İrlanda'nın ekonomik açıdan büyük bir gelişme yaşayarak Kelt Kaplanı adıyla anılmaya başladığı bir döneme denk gelmektedir. Bu dönemde İrlanda küresel dünyayla ve bilgi çağıyla bütünleşmiş, göç veren bir ülke konumundan göç alan bir ülke konumuna geçmiştir. Artık durağan ve tek düze bir İrlanda'dan ve İrlandalılıktan söz etmek imkânsızdır. Bu toplumsal değişiklikler tiyatroda da etkisini göstermiştir. Bu dönem yazarlarının pek çoğu, ilk dönemin milliyetçi fikirlerini alt üst ederken ikinci dönem yazarlarında görünen kimlik krizinin de ötesine geçmişlerdir. İrlanda toplumundaki farklılıkları en etkili şekilde yansıtmaya çalışmışlardır. Billy

Roche, Sebastian Barry, Marina Carr, Martin McDonagh, Conor McPherson ve Dermot Bolger bu dönem yazarlardan bazılarıdır.

Bu çalışma, üçüncü dönem yazarlarından Martin McDonagh'ın *Leenane Üçlemesi*'ni oluşturan *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (1996), *A Skull in Connemara* (1997) ve *The Lonesome West* (1997) adlı oyunları ile Dermot Bolger'ın *The Lament for Arthur Cleary* (1989), *Blinded by the Light*, (1990), ve *The Passion of Jerome* (1999) adlı oyunlarını analiz etmektedir. Çalışmada McDonagh ve Bolger'ın İrlandalılığı oluşturan temel kavramları altüst ederek oyunlarında İrlanda toplumunun çeşitliliği ve karmaşasını ifşa etmeyi amaçladıklarını, böylece de yazarların oyunlarının postmilliyetçi bir okumaya açık olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Bu bağlamda İrlandalılığı oluşturan temel kavramlardan toprak, din ve aile ele alınmakta ve her bölümde bu kavramlardan biri üzerinde durulmaktadır. Analizlerde postmordern Gothic ile Baudrillar'ın simulacrum ve Kristeva'nın abjection kavramlarından yararlanılmaktadır.

1990'lı yıllarda İrlandalılık algısında görülen değişimleri daha iyi ifade edebilmek için çalışmanın ikinci kısmında 19.yy'dan günümüze İrlanda'da milliyetçilik anlayışı incelenmektedir. Bu amaçla önce millet ve milliyetçilik kavramları ile ilgili genel bir araştırma yapılmakta, daha sonra da postmilliyetçilikle ilgili çeşitli teoriler üzerinde durulmaktadır.

Avrupa'da 1980'li yılların sonundan itibaren yaşanan bir dizi sosyal ve politik olay millet ve milliyet kavramları hakkındaki görüşlerde derin değişikliklere yol açtı. Doğu ve Batı Almanya'nın 1989 yılında birleşmesi, Sovyetler Birliği'nin 1991 yılında dağılması ve 1990'larda yaşanan Balkan Savaşları bu olaylardan en önemlileridir. Bu olaylar sonucunda milliyetçilik üzerine tartışmalar yeni bir döneme girmiştir. Bu dönemde John Breuilly, Liah Greenfeld ve Eric Hobsbawm gibi düşünürler, o güne kadarki milliyetçi tartışmaların ötesinde bir bakış açısı geliştirmeye başlamışlardır. Richard Kearney bu düşünürlerin oluşturduğu grubu "postmilliyetçi" olarak tanımlamıştır. Bu düşünürlere göre milliyetçilik dönemi kapanmıştır. Milliyetçilik artık modern jeopolitik süreçleri açıklamak için yetersiz kalmaktadır ve bu yüzden de yeni siyasi teoriler, sübjektif ve heterojenik bir sosyal yapıyı açıklayacak şekilde geliştirilmelidir.

Postmilliyetçilik, postmodern II. Dünya Savaşı sonrası dönemde millet ve milliyet kavramlarının işlevi üzerinde durmakta ve siyasi süreçlerin nasıl karmaşık ve parçalanmış ve aynı zamanda da nasıl kolektif sosyal kimlikler oluşturduğunu açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, ulusal kimlik oluşum süreçlerini ifşa ederek, bu süreçte milliyetçiliğin göz ardı ettiği boşlukları ortaya koymaya çalışmaktadır. Postmilliyetçi çalışmalarla uğraşanlar, teknolojik gelişmelerden, pek çok uluslararası politik ve ekonomik yapının yükselişine uzanan koşulların ulusal aidiyet ihtiyacını azalttığını da öne sürmektedirler. Örneğin, postmilliyetçilik alanında önemli bir isim olan Yasemin Soysal, savaş sonrası dönemde yeni ve daha evrensel bir vatandaşlık kavramının ortaya çıktığını ve bu tür bir vatandaşlığı düzenleyen prensiplerin artık ulusal aidiyet kavramına dayanmadığını söylemektedir. Bu noktada postmilliyetçiliğin ulusal kimlik kavramının varlığını tamamen inkâr etmediğini belirtmek gerekir. Ulus devletler ve çeşitli milliyetçilik formları varlıklarını sürdürmektedirler. Ancak küreselleşme süreçleri sonucunda ulus-devlet etkin bir yapı olma özelliğini kaybetmekte ve ulusal kimliğin yerini alternatif kimlik formları almaktadır.

Postmilliyetçilik bir terim olarak Richard Kearney, Jürgen Habermas ve Deirdre Curtin'in çalışmalarında gündeme gelmiştir. Bu isimlere ek olarak Archibugi ve Held, Sassen, Soysal ve Tambini gibi akademisyenler de yaşadığımız dönemi milliyetçilik sonrası dönem olarak nitelemişlerdir. Kearney'e göre postmilliyetçi çalışmalar iki farklı düşünce kolu şeklinde ilerlemektedirler: Aydınlanmacı kozmopolit çizgiden ilerleyenler ve postmodernler. Bu çalışma ikinci düşünce çizgisini takip edecektir.

Aydınlanmacı kozmopolitlerin en bilinen iki ismi Habermas ve Curtin'dir. Habermas postmilliyetçilik üzerine felsefik bir tartışmanın temelini atmıştır. Habermas postmilliyetçiliği insanları bir grup evrensel kanun ve normlar etrafında toplayacak evrensel bir yurttaşlık anlayışı olarak tanımlar. Deirdre ise postmilliyetçi kimliğin politik ve kültürel faaliyetlerin millet ve vatandaşlık kavramlarından ayrılması üzerine dayandığını söyler.

Aydınlanmacı kozmopolitleri postmodernlerden ayıran fark insanları ulusal kimliklerini gözetmeksizin bir araya getirecek evrensel normları savunmalarıdır.

Buna karşın, postmodern postmilliyetçiler kültürel ve yerel farklara daha fazla önem verirler. Bu noktada, Delanty postmilliyetçi kimliği çoğul kimlikler olarak tanımlar. Bu kimlik, ulusal kimliğin aksine bölgesel ulus-devlet kavramına dayanmaz. Ayrıca geçmişi ya da kökenle ilgili mitleri dayanak noktası olarak almaz ve sadece bugüne dayanır. Postmodern postmilliyetçilik belirsizlikleri ve istikrarsızlıkları kucaklar. Postmilliyetçi kimlik değişken ve parçalanmış bir kimliktir. Bu çalışma, Kelt Kaplanı gibi bir dönemde İrlandalılığın artık problemsiz ve homojen bir kavram olarak düşünülemeyeceğini savunmaktadır. Bu nedenle, farklılığa, geçiciliğe ve değişkenliğe vurgu yapan yeni bir tanımlama gerekmektedir. Postmodern postmilliyetçiliğin sağladığı kimlik kavramı bu noktada önemlidir.

Çalışmanın milliyetçilik ve postmilliyetçilik ile ilgili tartışmaların yer aldığı teorik kısımından sonra, İrlanda'nın Kelt Kaplanı dönemine kadar uzanan tarihsel sürecinden kısaca bahsedilmektedir. Aralık 1918'de Cumhuriyetçiler genel seçimlerde bir zafer kazanmıştır. 1919 Ocak ayında Dublin'de Dail Eireann adıyla ve Eamon de Valrea'nın yönetiminde kendi parlamentolarını toplamışlardır. 1922 yılında parlamento İrlanda'nın güneyde İngiltere'den ayrılarak İrlanda Bağımsız Devleti'nin kurulmasını kabul eden İngiliz-İrlanda antlaşmasını onaylamıştır. Antlaşmaya göre kuzeydeki Ulster bölgesi İngiltere'ye bağlı kalmıştır. 1932 yılında De Valera hükümet başkanı olmuştur.

De Valera 1934 yılındaki ünlü St. Patrick konuşmasında İrlanda'nın Galik ve Katolik değerlerine sahip çıkılmasının öneminden bahsetmiş ve aile ile kırsal yaşamın önemi üzerinde özellikle durmuştur. De Valera'nın tasarladığı İrlanda, kırsal bölgeleri sıcak bir ortam vadeden çiftlik evleri ile dolu olan, tarlalarında ve köylerinde neşeli bir çalışkanlığın, gürbüz çocukların haşarılıklarının, atletik gençlerin yarışmalarının ve sevimli genç kızların kahkaha seslerinin çınladığı bir topraktır. De Valera kültürel izolasyona önem vermiştir. Onun yönetimi altında, İrlanda'nın küçük ölçekli, kırsal, dindar ve geleneksel bir toplum olması teşvik edilmiştir.

İrlanda'da ulus inşa etme süreci 1950'li yılların sonuna kadar devam etmiştir. Bu dönemde temel kaygı eşsiz, tutarlı ve durağan bir İrlandalılık kavramının var

olduğunu kanıtlamak olmuştur. İrlandalı politikacılar ve entelektüeller bu misyonu üstlenmişlerdir. 1959 yılında De Valera yerini Sean Lemass'a bırakmıştır. Lemass, De Valera dönemindeki kültürel izolasyon politikasından vazgeçmiştir. T.K Whitaker ile beraber Birinci Ekonomik Genişleme Programı üzerinde çalışmaya başlamıştır. İrlanda milliyetçiliğinin Bağımsızlık sonrası üstlendiği rol kültürel olarak farklı ve bağımsız bir İrlanda yaratmak iken yüzyılın ikinci yarısından sonra küresel dünya düzeni ile bütünleşmiş bir İrlanda yaratma kaygısı ön plana çıkmıştır. Böylece, çeşitli kültürel ve ekonomik gelişmeler neticesinde İrlanda milliyetçilik anlayışında değişimler gözlenmeye başlanmıştır.

1980'lerin sonundan itibaren İrlanda'da endüstri, ticaret, turizm, kamu hizmetleri ve bilgi teknolojileri alanında büyük gelişmeler yaşanmaya başlamıştır. 1991 ve 2003 yılları arasında İrlanda ekonomisi gözle görülür şekilde büyümüştür. 1990 yılında Mary Robinson'un devlet başkanı seçilmesi de önemli gelişmelere yol açmıştır. Robinson'un birleştirici ve marjinal seslere yer açan politikası İrlanda'nın yeni politikası olmuştur. Bu durumda İrlanda toplumunu postmilliyetçi söylemle açıklamak yerinde olacaktır. Postmilliyetçilik İrlanda'nın kendine özgü tarihsel koşullarından doğan kimlik kurgularını tamamen reddetmek demek değildir. Bu kurguları yeniden gözden geçirmek ve mevcut toplumun farklılıklarını ve karmaşalarını daha iyi ortaya koyacak şekilde yeniden düzenlemek demektir.

Çalışmanın ilk analiz bölümünde toprak teması ele alınır. Toprak kavramı İrlanda milliyetçi söyleminde her zaman büyük öneme sahip olmuştur. Toprak, ulusal toprağı yani coğrafi açıdan bir köklülüğü ve yerleşikliği ifade eder. Bu bakımdan toprak kavramı insanlar arasında ortak ulusal bir ruh ve aidiyet hissi yaratılmasına hizmet eder. Bu kavram, İrlanda tiyatrosunda birçok oyunda da yerini bulmuştur. İrlandalı oyun yazarları toprak temasını kendi İrlandalılık algılarına göre değişik şekillerde işlemişlerdir. Abbey dönemi yazarları için toprak idealize edilmiş, romantik bir kırsal İrlanda fikriyle özdeştir. Kırsal İrlanda, cennet gibi ve neredeyse kutsal bir yer olarak tasvir edilir.

Önceden de belirtildiği gibi, İrlanda'da ulus yaratma sürecinde amaç kültürel olarak farklı, özgür ve bağımsız bir İrlanda yaratmak olmuştur. 1960'lara

gelindiğinde, değişen ulusal gündemde ekonomik ve kültürel açıdan modern ve diğer Batı toplumlarıyla bütünleşmiş bir İrlanda yaratmak vardı. İkinci dönem yazarları modernite ve gelenek arasındaki çelişkiden doğan sorunlar üzerine yoğunlaştılar. Yabancılaşma ve göç, dönemin belirgin temaları arasındaydı. Bu bağlamda, bu dönem oyunlarında toprak ve anavatanla bağların aşınmaya uğradığı görülür. Bu aşınma aynı zamanda da nostalji ve anavatana duyulan özlemi tetikler.

1980'ler sonu ve 1990'larda da, yazarlar toprak ile bağların kopukluğunu ele almaya devam ettiler. Bu yazarların öncekilerden farkı, bu kopukluğu ulusal kimlik kavramının yapaylığını ifşa etmek için kullanmalarıydı. Bu yazarlar, belirli bir yere "ev" ve aidiyet gibi anlamların yüklenmesine karşı durdular. Bu açıdan bakıldığında, bu yazarların Kearney tarafından "Beşinci Bölge" diye adlandırılan bir noktada durdukları söylenebilir. Kearney'e göre İrlandalı sanatçılar, tarihçiler ve eleştirmenler İrlandalılık kavramına bu Beşinci Bölge'den yaklaşmalıdırlar. Bu bölge fiziki sınırların kısıtlandırmalarının ötesine geçen imgesel bir alandır ve ancak bu alandan bakıldığında İrlanda'ya farklı bakış açıları geliştirilebilir.

Martin McDonagh bu Beşinci Bölge'den yazan yazarlardan biridir. McDonagh 1970 yılında Londra'da doğmuştur. Ailesi İrlanda kırsalından Londra'ya göç etmiştir. McDonagh çocukluğu boyunca yaz tatillerini İrlanda'nın batı sahilinde yer alan Connemara bölgesinde geçirmiştir. Bu ziyaretler ve Londra'daki yaşantısı, McDonagh'a liminal bir alanda var olduğu fikrini vermiştir. Kendisine göre bu alan çok yönlü ve kolay tanımlanamayacak bir alandır.

McDonagh'ın *Leenane Üçlemesi,* Connemara'da küçük bir kasaba olan Leenane'de geçer. Batı İrlanda'nın kalbinde yer alan Connemara, hem doğal güzelliğiyle hem de folklorik zenginliğiyle milliyetçi söylem için her zaman çok önemli olmuştur. Kelt Uyanışı'nın liderleri insanları Batı'ya gitmeye kendi ana dillerini ve kültürlerini öğrenmeye teşvik etmişlerdir. Milliyetçiler Connemara'yı ulusal kimliğin tüm unsurlarını barındıran bir hazine olarak görmüşlerdir.

McDonagh ise milliyetçilerin Connemara'nın doğal güzelliği ve kültürel çağrışımları karşısında duydukları çoşkuyu paylaşmaz. Bu, McDonagh'ın bölgenin bu özelliklerini reddetmesinden kaynaklanmaz. O sadece bu bölgenin ve

insanlarının idealize edilmesine ve milliyetçi ideallerle eş tutulmasına karşıdır. Böylece, kırsal yaşamı kutsayan tiyatro geleneğinden ayrılır. Oyunlarında, İrlandalılık ve toprak arasında var olduğu varsayılan organik bağa saldırır. Bu durum, Leenane'ın postmodern bir pastiş olarak tasvir edilişinde ve bu tasvirde bulunan Gothic unsurlarda görülebilir. Bu amaçla, çalışmanın bu bölümünde önce Leenane postmodern bir postiş olarak analiz edilmektedir.

Frederic Jameson postmodernizmin en önemli özelliklerinden birinin pastiş olduğunu belirtir. Pastiş belirli bir tarzın, parodi amacı olmadan taklit edilmesidir. Pastişde, gülme unsuru ya da mizah öğeleri yoktur. Farklı tarzlar bir araya gelir ve oluşan bütün gerçekmiş gibi sunulur. Diğer bir deyişle, pastiş kendi ötesinde bir gerçeğe işaret etmez. Bu bağlamda pastiş doğru, gerçek ve gerçeğin kökeni gibi kavramları sorunsallaştırır.

Jameson'a göre pastiş postmodernizmin yer anlayışını açıklamak için de kullanılabilir. Bu açıdan bakıldığında, Leenane güzel bir postmodern pastiş örneğidir. Leenane'de iki farklı dünya resmi bir araya gelir. İlki, Abbey oyunlarında görülen küçük soyutlanmış bir kasaba resmidir. Aynı zamanda da Leenane, küreselleşmiş dünya ile bütünleşmiş bir yer resmi sunar. Sonuç olarak, Leenane'de eski ve yeni bir araya gelir ve Abbey'in köy oyunlarındaki geleneksel kasaba imgesi yerle bir olur. Öyle görünse bile, Leenane artık özgün, el değmemiş bir batı kasabası değildir.

McDonagh'ın her üç oyununda da, oyunların geçtiği ana mekânlar geleneksel yoksul batı İrlanda kulübeleridir. Abbey oyunlarında her zaman rastlanan haç, tarım aletleri, tezek gibi objeler McDonagh kulübelerinde de görülür. Bu objeler, bilindik anlamlarıyla kırsal değerleri temsil ederler. Böylece, ilk bakışta bu kulübeler, Leenane'in kırsal, içe dönük ve bozulmamış bir kasaba olduğu izlenimini verirler. Öte yandan, Leenane'de küresel medyanın etkileri sürekli hissedilmektedir. Kırsal yaşam, radyo ve televizyondan seçilmiş medya imgeleri ile bir arada sunulur. Böylece, geleneksel soyutlanmış kırsal toplum imgesi hasar görür.

McDonagh karakterleri sürekli pembe dizi seyreder ve günlük yaşam deneyimlerini çeşitli Amerikan ve Avusturalya televizyon programları ile

ilişkilendirirler. Örneğin, Leenane'ın genç sakinlerinden biri olan Ray'in kasabanın sıkıcı ve boğucu yaşantısında tek eğlencesi televizyon programlarıdır. Öyle ki, abisinin yaklaşan düğünü ile Avrupa Futbol şampiyonası aynı tarihlere denk geldiği için büyük üzüntü duyar ve abisine düğün tarihini değiştirmeyi teklif etmeyi bile düşünür. Görüldüğü gibi Ray hiç de De Valera tarafından hayal edilen gençlik tipine uymaz. O, batı İrlanda'nın cennet gibi güzelliğinin tadını çıkarmak yerine televizyon programları tarafından esir alınmış bir nesli temsil eder.

Eskinin ve yeninin imgelerini bir araya toplayan Leenane, sakinlerine hiç de umut vadetmez. Bu yüzden, orayı terk eden birileri vardır hep. Karakterler daha iyi yaşam imkânları bulabilmek umuduyla İngiltere'ye ya da Amerika'ya göç ederler. McDonagh karakterlerinin yaşadıkları yere karşı duygusal bir bağ geliştirdikleri ya da aidiyet hissettikleri görülmez. Yani, belirli bir yere karşı hissedilen bağlılık hissi ve kişilerin anavatanlarıyla aralarındaki organik bağ yok olmuştur.

Postmodern bir pastiş olarak Leenane, idealize edilmiş batı İrlanda kırsalı imgesini yerle bir eder. Bu durum, Gotik unsurların eklenmesi ile daha da kuvvetlenir. Leenane'ın kasvetli ve kısıtlayıcı atmosferi ve sakinleri arasındaki şiddete dayalı canavarca ilişkiler, analizi oyunlardaki Gotik unsurların ve bunların anlamlarının araştırılmasına yönlendirir. Gotik, geleneksel şekli ile aslında milliyetçi söylemlere hizmet etmek için kullanılmıştır. Gotik tarzı yazılan ilk eserler, bir ulusun Diğeri'ni yaratmayı ve bu Diğer'i canavarca tasvir etmeyi amaçlamıştır. Oysa McDonagh'ın oyunlarında, Gotik unsurlar bu amacın tam tersi şeklinde kullanılmaktadır. McDonagh'ın oyunlarında canavarca, ahlak dışı ve yıkıcı olan tam da İrlandalıların kendileridir. McDonagh'ın oyunlarında nefret, şiddet ve kargaşa batı İrlanda'nın kalbinde yer alır.

Leenane kasvetli ve boğucu bir yerdir. Karakterler sohbetlerinde sürekli yağan yağmurdan, çamurdan, kayalıklardan bahsederler. Böylece ilk olarak karanlık ve karamsar bir Leenane resmi çizilir. Bu fiziksel Gotik atmosfer kasabada hüküm süren şiddet, yıkıcılık ve gizemli olaylar ile daha da derinleşir. Kasaba halkı her fırsatta birbirine zarar verir. Aile içi şiddet yaygındır. Çözülemeyen cinayetler vardır. Yani, McDonagh'ın Leenane'i, sakin, huzurlu ve ahenkli ve halkı

milliyetçi idealler doğrultusunda yaşayan bir batı İrlanda imajını ters yüz eder. Leenane İrlandalılığın özünü temsil ettiğine inanılan kırsal yaşam fikrinden çok uzaktır.

McDonagh batı İrlanda kırsalının milliyetçi çağrışımlarına saldırırken, Bolger Dublin üzerine yoğunlaşır. Genellikle de Dublin'in kenar mahallelerinde yaşayan insanların yaşamlarından kesitler sergiler. Bu insanlar milliyetçi söylemin dışına itilmiş karakterlerdir. Ayrıca, şehir yaşamının parçası olmuş işsizlik, fakirlik, suç işleme gibi sorunları ele alır. Onun Dublin'i de McDonagh'ın Leenane'i gibi ideal olmayan bir yerdir. Bolger da ulusal kimlikle belirli bir yeri bağdaştırmanın anlamsızlığını gösterir.

Bolger ilk bakışta karanlık ve karamsar bir şehir portresi çizse de dar bir gerçekçilik içine düşmez. Onun amacı şehir yaşamındaki çeşitliliği ve çok katmanlılığı göstermektir. Bu açıdan Bolger'ın oyunlarındaki Dublin Bakhtin'in karnaval kavramı yardımıyla incelenmiştir. Karnaval zamanlarında hiyerarşik düzenler altüst olur ve toplumun farklı katmanları bir araya gelir. Karnaval kutsal ile dindışı olanı, soylu ile avamı, önemli ile önemsizi ve bilge ile aptalı bir araya getirir.

Bolger'ın oyunlarında toprak kavramını incelemek için karnaval kavramının seçilmesinin nedeni yazarın oyunlarında görülen şu özelliktir: Bolger Kelt Kaplanı İrlanda'sında yaşanan sorunları ele alır ancak oyunlar bu gerçekleri sığ bir gerçekçilikle yansıtmaz. İrlanda'da yaşanan ekonomik yükselişe rağmen, daha önce de bahsedildiği gibi, dönemin pek çok olumsuz özellikleri de vardır. Bu dönemde, geç kapitalist bir toplumda görüleceği üzere, zengin ile fakir arasındaki uçurum derinleşmiş, işsizlik, fakirlik gibi sorunlar artmıştır. Ayrıca, uyuşturucu kullanımı ve suç oranında da ciddi bir artış mevcuttur. Bu sorunlar, Bolger'ın oyunlarında da işlenir. Ancak, işlenen konuların ciddiyetine rağmen, dönüştürücü ve olumlayıcı bir karnaval ruhu oyunları sığ gerçekçiliğe düşmekten korur. Bolger oyunlarında tek bir mesaj vermek niyetinde değildir. Örneğin, *The Lament for Arthur Cleary* adlı oyunda, Arthur Cleary, Avrupa'da on beş yıl çalıştıktan sonra Dublin'e geri dönmüş otuz beş yaşında bir işçidir. Arthur'un döndüğü Dublin geçmişinde hatırladığı Dublin'den çok farklıdır. Dublin'in artık Avrupa'daki

herhangi bir şehirden farklı yok gibidir. Bildiği yerler kapanmış, yerlerine hamburger dükkânları açılmıştır. Oysaki Arthur geçmişinde hatırladığı Dublin'i aramaktadır. Buna rağmen Arthur'un nostaljik bakış açısı oyunu ele geçirmez ve diğer bakış açıları ile bir arada verilir.

Arthur'un on sekiz yaşındaki sevgilisi Kathy, Dublin'deki yaşamından bunalmıştır ve bir gün oradan uzaklaşma hayalleri kurmaktadır. Arthur Kathy'nin bu hayallerine bir anlam veremez ve "Dublin bizim evimiz" fikrini Kathy'e aşılamaya çalışır. Kathy bunu kabullenemez. Bolger farklı görüşleri, bir mesaj kaygısı gütmeden bir araya getirerek, bir yere tek bir anlam yüklenemeyeceğini, çünkü o yerin herkes için farklı anlamlar taşıdığını gösterir. Oyunun sonunda Arthur, uyuşturucu baronu Deignan'ın adamları tarafından öldürülür. Buna rağmen oyunun tonuna isminde geçtiği gibi bir yas havası hakim değildir. Kathy Arthur'un ölümüne çok üzülür ancak oyunun sonunda onun evlenip çocukları olduğu ve Avrupa'ya göç ettiği öğrenilir. Yani, Kathy hayallerini gerçekleştirmiştir. Arthur'un ölümü Arthur için özgürleştirici olurken, Kathy için de yeni bir yaşama başlamasına vesile olmuştur.

Blinded By The Light adlı oyunda ise Bolger kişisel bir alanı karnavallaştırır. Bu oyunda ana mekan Mick adlı genç bir Dublinlinin yaşadığı kiralık bir odadır. Mick bir kütüphanede çalışmaktadır ama oyun boyunca işe gittiği pek görülmez. Hastalık bahanesiyle işten sürekli izin almaktadır. Mick'in en büyük zevki odasında oturup esrar içmek ve kütüphaneden aşırdığı kitapları okumaktır. Ayrıca Mick bireyselliğe çok önem verir. Ömrü boyunca herhangi bir ideolojik gruba, kuruma ya da örgüte katılmaktan hep kaçınmıştır. Mick kendi dünyasını "Bağımsız Mickonia Cumhuriyeti" olarak tanımlar. Mick'in mahremiyetine büyük önem vermesine rağmen, odası sürekli birileri tarafından ziyaret edilir. Özellikle onu kendi tarikatlarına kazandırmaya kararlı iki Mormon ve Legion of Mary tarikatından iki kişi Mick'i sık sık ziyaret ederler. Mick bu ziyaretlerden bir yandan bunalsa da bir yandan bu kişilerle gizliden eğlenir. Bu karşılaşmalar sırasında dini ve din dışının bir araya gelmesinden doğan komik durumlar ortaya çıkar.

Din ve din dışı olanın bir araya gelmesi *The Passion of Jerome* adlı oyunda da gözlenir. Bu oyunda ana karakter Jerome Furlong adlı otuzlarının sonlarında bir reklamcıdır. Jerome eşi Penny ile birlikte Dublin'in saygın bölgelerinden bir olan Malahide'de yaşamaktadır. Jerome'un, iş arkadaşı Clara ile de evlilik dışı bir ilişkisi vardır. Jerome, Clara ile, kardeşi Derek için kiraladığı bir apartman dairesinde buluşur. Bu apartman dairesi Ballymun adlı bir kenar mahallededir. Ballymun genellikle düşük gelirli kişilerin yaşadığı bir yerdir. Burada suç oranı da yüksektir. Ballymundaki bu apartman dairesinde bir gün yalnızken Jerome ellerinde bir acı ile uyanır. Ellerine çakılmış çivi izleri vardır ve yaraları sürekli kanamaktadır. Jerome, rüyasında bir çocuk hayaletinin ondan İsa peygamber gibi davranmasını ve kendisini kurtarmasını istediğini gördüğünü hatırlar. Jerome'un ellerindeki yaralar da, İsa'nın çarmıha gerilişini hatırlatmaktadır.

Jerome apartmanın kapıcısından bu apartmanda bir çocuğun intihar ettiğini öğrenir. Çocuğun babası alkoliktir ve sık sık annesi ile kavga edip onu dövmektedir. Bir gün annesi balkondan atlayarak intihar eder. Arkasından da babası ölür. Çocuk bu yaşadıklarına dayanamaz ve intihar eder. Jerome Ballymun'da ilk kez kendi hayatından farklı hayatlarla karşılaşır. Gittiği hastanede karşılaştığı Rita adında bir kadın, onun yaralarını görünce, bu durumu İsa peygamberin durumu ile bağdaştırıp ondan ölmek üzere olan torunu için dua etmesini ister. Jerome başlangıçta bunu kabul etmez çünkü o ancak aklına inanan bir ateisttir. Fakat daha sonra, kadının torunun yanına gider ve bilindik anlamda olmasa da içinden geldiği gibi dua eder. Oyunun sonunda küçük kız ölür ancak ölmeden önce babaannesine rüyasında gördüğü bir adamdan bahseder ve onun kendisine huzur verdiğini söyler. Acıları azalmıştır ve huzur içinde ölmüştür. Jerome oyunun sonunda kendi hayatını da değiştirmeye ve daha dürüst bir hayat yaşamaya karar verir. Ballymun'un acımasız dünyasının ortasında yaşanan bu metafizik olay Jerome için dönüştürücü bir etki yaratmıştır.

Hem McDonagh'ın hem de Bolger'ın oyunlarında İrlanda ve İrlandalılığın toprak ile bağlantısı postmilliyetçi bir söylemle reddedilir. Her iki yazar da belirli bir yerin ulusal kimlikle sıkı bir bağının olduğu fikrine karşı çıkar. McDonagh Leenane'i postmodern bir pastiş şeklinde ve karanlık, uğursuz ve kanunsuz bir yer

olarak resmederek Batı İrlanda hakkındaki idealleştirilmiş milliyetçi söylemleri alt üst eder. Öte yandan Bolger Dublin'in kenar mahallelerine yoğunlaşarak daha önce milliyetçi söylemlerden dışlanan bölgeleri ve karakterleri ön plana çıkarır. İncelenen oyunlarda Dublin, kutsal ile kutsal olmayanın, geçmiş ile geleceğin ve yaşam ile ölümün iç içe geçtiği bir karnaval alanı haline gelir. Böylece Bolger tek boyutlu bir şehir tasvirine ve böyle bir yerde yaşayan tek tip ve homojen bir toplumun İrlandalılığı temsil ettiği fikrine karşı çıkar.

Çalışmanın dördüncü bölümünün odak noktası din, özellikle de, İrlanda milliyetçi söyleminin en önemli bileşenlerinden biri olan Katolikliktir. Bu bölümün başında, Katolik dinin İrlanda için öneminden kısaca bahsedilir. İrlanda'da yirminci yüzyılın ortalarına kadar İrlandalılık ile Katoliklik ayrılmaz bir bütün olarak görülmüştür. Katoliklik, Protestan İngiliz değerlerine karşı İrlanda yaşam biçimini temsil eden bir sembole dönüşmüştür. Kilise; eğitim, sağlık, aile yaşamı gibi akla gelebilecek her sosyal alanda etkili olmuştur. 1960'lı yılların ortalarına doğru, ülkenin laikleşmesi ve küresel dünya ile bütünleşmeye başlaması sonucunda dinin insanların yaşamı üzerindeki etkisi azalsa da, Kilise etkin rolünü 1980'li yılların sonuna kadar devam ettirmiştir. Ancak, 1980'lerin sonunda Kilise'nin gücü iyice azalmıştır. Bunda din adamları ile ilgili ortaya çıkan bir dizi skandal da etkili olmuştur. Bazı din adamları çocuk istismarı ile suçlanırken, bazılarının gayri-meşru çocuk sahibi oldukları, bazılarının da homoseksüel ilişki yaşadıkları ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu skandallar halkın Kiliseye olan güvenini derinden sarsmıştır.

Çalışmanın din ile ilgili bu bölümünde, McDonagh ve Bolger'ın dinin İrlanda halkı üzerinde azalan etkisini gösterdikleri ve böylece de İrlandalılık ve Katoliklik arasındaki bağı alt üst ettikleri öne sürülmektedir. Böylece yazarlar, İrlandalılığı oluşturan diğer bir bileşeni de problemli hale getirerek İrlanda'nın postmilliyetçi temsilinde bir adım daha atmaktadırlar. Hem McDonagh hem de Bolger, manevi değerlerin yokluğu üzerinde dururlar. McDonagh sadece bu değerlerin yokluğunu işlerken, Bolger bir adım daha öteye giderek, aslında Kelt Kaplanı İrlanda'sında manevi bir derinliğin yine de mümkün olduğunu, ancak bunun için ille de bir dinin kısıtlayıcı değerlerinin gerekli olmadığını gösterir.

McDonagh'ın oyunlarında din teması Baudrillard'ın simulakr ve simülasyon teorisi ışığı altında incelenir. Leenane'de Katoliklik semboller; kelimeler ve ikonlar halinde yaşamaya devam eder. Ancak bunların manevi değerleri kaybolmuştur. Örneğin, her evde haç başköşede asılıdır. Karakterler konuşurken sık sık İsa'nın ve Tanrı'nın adını anarlar. Bu da ilk bakışta Leenane'ın dindar bir toplum olduğu izlenimini verir. Oysaki dinin karakterler üzerinde hiçbir etkisi yoktur. Karakterler, küfrederler, birbirlerine zarar verirler, cinayet işlerler. Örneğin, *A Skull* adlı oyundaki yaşlı karakterlerden bir olan Mary, İsa'dan bahseder, diğer insanları din dışı davranmakla suçlar, sık sık günah çıkartmaya gider; böylece de dindar biri olduğu izlenimin verir. Oysa Mary, kumar oynayan ve oynarken de hile yapan, kasabaya gelen turistleri kandıran, kolayca yalan söyleyebilen biridir.

Oyunlardaki en önemli din, sembollerden biri *The Lonesome'da Valene* adlı karakterin plastik aziz ikonlarıdır. Valene için bu ikonlar çok değerlidir. Valene sadece bu ikonları biriktirdiği için cennete gideceğine inanır. Öte yandan, babasını öldüren kardeşi Coleman lehine yalancı şahitlik yapar. İkonlarını yakan Coleman'ı öldürmeye kalkar. Yani ikonların kendilerinden öte hiçbir anlamı yoktur.

Kasabanın din adamı olan rahip Welsh, halkın arasında süregelen kin ve nefretten ve birbiri ardına tekrarlanan şiddet olaylarından dolayı çok üzüntü duymaktadır. Kasabadaki hiç kimse Welsh'i ciddiye almaz, dini bir otorite olarak görmez. Aslında Welsh'in kendisinin de inanç sorunları vardır. Belki de kendisi bir Tanrı'nın varlığına inanmamaktadır. Zaten kasaba halkını doğru yola çekmek için dini söylemlere başvurmaz. İnsani değerlerden, sevginin öneminden bahseder. Kısacası, rahip Welsh de Katolikliğin sadece sembol düzleminde kalan sembollerinden biridir.

Bolger'ın oyunlarında da McDonagh'da olduğu gibi din etkisini kaybetmiştir. Ancak Bolger'ın oyunları yapıcı postmodernizm teorisi ile incelenmektedir çünkü Bolger'ın oyunlarında Kelt Kaplan'ı İrlanda'sının materyalist değerlerine karşın, manevi bir boyut her zaman vardır. Ancak Bolger bu boyutu Katoliklik ya da başka bir kurumsallaşmış din ile bağdaştırmaz. Bolger karakterleri genellikle

kendi manevi dünyalarını kendi istedikleri gibi şekillendirirler. Örneğin, *Blinded* oyununda Mick Katoliklik ya da herhangi başka bir din ile ilgilenmez. Onun dünya görüşünü Yunan filozof Diogenes'in felsefesi şekillendirir. Diogenes gibi Mick de milliyetçi ya da dini bir bağlantıyı kabul etmez. Tüm ideoloji ve inanç sistemlerine şüphe ile yaklaşır.

Blinded oyununda kurumsallaşmış inanç sistemleri alaya alınır. Mick'i kendi yollarına çekmeye çalışan Mormonlar'ın inatçı çabaları komik durumlara sebep olur. Mick onlara, herhangi bir dine ya da mezhebe bağlanmak istemediğini, kendi manevi yolunu kendi çizmek istediğini anlatmaya çalışır ancak Mormonlar'ı ikna edemez. Mormonlar onun kendilerine ihtiyacı olduğu konusunda ısrarcıdırlar. Mick onları caydırmak için kadın kıyafetleri giyer, sapkın cinsel eğilimleri olduğundan bahseder ama bu durum Mormonları daha da hırslandırır.

The Passion oyununda da Jerome'un kendi manevi yolunu kendi çizme süreci izlenir. Jerome'un materyalist değerlerle çevrili dünyasında apansız beliren çocuk hayaleti ve ellerinde çıkan yaralar, onu kendi yaşamı üzerinde düşünmeye zorlar. Jerome başlangıçta kendi mantığından ve gözüyle gördüklerinden başkasına inanmayacağı konusunda kararlı olsa da, zamanla hayatın farklı boyutları da olabileceğini kabullenir. Jerome'un dünyası çalışmak ve çok para kazanmak üzerine kuruludur. Jerome bu hayatı sorgulamaya başlar ve sonunda yaşantısını değiştirmeye karar verir. Ancak bunu herhangi bir dine bağlanarak yapmayacak, kendi yolunu kendi çizecektir.

Hem McDonagh hem de Bolger, Kelt Kaplanı İrlanda'sının geç kapitalist toplumunun bireysellik, tüketicilik ve materyalizm gibi özelliklerini ön plana çıkarırlar. Bu toplumda artık Katolik değerler etkin değildir. McDonagh sadece bu durumu göstermekle yetinirken, Bolger Katolik değerler yerine insanların kendi manevi dünyalarını kendi istedikleri gibi şekillendirmelerinin mümkün olduğunu gösterir. Her iki durumda da McDonagh ve Bolger İrlandalılığı şekillendiren bir kavramı daha etkisiz hale getirirler.

Çalışmanın son analiz bölümü aile kavramını ele almaktadır. Aile çoğu milliyetçi söylem için olduğu gibi İrlanda milliyetçiliği için de çok önemli bir kavram olmuştur. Belli bir inanç ve değerler sistemi çerçevesinde sınırları iyi

çizilmiş bir aile kavramı İrlanda milliyetçiliğinin en önemli dayanak noktalarından biridir. Siyasi ve kültürel milliyetçiler ailenin sağlam ve güçlü bir İrlanda toplumun temeli olduğu hususunda birleşmişlerdir. Ailenin önemli pozisyonu 1937 Anayasası'nda da yerini almıştır.

İrlanda milliyetçi söyleminde ailedeki roller sıkı sıkıya belirlenmiştir. Millet anne kavramı ile özdeşleştirilmiş, bu durum kadınların anne ve yuva kurucu rolünü sabitlemiştir. Erkek ise ailenin koruyucusu ve idame ettiricisidir. İrlanda kadını, ya iffetli ve itaatkâr genç kadın ya da bilge yaşlı kadın imgeleriyle tanımlanırken, erkek imgesi güçlü, cesur ve kendine güvenen bir erkektir. McDonagh ve Bolger oyunlarında bu rollere ve imgelere saldırmakta ve milleti temsil edecek homojen ve tek tip bir aile kavramının mümkün olmadığını göstermektedirler.

Bu bölümde hem McDonagh hem de Bolger'ın oyunları Kristeva'nın abject kavramı üzerinden incelenir. Sosyal boyutuyla bakıldığında bu kavram, tutarlı ve homojen bir toplum yapısını bozan, bu yapıda istenmeyen ve dolayısıyla da yapının dışına itilen her şeydir. Ayrıca bir toplumun Öteki yaratarak kendisini tanımlayabilmesi için gereken şeydir. McDonagh ve Bolger abject olan her şeyi aile kurumun tam da ortasına yerleştirerek ideal İrlanda ailesi imajını alt üst ederler.

McDonagh oyunlarında rahatsız edici aile ilişkileri gösterir. Her üç oyunda da aile ilişkileri nefret, kin ve şiddete dayalıdır. İşkence ve cinayetler ailelerin içinde gerçekleşir. Oysaki ideal bir aile, insanı bu tip tehlikelerden koruması umulan bir nevi sığınaktır. McDonagh'ın oyunlarında ise bu durumun tam tersi mevcuttur. Örneğin, *The Beauty Queen* oyununda problemli bir anne-kız ilişkisi sunulur. Mag ve Maureen birbirlerinden nefret ederler ve birbirlerine zarar vermek için ellerinden geleni yaparlar. Oyunun sonunda ise Maureen, annesi Mag'i öldürür. *The Lonesome* oyununda ise Coleman ve Valene arasındaki kin ve nefrete dayalı ağabey-kardeş ilişkisi izlenir. McDonagh bu oyunlarda aile ile ilgili, anne sevgisi ve şefkati, ana-babaya saygı, kardeş sevgisi gibi tüm olumlu kavramları yerle bir eder.

Bolger da oyunlarında abject'e başvurur ancak onun nedenleri farklıdır. Bolger abject'in özgürleştirici etkisinden faydalanır. Toplum tarafından istenmeyip dışlanan ilişkiler, onun oyunlarında karakterleri özgürleştirir. Bu ilişkiler sayesinde karakterler kendi bağımsızlıklarını ortaya koyarlar ve daha kendine güvenli olurlar. Ayrıca, Bolger ideal bir aile alanında olmaması gereken sıra dışı karakterleri de bu alana yerleştirir. Örneğin, *Blinded'*da Mick'in komşuları, her biri tuhaf özellikleri olan ilginç karakterlerdir. Bu oyunda aile ortamı, Mick'in darmadağınık bekar odası ve bu odaya girip çıkan bu ilginç karakterlerdir.

Her iki yazar da ulus ile özdeşleştirilen, idealize edilmiş durağan ve monolitik aile kavramını sorunsallaştırırlar. Böylece de saf ve problemsiz bir ulus olgusunu sorgularlar. Bu oyunlardaki ailelere bakıldığında, eğer ki aileler İrlanda ulusunu temsil eden en küçük birimlerse, İrlanda da kaotik ve düzensiz bir yer olarak görünür. Bu, milliyetçi söylemin çizdiğinin aksi bir İrlanda portresidir.

Sonuç olarak, McDonagh ve Bolger oyunlarında İrlandalılığı oluşturan temel öğeleri alt üst ederek durağan, tek tip ve sorunsuz bir millet anlayışının içini boşaltırlar. Bunun yerine kaotik ve değişken bir topluluk anlayışı ortaya koyarlar. İrlandalılığın da diğer kimlik kategorileri gibi kurgulanmış bir kategori olduğunu göstermeye çalışarak, postmilliyetçi bakış açılarını yansıtırlar. Hem McDonagh hem de Bolger milliyetçi kesinliklerin çöküşünü gösterirken farklı yaklaşımlar sergilerler. McDonagh'ın çizdiği dünyalar kesinliklerin kaybolduğu, derinlikten yoksun kaotik dünyalardır. Bu açıdan bakıldığında McDonagh karamsar bir tablo çizer ama bu çizdiği tablodan memnundur ve İrlandalılığın çökmüş unsurlarını canlandırmaya çalışmaz. Öte yandan Bolger daha iyimser bir tablo çizer. O da İrlandalılığı oluşturan unsurların çöküşünü gösterir ancak bu çöküş aynı zamanda olumlu gelişmeleri beraberinde getirir ve karakterler için yeni ve özgürleştirici olasılıkların kapısını aralar.

C. TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

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