

MOVING FROM TOPOGRAPHIC TO RELATIONAL SPACES IN BRIAN  
FRIEL'S DRAMA: SPATIAL RECONFIGURATIONS IN DANCING AT  
LUGHNASA, WONDERFUL TENNESSEE AND MOLLY SWEENEY

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## ABSTRACT

### MOVING FROM TOPOGRAPHIC TO RELATIONAL SPACES IN BRIAN FRIEL’S DRAMA: SPATIAL RECONFIGURATIONS IN DANCING AT LUGHNASA, WONDERFUL TENNESSEE AND MOLLY SWEENEY

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This study explores the spatial dynamics of Brian Friel’s drama, mainly in his three plays of the 1990s, *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990), *Wonderful Tennessee* (1993), and *Molly Sweeney* (1994) against the backdrop of Doreen B. Massey’s relational understanding of space. Drawing on Massey’s reconceptualization of “space”, “place”, and “landscape”, it will be argued in this dissertation that Brian Friel’s plays challenge the conventional idea of rootedness and authentic identity attached to Ireland and Irishness. These plays, subverting the prevalent notions of sense of place and cultural identity, and emphasizing the multiple, shifting, and unbounded nature of places and people, offer an alternative way of approaching space and subjectivity in Ireland and Irish writing. Along with Massey’s conceptual tools, Edward Soja’s concept “Thirdspace” will be employed in order to highlight how spaces and places in Friel’s drama are open and porous, and how they draw attention to the intertwining nature of the spatial and the social. Through the analysis of these late plays of Ballybeg, an imaginary town epitomizing Friel’s vision of the fifth province, an-Other realm for rethinking Ireland and Irishness, this study will conclude that Friel, undermining monolithic constructions of national space and identity, forges a relational understanding of Ireland which embraces multiplicity, the cluster of

relations, meetings, encounters and transformation — a “global sense of place” embodying “the chance of space” within and beyond in Doreen Massey’s terms.

Keywords: space, Doreen Massey, sense of place, Brian Friel, Ballybeg

## ÖZ

### BRIAN FRIEL OYUNLARINDA TOPOĞRAFİK UZAMDAN İLİŞKİSEL UZAMA GEÇİŞ: LUGHNASA'DA DANS, HARİKA TENNESSEE VE MOLLY SWEENEY'DE UZAMIN YENİDEN OLUŞUMU

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Bu çalışma Brian Friel'in 1990lı yıllara ait Lughnasa'da Dans (1990), Harika Tennessee (1993), ve Molly Sweeney (1994) adlı oyunlarında uzamdaki devinimi Doreen Massey'nin ilişkisel uzam kuramı çerçevesinde incelemektedir. Bu çalışmada Massey'nin “uzam,” “yer,” ve “manzara” kavramlarını yeniden biçimlendirmesine dayanılarak, Friel'in oyunlarının İrlanda ve İrlandalı olmak ile özdeşleşmiş olan köklülük ve otantik kimlik fikrine meydan okuduğu tartışılacaktır. Bu oyunlar İrlanda yazınında uzun zamandır hüküm süren yer duygusu ve kültürel kimlik kavramlarını ters yüz edip, yerlerin ve insanların çoklu, değişken ve sınırsız doğasına dikkat çekerek, İrlanda bağlamında uzama ve özneelliğe yaklaşmanın alternatif bir yolunu sunuyor. Friel'in oyunlarında yer ve uzamın nasıl açık ve geçirgen olduğunu, uzam ve toplumun nasıl iç içe geçtiğini vurgulamak için Massey'nin kavramsal araçlarının yanında Edward Soja'nın “Üçüncü Uzam” (Thirdspace) nosyonundan da yararlanılacaktır. Friel'in İrlanda ve İrlandalı olmak fikrinin yeniden ele alınmasını simgeleyen ve beşinci bölge (fifth province) kavramıyla özdeşleşen kurmaca bir kasaba olan Ballybeg'de geçen bu üç oyunun incelenmesi sonucunda, İrlanda'nın yekpare bir yer değil bunun aksine ilişkilerin, buluşmaların, karşılaşmaların ve dönüşümün bir araya geldiği ve kucaklandığı çoklu bir uzam olduğu fikri vurgulanacaktır. Bu görüş de Massey'nin deyiimiyle içinde uzamın sunmuş olduğu

olanakları barındıran, çok ihtimalli evrensel bir yer duygusunu yansıtmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: uzam, Doreen Massey, yer duygusu, Brian Friel, Ballybeg

To my husband Sedat and our dearest daughter Ada

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Some places do not exist on the map, but are composed of fragments, memories, inventions, other dreams.

— Ciaran Carson, “Interesting Times”

#### 1.1. Aim and Scope of the Study

This study aims to explore the significance of ideas of space and spatiality along with human-place relations and subjectivity as represented in Brian Friel’s three full-length plays *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990), *Wonderful Tennessee* (1993), and *Molly Sweeney* (1994). Brian Friel in his plays undermining the colonial binary opposition of Self and Other, the inherent cultural and political discourse in Ireland and Irish Studies, questions and problematizes the idea of a romanticized sense of place, an authentic identity, and organic belonging. His plays portray how a homogenous view of Ireland and Irishness might be contested and how on this shifting plane, identities are fluid, and spaces and places are open to negotiation. In this sense, rather than a fixed point or an essentialist concept in Irish history and culture or a surface on a map, Ireland in Friel’s plays appears as an interface, a space of intercultural exchange and transnational linkages in a relational way, thereby challenging the idea of permanence attached to space and subjectivities in Ireland. To be able to address how Friel’s drama subverts notions of rootedness and authenticity through forging a relational understanding of space and a progressive sense of place, this dissertation borrows conceptual tools from a variety of theoreticians including Henri Lefebvre, Gaston Bachelard, Michael Foucault, Merleau-Ponty and Edward W. Soja, but specifically from the British human geographer Doreen B. Massey.

The trope of place along with the umbrella concept “a sense of place” has always been regarded as significant in Irish literature especially in the period following

the Irish Free State (1922-1937). Writings on place have made the turbulent facts of Irish history, issues of cultural and national identity, regional awareness and landscape a focus of attention, which have rendered place and its attached meanings in an Irish context more complicated and contested. Additionally, such writings, attributing a set of characteristics to space and place, adopted an essentialist approach while portraying places and people in Ireland. For instance, in his essay "The Sense of Place," a lecture given in the Ulster Museum in 1977, Seamus Heaney, discussing the relationship between literary text and place exemplifies how in Ireland places and place names are laden with the quintessence of the poet and his poetry. Heaney believes that evoking a certain sense of identity and belonging, places have the power to bind people to the soil and bring them together in one single space (225-60). In a similar vein, referring to Irish writers' understanding of place and its echoes in poetry, in his introduction to *Writing Home* Elmer Kennedy-Andrews observes that for certain poets a Catholic, nationalist and rural background like Seamus Heaney and John Montague or John Hewitt with Protestant roots, place is an essential constituent of culture and identity, and for them displacement is often unsettling. These artists in their works often draw attention to the significance of a certain rootedness in Irish place through rural imagery and regionalism, and expressing their desire for fixity, stability, continuity and tradition, they insist on the necessity of cultural nationalism, which has caused controversy among literary circles (1-4). Nevertheless, attaching great importance to place as a unique marker to understand Ireland and Irishness, and offering a "strong sense of place" as a solution for chaos and instability, such writers actually fixate the meaning of places as well as delimiting identity, culture, and history.

Such a singular and static understanding of place as attached to identity, culture and history and posed as a claim to national histories and timeless identities, as the present study argues, though has persisted for many years in Ireland and in Irish literature, appears now as an essentialist view and conveys misleading representations. Bearing a variety of stories and struggles, place within the context of Ireland and its literature has not always been a very straightforward concept to handle. As Kennedy-Andrews states, "place in the Northern Irish context remains contested, the cultural landscape a palimpsest capable of being read in different ways" (*Writing Home* 1-2).

Exposed to various invasions and stamped by occupation, place in Ireland has been subject to various change, and maps have been re-drawn just as the h/stories and of people, culture and identity. Within such “a history marked by annexation,” as Scott Brewster states in his introduction to the edited collection *Ireland in Proximity*, “space becomes a site of dispute and an index of power” (125). Accordingly, as this dissertation aims to demonstrate, the political and social changes which bring with themselves the spatial change have made Ireland, especially the Northern Ireland, a contested space which allows for multiple interpretations.

To be able to understand the disputable geographies of Ireland, one should consider the issues relating to the Partition, which would validate the claims that nations build walls on borders; territories are formed, places are constructed or geographically imagined, thereby creating social and cultural boundaries and fractured selves. Around the 1920’s, Ireland was torn apart by violence and disagreement, and literally in 1922 the country was partitioned into two states. This was a time when certain concepts like nation, identity, home, dwelling and belonging no longer meant the same for people. These notions were to remain as signs without interpretation while the Irish question remaining unresolved. When the Free Irish State was established in 1922, the Anglo-Irish Treaty passed a decision to form a region consisting of six counties in the province of Ulster. Under the shadow of the Partition and, later on, the Troubles, literary circles were also divided up in their approach to and their experience of ‘space’ and ‘place’ in Ireland. Northern Irish writers were driven by a feeling of “being in two places at once” (Heaney, “Place and Displacement” 161). In his lecture presented at Grasmere in 1984, Heaney referring to the issue of “place and displacement” in the works of the literary figures of Northern Ireland argues that these writers are caught in the dilemma of belonging to one nation or more nations: “Each person in Ulster lives first in the Ulster of the actual present, and then in one or other Ulster of the mind” (161). As Heaney elucidates further, Nationalists believe that they live in a unified Ireland, while at the same time being aware of the fact that they are the natives of the partitioned British state. Unionists, on the other hand, believe that Northern Ireland is their constituted and newly found homeland, while accepting the political presence of the United Kingdom (161). In a similar vein, the Irish poet Eiléan

Ní Chuilleanáin in “Borderlands of Irish Poetry,” referring to the Irish border emphasizes such polarity experienced by the artists: “A line is drawn across our experience, by an event in history or a pattern of nature, and we instantly find ourselves in a double life cut in two by a line of bars” (25). This dual presence occupying the minds of Irish people points out the imagined and contested geographies of Northern Ireland and many more borders that the political barriers cut across and create boundaries of the self.

Born in 1929, Bernard/Patrick Friel<sup>1</sup> already with a division in his name would also find himself in this divided society where “you are certainly at home but in some sense exile is imposed on you” (“The Man from” 169). Over the years, Friel’s sense of home and belonging would remain ambiguous, nearly contradictory signifying both attachment and alienation, moving towards a poetics of placelessness through displacement. Describing himself as “a member of the Northern minority” and a displaced person in an interview<sup>2</sup> with Fintan O’Toole in 1982, Friel would celebrate the feeling of “rootlessness and impermanence” as he believes to be in his life and in his work (“Friel Takes Derry” 159). It was against the background of such fluid conception of place, of Ireland and Irish identity Friel would write his dramatic works.

The main reason why this study focuses on Friel’s dramatic art is that writing in the second half of the twentieth century Friel had the chance to observe the changes and challenges in space and place in Ireland, which enabled him to respond to these spatial shifts through his work. Living along borders,<sup>3</sup> crossing back and forth, Brian

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<sup>1</sup> Although the author is always known as Brian Friel, his name appears as Bernard Patrick Friel in his birth certificate. Since the Protestant bureaucracy did not approve of the registration of the ‘Gaelic’ names, Brian Friel had to adopt another name, Bernard, for registration.

<sup>2</sup> When Fintan O’Toole asks about the sense of place in the plays of Friel and its echoes in his life and in his characters, Friel, finding the question highly academic, explains that the reason might be related to his national and cultural origins: “Seamus Deane has written a number of essays on me, and that’s one of his persistent points, that I’m some sort of displaced person, you know? If there are parallels in my own life I don’t know. There is certainly a sense of rootlessness and impermanence. It may well be the inheritance of being a member of the Northern minority” (“The Man from” 168-69).

<sup>3</sup> Brian Friel lived and worked in Northern Ireland all his life except for a short span in Guthrie Theatre, in America, which enabled him to view his homeland with both familiar and estranged

Friel writes the story of fractures of space and self in the form of multiplicities creating a flux, an effect to be viewed from different positions. His representation of spaces and places of Ireland goes beyond essentialisms, fixed connotations and conceptualizations of these notions as a matter of authentic identity. Like many Irish writers, Friel also keeps a strong relationship with Northern Ireland as his birthplace; however, he does not render this tie symbiotic. His understanding of place is progressive and open rather than closed, coherent or pre-given, and it is a move towards a more “global sense of place” in Doreen Massey’s terms.

Moreover, like the shifting spaces Friel describes his characters are also fluid, mobile and rootless, a situation which is treated in a celebratory tone. Fluctuating between possibilities and living on the edge, Friel’s characters locate themselves on the margin to be able to experience the chance of space, the myriad possibilities it offers. Taking their journey towards the self in threshold spaces, these characters have multiple, shifting and unbounded personal identities coloured by individual memories and stories. Space, then, in Friel’s plays can be conceived as “a simultaneity of stories-so-far,” and spatiality as a product of social relations and a notion prone to change over time through interactions, as “trajectory” with overtones of history, change and movement, as emphasized in Massey’s relational understanding of space.

Each composed and performed in the 1990s, the plays chosen for this study, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Wonderful Tennessee*, and *Molly Sweeney* are often considered as the ‘late plays’ in Brian Friel scholarship. In his Introduction to the collected plays of Friel, the Irish scholar and critic Christopher Murray specifies these three plays as both “a new departure and a return to the familial ground” (vii). However, Murray also reminds us that as a playwright who is at home with a wide range of styles Friel and his drama, in fact, resists categorisation. With this reservation in mind, I would like to treat them as ‘late plays,’ and yet with a nuanced glance, thinking that these plays also symbolize maturity of the artist toward the end of his career.

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eyes forming a significant link between self and place. In 1939, the Friel family moved to Derry, a city of political divisions – Londonderry to the Unionists and Derry to the Nationalists. When the Troubles began, and spread in 1969, the Friel family this time moved across the border to County Donegal, where Friel would be familiar with the turmoil of both the Republic of Ireland and the Northern Ireland.

The most important reason why this study specifically brings these plays together is that taking Friel's imaginary town Baile Beag,<sup>4</sup> a small town in County Donegal in Ireland, as a central locale, these three plays all contribute to Friel's reconceptualization of Ireland as an alternative space, a plane of possibility and multiplicity. This an-Other realm materialized in this fictional place Ballybeg is actually a Thirdspace<sup>5</sup> where difference is cherished and celebrated, which also dovetails with Friel's idea of the fifth province, a new space of signification for Ireland and Irishness. In a way, this 'Frielesque' space, Ballybeg, appears as a microcosm of Ireland but in an anti-pastoral<sup>7</sup> fashion, which deconstructs the trope of idyllic Irish space or the rural nostalgia. Maps do not locate it; coordinates and routes do not lead to its imaginary sites because Ballybeg appears here and elsewhere on a spatially smooth ground. Similarly, the identity of this place is also rendered fluid. As Friel's fictional town, Ballybeg is characterized by certain ambiguities in the sense that it is a place which has not only its features and certain traditions as the Celtic Culture and the mythical past related to Ireland and Irishness but also the potential to embrace change and renewal which come through advancements in technology and globalisation. In other words, despite being a small town with certain cultural and political boundaries and in a geographically marginal position, Friel's Ballybeg is

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<sup>4</sup> Meaning "little town" in Gaelic, Baile Beag appears in its anglicized form as Ballybeg in Friel's plays. This distinction is first addressed in Friel's *Translations* (1980), a play about mapping Irish space and the anglicisation of place names.

<sup>5</sup> In *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (1996), Edward W. Soja describes Thirdspace as an alternative way of thinking about space and spatiality beyond the restricted modes of dualistic thinking, which resonates in Friel's idea of the fifth province, another space for approaching Ireland and Irishness. (Detailed information on Soja's concept, Thirdspace will be provided in the theoretical framework of this study.)

<sup>6</sup> More detail about the Field Day Theatre Company and the notion of fifth province will be provided in the following chapter within the context of the historical framework.

<sup>7</sup> Nicholas Grene in *The Politics of Irish Drama*, drawing attention to Friel's and Tom Murphy's approach to rural Irish idyll claims that both playwrights adopt a distinctly critical anti-pastoral tone. (212)

inclusive and spatially dynamic. It strongly draws attention to the existence of other people, times, and places along with their web-like nature. Here is not a unique place but a place where the extended and multifarious nature of places is foregrounded, which strikes a sympathetic chord with Massey's conceptualization of place in a progressive way with both local and global ties.

The concepts of space and place prevalent in Irish literature and in Friel's drama have often been explored within a colonial discourse specific to cultural imperialism, and in political contexts with references to 'time' and 'history.' However, as I argue, on a broader level, Friel's drama with its emphasis on spaces and places of Ireland either as the lived, the conceived and the perceived, the real or the imagined lends itself to spatial conceptualizations as much as temporal ones. When observed through this new frame of spatial analysis, Friel's drama can be seen in fresh configurations outside the dichotomous nature of certain concepts like space, time, geography, and history but in the light of their harmony and multiplicity. For this reason, through exploring the unfolding and the blend of these notions in Friel's late plays *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Wonderful Tennessee* and *Molly Sweeney*, I aim to show how the issues Friel conveys, in fact, go beyond the frontiers of colonial binary logic of Self and Other, and challenge certain spatial categories as space/place, public/private, local/global, inside/outside, and home/exile, and draw attention to their blurred boundaries.

The departure point of my contention here concerning Brian Friel's drama is actually a contradiction which Gerry Smyth believes to be existing at the centre of Irish Studies. In *Space and the Irish Cultural Imagination* (2001), Smyth tracking the relationship between Irish man and his experience of space claims that despite the fact that there is a tendency to approach issues of Irish culture in terms of history, that is, with references to chronology, duration, order, and frequency, the content of these studies has been predominantly geographical in the sense that they draw attention to the prevalent relationship between community and environment. Criticizing this tendency to understand and associate Irish cultural imagination within a temporal frame, with references to time and its reverberations, Smyth maintains that any approach to Irish culture and society should also be geographically positioned rather

than a mere chronological consideration because there lies a “special relationship” between people and places of Ireland. Towards the end of the twentieth century, as Smyth concludes, interest in Irish space has re-appeared in a different shape alongside temporal concerns due to the varied political, cultural and social conditions in the changing world and the emergence of the idea of a postmodern geography.

Smyth’s arguments here emphasize the importance of space as a category in Irish culture and calls for a reconsideration of Irish spatial imagination. While doing this, one should neither drop historical approach nor the geographical one because, in Smyth’s words, “Geography without history would be just as flawed as history without geography” (22). It is this idea of the linkage between geography and history that I want to foreground while analysing Friel’s plays within the context of Massey’s relational approach to space. By the same token, we might refer to an important point made by Massey concerning the role of geography in our life-worlds, and it is worth quoting at length:

Human geography is not only about gaining detailed knowledge of particular places and how they are connected across the globe. It is about understanding and interpreting these local and global worlds. It is about the interpretation and meaning of maps, of travel accounts, of all things environmental – from the social and physical characteristics of the towns and cities in which we live, to the landscapes which frame our world – and so on. Above all, geography contributes a particular slant on the ways in which we understand our place in a changing world. It is this kind of understanding which lies at the heart of what may be called our geographical imagination.

(Geographical Worlds 1-2)

As the quotation indicates, Massey stresses how geography matters in the way of determining one’s position on a spatially unstable ground, a space characterized by flux and by the continual fusion of the global into the local<sup>8</sup>. Bringing human geography to the fore, Massey also emphasizes the gradual infiltration of these seemingly opposite notions ‘global’ and ‘local’ into the way people conceptualise spaces, places, and landscapes while also grasping their significance. This idea, in fact,

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<sup>8</sup> The word “glocal” is also used to describe the intertwining nature of the global and the local; however, Massey specifically prefers employing the notion “the global in the local.”

overlaps with Friel's vision of representing Ireland and Irishness in a fresh light. In that sense, Massey's insistence on the idea that "geography matters,"<sup>9</sup> which emerges in parallel lines with Smyth's suggestions regarding new directions in Irish Studies in a way provides a departure point for defining my research objectives in this dissertation.

There has been a considerable amount of study<sup>10</sup> on space and place in Irish studies and Irish theatre studies, which Chris Morash and Shaun Richards describe as "a self-consciously spatial turn" (*Mapping Irish Theatre* 5). However, Brian Friel scholarship has not had its fair share in this spatially informed body of work. For this reason, with the aim of responding to such a gap in Brian Friel studies, I aim to follow

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<sup>9</sup> For a more detailed discussion on geography's place in social sciences see *Geography Matters!: A Reader* (1984) edited by Doreen Massey, John Allen and with James Anderson, Susan Cunningham, Christopher Hamnett, Philip Sarre.

<sup>10</sup> Among the seminal works are the edited collection *Ireland in Proximity: History, Gender, Space* (1999) by Scott Brewster, Fiona Beckett, Virginia Crossman, and David Alderson; *Space and the Irish Cultural Imagination* (2001) by Gerry Smyth, *Ireland: Space, Text, Time* (2005) by the editors Liam Harte, Yvonne Whelan and Patrick Crotty; and, within Irish Theatre Studies, Patrick Lonergan's *Theatre and Globalization: Irish Drama in the Celtic Tiger Era* (2009), Helen Lojek's *The Spaces of Irish Drama: Stage and Place in Contemporary Plays* (2011), *Mapping Irish Theatre: Theories of Space and Place* (2013) by Shaun Richards and Chris Morash; and in Brian Friel Studies, Richard Rankin Russel's *Modernity, Community, and Place in Brian Friel's Drama* (2014). Each study stated in this literature review contributes in significant ways to Irish Studies within the context of space and place; however, it is mainly through the last three publications that Friel's plays have been addressed in terms of space and place. For instance, Richards and Morash aiming at developing a theory of theatre space in *Mapping Irish Theatre* examine the relationship between Irish theatre and society within which they also allocate discussions of certain plays by Brian Friel and some theatrical productions of the Field Day Theatre Company. In a similar vein, devoting a chapter to Friel's most critically acclaimed play *Translations*, Helen Lojek in *The Spaces of Irish Drama* explores the dynamics of both the geographical space and the dramatic space of the play. On the other hand, as a complete study of Brian Friel's five selected plays, Richard Rankin Russel's *Modernity, Community, and Place in Brian Friel's Drama* traces the relationship between place and community from a phenomenological aspect and with a special focus on the devastating effects of encroaching modernity and the loss of authenticity in Irish culture. As the most recent full-length study of Friel's plays in relation to theories of place, although Russel's book provides fruitful insights into the analysis of the plays in terms of the relationship between people and the land, his discussions on spatiality is said to have proved inadequate when it comes to explaining how recent theories of space and place can be applied to the plays in question. For instance, in his review of Russel's book on Friel's drama, Shaun Richards draws attention to the fact that Russel's analysis of Friel's plays does not bear any references to contemporary discussions on space and place (e.g. David Harvey's *Spaces of Global Capitalism*); therefore, it falls short of a thorough spatial evaluation of Friel's drama. (275-77)

a thoroughly spatial track to be able to offer an analysis of three major plays by Friel. In this sense, I will draw on theories of space and place while also questioning certain ways in which these two notions were previously conceptualized in Irish drama, thereby tracing the path which has shaped Irish literary and cultural criticism and studies of space relating to the spatial turn in the twentieth century.

For all these reasons, this dissertation taking its cue from the spatial turn in social sciences and the rekindling of spatial interest in Irish studies aims to offer a new perspective on the readings of space, place, landscape, and human-place relations along with subjectivity in Friel's dramatic art. Even though the exploration of these concepts within the context of Irish theatre and literary criticism is not a new phenomenon, the arguments maintained here and the theoretical focus as the human geographers' and specifically Doreen Massey's approach to spatiality and its echoes in the plays can be regarded as novel in Brian Friel studies. To be able to view Friel's plays from a spatial perspective, I will be dwelling on the ideas of a variety of philosophers and human geographers, mainly Gaston Bachelard, Michel Foucault, Elizabeth A. Grosz and Merleau-Ponty; Henri Lefebvre, Edward W. Soja, and Doreen B. Massey. The thoughts and theories of these geographers feed into this dissertation at a number of levels; however, it is primarily through Doreen Massey's relational approach to space that the concepts space, place, and landscape are addressed in the plays. Accordingly, by bringing Massey's understanding and interpretation of space as open and unfinished, as the dimension of multiplicity and the simultaneity of stories so-far, this study aims to offer novel insights to the scholarly domain and open up an alternative realm, a new 'space,' within Brian Friel scholarship.

## 1.2. Research Methodology

This dissertation analyses *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Wonderful Tennessee* and *Molly Sweeney* which are often considered as Friel's major plays in terms of performance history and literary criticism. There is a chronological order regarding the timeline that the plays were composed and performed, and all the plays treat certain phases of Irish social history, though not in an overt way, forming a certain sequence.

However, through using memory and storytelling as a mode of stylistic subversion and fashioning temporal and spatial discontinuities in these works, Friel plays with the notion of linear narratives and undermines their claim to authority. This narrative strategy is significant within the scope of his dissertation because it reveals how the literary space Friel creates accords with the spaces of Ireland depicted in the plays. Like the fragmented, disconnected and circular narratives of the plays, the representational space in Friel's writing is also fluid, and the places he portrays are conceptualized in a progressive way as events and processes as in Massey's sense.

My reading of these three plays is text-based, and I offer interpretation of content along with form because as a playwright, story writer and a director, 'form' and 'style' are integral parts of Friel's art. For this reason, each chapter includes brief information on the writing process of the plays, their styles, sources and influences as well as references to the social, political and spatial changes in Ireland. Putting the plays in such a context, though would not suffice for comprehending the significance of Friel's drama, would open up a space to track Friel's artistic journey, which will in turn facilitate the spatial analysis of the plays. However, I will not be mapping out a route to periodize his plays and evaluate them in accordance with a certain literary movement or theatrical approach. As Murray asserts, "Friel is a Proteus figure, who, like the sea god, is constantly changing his shape in an effort to escape categorisation, being identified with any one theatre, any one style or set of beliefs" (Theatre of Brian Friel 2). Hence, in my effort to situate Friel in this research, I aim to avoid labelling him as a modern, postcolonial or a postmodern playwright; however, there are various references to Friel's engagement with postmodernism as revealed in his ever-changing dramatic style and experimental narrative techniques along with his subversion of grand narratives. Keeping these opinions in mind, one should approach Friel's plays in this study with an anti-essentialist perspective just as Friel himself did while representing the spaces and subjectivities in Ireland.

The following chapter<sup>11</sup> offers an overview of the Irish social and political history specifically the 1920s and the 1930s, the first two decades of Irish

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<sup>11</sup> Although referred to as the historical framework, this chapter does not provide a complete history of Irish politics or society but only offers a general review of the mentioned periods with regard to

independence, a turbulent time when Ireland went through a series of conflicts, upheavals, and constitutional reforms. The 1920s in Ireland marks the beginning of a period which is characterized by political oppression and religious orthodoxy as manifested through the policies of the Irish Free State and the Catholic clergy. Through enacting laws and passing legislations regarding public morality and national identity, these two institutions exerted power over society structuring space and subjectivity in a variety of ways, the most important of which can be observed in the Public Dance Halls Act in 1935. As the central metaphor of *Dancing at Lughnasa* and *Molly Sweeney*, as well as *Wonderful Tennessee*, dance bears particular significance to the scope of the thesis. Therefore, this section providing detailed information about the Public Dance Halls Act and its repercussions on society aims to point out the convergence between the text and the context. In order to illuminate the discussion regarding the dance hall space and the construction of identities through policing space and the subjects, this section also incorporates Michel Foucault's ideas on the exercise of power. Following this is a general review of the 1990s, the Celtic Tiger and its consequences in terms of economic change, social development, and a relatively altered relationship with Europe. The plays analysed in this study are all written and staged in the 1990s, and each is set in the 1990s with the exception of *Dancing at Lughnasa*. The play is set in 1930s rural Ireland; however, it is also the Ireland in the 1990s which has relevant characteristics linked to the previous decades because there are still concerns about the social transition taking place in the country due to economic growth as well as political and cultural changes which are associated with the Celtic Tiger Period. In that sense, each play in this study bears certain references to the Celtic Tiger boom and shows how Friel responded to and represented the profound alterations Irish society underwent in the twentieth century. However, it is *Wonderful Tennessee* that is most informed by the Celtic Tiger phenomenon and its ramifications revealed through the characters' motives and actions as they feel restless

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the plays analysed in the dissertation and their relevance to the discussions around space, place and landscape.

and displaced in a society of constant flux where the Celtic traditions and Catholic faith are on the wane along with the landscapes of the contested Irish space.

This historical framework also includes a section on Friel's formation of The Field Day Theatre Company in 1980, a milestone in Irish theatre history, and his appropriation of the notion of the fifth province, an alternative space connoting Ireland and Irishness without borders and social or cultural boundaries. With its spatially fluid position as a touring company without any centre and its notion of the fifth province as an alternative space for a revisioning of Ireland and Irishness anew, Field Day's artistic stance complements the spatial frame drawn in this dissertation with regard to Friel's approach to and his representation of the spaces and places of Ireland as dynamic and multiple. One caveat to keep in mind, however, is that the plays chosen for this dissertation are not Field Day productions; *Dancing at Lughnasa* and *Wonderful Tennessee* had their premieres at the Abbey theatre, while Friel sent *Molly Sweeney* to Gate Theatre in Dublin. Still, it was the guiding principles and the philosophy of the Field Day that gave an essential quality to Friel's plays, permeating through his oeuvre.

Chapter three provides a theoretical framework to enable the reader to familiarize herself/himself with the major approaches regarding space, place and spatiality adopted within the course of the study. In order to orient the reader within the spatial track drawn in this study, this chapter opens by providing brief information on the 'spatial turn' in the humanities in the twentieth century and evaluates how a rekindling of interest in the conceptualization of space and place has dominated the discussions around social theory. Following this are two subsequent sections on certain definitions of the key concepts space and place along with the way how they are often conceptualised as binaries by a range of thinkers from Antiquity to the seventeenth century and onwards. Providing a genealogy of space and place as epistemological categories in this section, I turn to explaining how space and place as geometrical concepts, posing a challenge to the absolute theories of space, have come to be perceived as phenomenological notions having a direct relationship with people's lifeworlds, and finally becoming relationally conceptualised ones. The following part, therefore, opens with the problematization of certain opposing views regarding the

definitions of space and place, and focuses on the need to understand and conceptualise these concepts as related and interdependent as maintained by Doreen Massey's relational understanding of space. Along with Massey's spatial thinking, recent critical discourses and approaches such as Henri Lefebvre's "social production of space" and Edward Soja's "Thirdspace" are foregrounded in this study at different levels as they are relevant for the concerns around the spaces of Ireland and the spatial dynamics of Brian Friel's drama. It should be noted that the theoretical discussion in this chapter is not designed to be fully comprehensive of the spatial-turn, and the concepts of space and place. Rather, these approaches and the concepts are outlined and reviewed selectively because they illuminate the study to be undertaken in the following chapters.

Chapter four studies Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*, a play illustrating Friel's engagement with spaces and subjectivities of Ireland which he conceptualises as multiple, shifting and unbounded. Drawing attention to the dynamic spatial and social relations in Friel's fictional town Ballybeg, the play addresses how in Ireland space is structured and power-laden and how this very same space allows for resistance and rebellion enabling characters to create possible realms for themselves, a space of their own and has a reality of its own. Therefore, in this chapter I begin by exploring the contested spaces of Ballybeg such as the back hills of the Lughnasa festival and the public space of the town where identities come into question and continue tracing the significance of the intimate spaces like the house and the cottage kitchen with a special emphasis on the concept of 'home' and the problematisation of certain "homely" notions as dwelling and belonging. Following this, I offer an analysis of the play's pivotal scene, the dance, emphasizing how the characters unsettle and cross the boundaries of the structured social space of Ballybeg. The last section of this chapter focuses on Friel's attempts at representing the fictional town Ballybeg, and, in a broader political context, Ireland, as a meeting place where the boundaries of national identity are blurred and the line between the local and the global dissolves opening a space for a re-consideration of place as inclusive and progressive challenging the prevailing static, and romanticised conceptualizations of place as a site of nostalgia.

Chapter five, focusing on *Wonderful Tennessee*, a play describing the weekend trip of three couples from Dublin to Ballybeg pier, explores the relationship between space, place, and landscape, which folds and unfolds through the characters' spatial experience along the pier and their engagement with the Donegal landscape and the mystery island, Oileán Draíochta. Set against the background of a changing society and landscape in the 1990s' globalised Ireland which the critics described earlier as "the vodka and tonic society,"<sup>12</sup> *Wonderful Tennessee* provides critical insights into Brian Friel's engagement with space, place, and landscape. The play laden with space and place-relations both enhances and complicates the reading of Friel's recurrent spatial concept "sense of place" by bringing into the fore another spatial notion, the "landscape," a concept which I employ to refer not only to the physicality of nature but also the heterogeneity of the stories and histories of people surrounding spaces of Ireland. Juxtaposed with the shifting spaces of the Celtic Tiger Ireland which bear multiple layers of time, multitude of links and social practices; in other words, trajectories embedded in place, this landscape-as-stories-so-far promises a space laden with chance, a gateway to new futures, and a re-imagining of the Irish space as open and the sphere of possibility. To be able to demonstrate how one should approach landscape in relation to space and place within the context of the Celtic Tiger Ireland in the play, the first section of this chapter provides brief information on the spatial consequences of the Celtic Tiger boom along with the sources and influences of the play. Following this section are two successive sections which offer a reading of Friel's spatial trope of the desert island and the pier, both portraying geographical locations and employing spatial metaphors that address the inherent dynamism of space, place, and landscape in Ireland.

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<sup>12</sup> In an essay titled "Plays Peasant and Unpeasant" which appeared in Christopher Murray's edited collection of *Essays, Diaries, Interviews*, Friel, talking about the contemporary Irish dramatists and their artistic process, problematizes the attitude of the critics who demand that the playwrights should mirror the nation in their plays: "Write of Ireland today, the critics scream. Show us the vodka-and-tonic society. Show us permissive Dublin. Forget about thatched cottages and soggy fields and emigration. We want the now Ireland" (53). Although Friel finds this demand 'interesting,' in *Wonderful Tennessee* he actually introduces us into the world of this society of vodka-and-tonic.

Chapter six explores Friel's *Molly Sweeney* which takes Friel's concerns with space and place to a different dimension by focusing on blindness, a non-locus. Through tracking the title character Molly's journey from blindness to sight and to blindsight, my analysis shows how Friel enables us to conceptualise space with blindness, thereby subverting the Cartesian understanding of self and space as real, unproblematic and unquestionable. Drawing together arguments about the hegemony of vision in Western thought, this chapter opens by providing information on the conceptualization of blindness in literature and Friel's writing process concerning *Molly Sweeney*. After situating the play within this literary and philosophical context, in the following section, "Body, Politics, and Space in *Molly Sweeney*," I foreground the significance of Molly's relations with her self and space, the way she normalizes her blindness and reconciles with her body, which allows for a parallel reading with the political situation in Ireland and Ireland's anomalous place in the globalised space. Like the preceding plays of this study, this chapter also incorporates a section on 'dance' describing the title-character Molly's hornpipe and her experience with her space and subjectivity. Finally, reiterating the claims Friel has made regarding a progressive sense of place, I conclude the chapter by forging a relationship between Molly's embracing her condition, blindsight and the conceptualization of Irish nation and identity in open and multiple terms beyond the binaries.

## CHAPTER 2

### 2. CONTESTED SPACES: A SPATIAL HISTORY OF IRISH SOCIETY, AND THE CASE OF BRIAN FRIEL

Ireland is an unstable entity and what it is depends very much on who you are, where you are and when you are” (xvii).

— Elizabeth Malcolm, *Ireland: Space, Text, Time*

Throughout history, political and social change which brings with itself the spatial change has made Ireland a troubled space blemished by borders, boundaries and segregation which is viable to multiple readings and interpretations. The complexity regarding the formation of such divisions in society and its repercussion echo in Brian Friel’s complete dramatic oeuvre but especially in the late plays *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Wonderful Tennessee* and *Molly Sweeney*, all written in the 1990s and are informed by the troubled phase of Irish history, which reveals itself in the plays either through memories or storytelling, in the narrative space created by the author. In order to orient the discussion of the plays, the present chapter therefore aims at offering a brief overview of the historical events that shaped Irish social and political history particularly the 1920s, 1930s and the 1990s, the period when Ireland witnessed a series of paradigm shifts. What is aimed is not to provide a complete history of Ireland but to address certain issues with regard to space, place, and landscape, both physical and moral in Ireland. Following this historical framework is an attempt to contextualise Friel mainly through a discussion of his theatre project, *The Field Day Theatre Company* and the significance of the idea of the fifth province in his dramatic approach as a political and cultural signifier evoking an alternative Irish space and subjectivity.

## 2.1. A Brief Look at the 1920s, 1930s and 1990s: Ireland amidst Constitutions, Conflicts and Contested Sites

### 2.1.1. The Irish Free State and Society

Most of Friel's plays and specifically the ones discussed in this dissertation bear a variety of references to Irish political and social history which can be traced in two major periods, namely, the 1920s and 1930s. The 1920s are often regarded as a troubling epoch in Irish history. Following the Easter Rising and the Proclamation of the Republic (also known as the Easter proclamation) in 1916, the country experienced a series of political troubles culminating in the Civil War and resulting in the establishment of the Free State in 1922. As a new state, Ireland strived to make changes in politics and culture to leave behind the problems of the past. However, the Free State did not put an end to Ireland's troubles. As Fintan O'Toole explains in his survey of the twentieth century *The Irish Times Book of the Century*, "[f]reedom was, for many, still an abstract term" and "the change of flags had done little to alter the underlying realities of life" (127, 123). Political problems coupled with social and economic issues including poverty, unemployment, and emigration prevailed in the post-independence period forcing many people to live in further destitute in various ways.

One of the most important problems of the post-independent Ireland was the population growth which was out of control due to delayed marriage and issues related to inheritance. As O'Toole observes, according to the 1926 census, the number of unmarried people in Ireland was the highest among the European countries, which was namely due to Famine, mass emigration and Catholic propriety. In line with these numbers were the figures for illegitimate children in the country, which climbed up to 1,853 from 1,520 between the years 1922 and 1929. Unmarried mothers with children were treated cruelly and child abuse was a serious problem. The census also laid bare the fact that, in Ireland, eight hundred thousand people were living in overcrowded spaces with no sanitary rules applied, which led to a rise in the number of infant deaths and epidemics like tuberculosis. Accordingly, there was a strong tendency to emigrate, especially among women, due to economic reasons and to fulfil dreams of a better life (*The Irish Times* 125-132). These details relating to the 1920s all inform *Dancing at*

Lughnasa, a play based on the memories of the out-of-wedlock child, Michael, a returned emigrant who gives an account of the lives of his four unmarried aunts living in an impoverished town of Ireland.

The 1920s also witnessed that the gap between the rich and the poor grew – while the farmers struggled to secure their degrading positions, the Anglo-Irish aristocracy still took pleasure in their gentry activities like hunting and golf. Apart from this aristocratic milieu and the lower classes, there was also another group which either chose to emigrate, or stay and participate in government projects as labouring men. The most important of these projects was the Shannon Scheme which was introduced in 1925 by the Irish Free State and the well-known engineering company Siemens. The Scheme aimed at the electrification of the whole country via the huge hydroelectric power plant built on River Shannon. The project provided a great deal of employment for the country but did great damage to the land namely changing the spatial sketch of the country. As Bushe and Bileneberg note, “in its four-year existence, the scheme employed five thousand men, laid sixty-five miles of railway, diverted nine rivers, built four bridges, and moved eight million cubic meters of earth” (qtd. in Ó hAllmhuráin 107). Meanwhile, the Catholic Church was preoccupied with a different scheme. They wanted to promote Irish traditions and Christian moral values in social life and insisted on a unified understanding of nation, identity and moral values. In order to be able to fulfil this mission and create an image of Ireland and of Irishness anew, they defied all foreign influences and pagan cultural elements, which would eventually cause serious problems in society.

This concern with identity and morals was not a new phenomenon in Ireland’s case. Beginning from the 1830s, the Irish clergy had always been active as the controlling mechanism in society; however, by the turn of the twentieth century, especially following the Civil War years, the governmental authorities too became much more involved in the issues related to the moral status of the citizens particularly that of women. As George Denis Zimmermann notes, the Catholic clergy came to be “more active and efficient in combating the older intermingling of the orthodox and ‘pagan’ in the countryside, and in suppressing the profane elements (drinking, dancing, fighting) associated with the celebration of local patrons or with funeral wakes” (276).

The statements made by the Catholic clergy clearly indicate that what the archbishops most concerned themselves with was women's life and their conducts related to a variety of areas from marriage and divorce, bans in contraception to fashion and enjoyments including dancing and theatre-going (Field Day Anthology 153, 155). For instance, according to the principles of the Catholic Church, having sexual affair before marriage or illegitimate children out of wedlock were mortal sins. Those who transgressed the laws of sexuality, marriage, and motherhood were severely condemned by the Church as threats to moral standards. The Lenten pastorals of 1924<sup>13</sup> can, in fact, illuminate the point how the Irish clergy strived to define the boundaries of morality in society. In his article "Dancing, Depravity and all that Jazz," Jim Smyth explains that the bishops in these publications (Lenten pastorals) regarded several issues as 'abuses' including dancing, women's clothes and dressing, theatrical shows and cinema, obscene literary materials, drinking and going on strike (51). These restrictions would pervade the atmosphere of the 1920s, but dancing as a source of decay in Irish values, as Smyth writes, would persist as a central issue of concern for another decade, especially during the controversial presidency of Eamon de Valera.

#### 2.1.1.1. Public Dance Halls: The Negotiation of Bodies, Spaces, and Cultural Identities

Throughout Irish history, dancing was always a matter of concern for the clergy who conceived it as the primary cause of all evil corrupting society. The clerical accounts belonging to the span as early as the early 17<sup>th</sup> century prove that dance and musical events were highly condemned by bishops, and both the dancers and musicians received severe punishment along with social pressure. Helen Brennan in her book on the evolution of the Irish dance, *The Story of the Irish Dance*, explains that in the early twentieth century there were occasions during which priests appeared, observed and penalized the folk dancing. One form of penalty was refusing to provide references for the parishioners, another was ostracizing the fiddlers and pipers to the point that most of them will end up as exiles in America. Dance instructors were also

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<sup>13</sup> For further information, see Lenten Pastorals, 1924, Irish Catholic Directory, 1924.

the target in such exclusion since they were thought to have the power to influence the masses and lure them into the passions of dancing (121-25). As stated before, during the 1920s and 1930s the Catholic clergy and the government collaborated in the scheme of structuring morality, and imposed certain rules on society following a patriarchal and racial model. This period also witnessed the relentless controlling of dancing and entertainments throughout Ireland with special emphasis on 'Irish dance' as the ideal model. In the end, the Government advised by the clergy enacted strict laws to control the citizens and preserve an ideal image of Irishness, and especially of Irish woman fitting to the moral codes of Christianity. Among these legislations were Censorship of Film Acts, 1923; the Censorship of Publications Act, 1929; and most importantly, the Public Dance Halls Act in 1935 which bears particular significance in *Dancing at Lughnasa* because the dance as the main metaphor in the play takes place against the background of this act.

The Public Dance Halls Act demanded that the dances could be organized only in the licenced dance halls and places which were specifically designed for dancing rather than houses or open spaces. In order to put the Dance Halls Act into effect and facilitate the indoor dancing, the clergy constructed local dance halls in every part of Ireland, requesting charges at the door on the day of the dance. Nonetheless, despite the frequent patrolling, there were a lot of illegal dances (dance without a licence) held at country houses for several reasons from collecting money to owing gratitude to people for their service. When the country was going through a period of economic turmoil such house dances seemed to be the only way of fund raising. There were also occasions when dances were held namely for the interests of certain political groups such as IRA. Along with these house dances, there were also tournaments in which people gathered for card-playing and gambling. What was interesting about the nature of such meetings was that sometimes the sessions ran concurrently with gambling in the salon and dance in the kitchen (Brennan 126-129). All these illegal gatherings either for the purpose of socializing or fund-raising were targets for the State and the Church which made every effort to exert control over people and especially on women's body in the cause of public morality.

Questions relating to the Public Dance Halls Act remained for another decade keeping to serve the nation's body politics in the entertainment halls. The Act aimed at preventing any immoral conduct and potential sins which would stain the moral status of women. Therefore, in the dance hall space, dancing bodies were closely monitored and the choreographies, freed from the wild exuberance of the dance, were strictly structured. As Barbara O'Connor states in "Sexing the Nation," "women's appearance, demeanour, and behaviour" was a central source of distress and trouble for the defenders of public sexual morality (92). Kept under such surveillance in public space, women were gradually pushed into the private/domestic space where they would be encouraged to lead their lives as mothers and wives as affirmed through Eamon de Valera's Constitution.

When the new Constitution came into force in 1937 by De Valera's efforts, the impact of the State and the Church on women became more absolute. The State "recognize[d] the family as the primary and fundamental unit group of Society" and "guarantee[d] to protect the Family in its constitution and authority, as the necessary basis of social order and as indispensable to the welfare of the Nation and the State" (Constitution of Ireland 160-62). The laws that were passed under the title of "The Family" in Article 41 prescribed the responsibilities of individuals, especially women, in society. Men were assigned to be in charge of money matters while women were supposed to deal with domestic issues. Accordingly, women's role in society was defined by fixing their identity to the role of housewives and mothers within the limits of their domestic space without worrying about economic income. The State would also "endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home" (Constitution of Ireland 162). The woman, as the Article emphasized, was regarded as the significant constitutional unit of the nation because "by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved" (Constitution of Ireland 162). Women, therefore, were required to lead their lives inside their home, which eventually restricted their status in the workplace. On the whole, the Constitution of 1937 endeavoured to constitute the nation by imposing rules on space and bodies as well as operating on a paternal model which excluded, engendered, and

secluded its citizens in a multitude of planes, the most persistent of which was the dance halls.

Public Dance Halls Act was a product of the domineering idea of the times which aimed to construct a solid Irish identity and nation through the control of subjects and social practice in space. In accordance with this plan, certain social and political groups conducted a “profoundly gendered” project, as O’Connor indicates, attempting to frame bodies on the dance floor to achieve an “ideal body politic” (“Sexing the Nation” 89). Hence, the dance hall space became a site where power reigned and bodies were kept under surveillance for the interests of the Church or the State. One reason underlying this strict surveillance was thought to be the idea that dancing is related to many other sources of evil especially bicycles and motor cars which facilitated illicit sexual affairs. In a pastoral letter of 1931, Cardinal MacRory emphasizes his concern about the changing face of Ireland due to the technological advances which facilitated mobility as follows: “Even the present traveling facilities make a difference. By bicycle, motor car and bus, boys and girls can now travel great distances to dances, with the result that a dance in the quietest country parish may now be attended by unsuitables from a distance” (qtd. in Smyth 51). As the letter indicates, the restrictions imposed to structure the moral status of the 1930s society were based on the exclusion of the mobile bodies, ‘the unsuitables.’ Additionally, prior to the Public Dance Halls Act, in 1931, the governmental authorities released the Carrigan Report in which picture houses, and motor cars were also condemned as the causes of “the present looseness of morals” (qtd. in Smyth 52). Regarding the categories that the clergy and the government mostly dealt with, it can be observed that the central focus is on bodily mobility and movement in space, which was thought to be a threat in a multitude of ways in the twentieth century Ireland.

In her comprehensive study of dance in contemporary Irish drama, *Dancing As If Language No Longer Existed*, Katarzyna Ojrzynska asserts that the twentieth century witnessed a tendency to think Irish dance in relation to power and practice which tried to find and impose ways of publicizing a certain “vision of Irishness” as well as denouncing the “changing perceptions of human body” in Irish society and culture (1). In the 1930s, dance acted as a significant symbol of cultural and national

identity, and in accordance with this, discussions on dance and society in Ireland corresponding to the years, the 1930s and 1950s largely dealt with the controlled and constructed bodies of traditional Irish dance or controlling the bodies who preferred modern dances and jazz instead of céilí dance (O'Connor 90; Shanagher 175). For instance, Céili, which the Mundy sisters dance in *Dancing at Lughnasa*, or the Hornpipe dance in Molly Sweeney's climactic dance scene was a special form of dance symbolizing Ireland and Irishness. It was originally established by the Catholic clergy and approved by the nationalist groups. From the outside, the Clergy was practically opposed not to the idea of dancing but to foreign dances which they thought to be creating 'degenerates.' A case in point is the following statement from the Catholic Church:

Our young people can have plenty of worthy dancing with proper supervision, and return home at a reasonable hour. Only in special circumstances under most careful control, are all-night dances permissible. It is no small commendation of Irish dances that they cannot be danced for long hours. That, however, is not their chief merit, and, while it is no part of our business to condemn any decent dance, Irish dances are not to be put out of the place, that is their due, in any educational establishment under our care. They may not be the fashion in London or Paris. They should be the fashion in Ireland. Irish dances do not make degenerates (Field Day Anthology 154).

As the statements of the archbishops indicate, Irish dance was associated with authenticity and purity while modern dance was perceived as the source of decadence and immorality in society. Therefore, the clergy wanted to standardize the music and the bodily movements in the dance hall to promote traditional dances, especially the céili, and serve the nation's idea of a culturally uniform society.

It should be stated that the discourse that the Church and the State generated to 'deal with' the dancing bodies clearly reveal how those in power aimed at creating uniform identities disregarding differences. Moreover, the practices they adopted show how societal discipline is grounded on a certain spatial system. Building licenced halls for dancing in every part of Ireland, the government and the clergy structured the way how young people, especially women, danced. By eliminating the organisation of house parties or outdoor summertime dancing and bringing people together in the limited, closed space of the dance hall, they facilitated the administration of discipline

and the patrolling process of the closed-couple dancing which they thought to be evoking sexuality. Accordingly, through ceaseless inspection and gaze, the dancing bodies on the dance floor are 'subjected' to various disciplinary mechanisms, rendered frozen and fixed in place, thus becoming immobile.

Furthermore, the architecture of the dance hall as a place with walls and windows, and under continuous supervision of the nonparticipating observers leads into a consideration of Michel Foucault's theories regarding the operations of power and his notion of panopticism which he borrows from Jeremy Bentham's 'Panopticon.' As a "technology of power" in Foucault's term, Panopticon was a ring-shaped building with surrounding cells and a central tower with an overseer. The idea behind the building was to ensure constant observation and surveillance of the inmates inhabiting the cells, through which the inmates were expected to internalize the process, thereby learning to police and discipline themselves. In a conversation with Jean-Pierre Barou and Michelle Perrot, Foucault explains how easily this disciplinary system operates: "Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising to the point that he is his own overseer, and against, himself" ("Eye of Power" 155). As Foucault suggests, the exercise of power through the gaze constructs the subject in such a way that the subject comes to perceive its essence as controlled and dependent, in other words, "subjected" to the opposing power. This construction process, in Foucault's words, is called "subjectivation." To Foucault, the word "subject" has two meanings: "subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to" ("The Subject and Power" 781). This very same Foucauldian idea of subjectivation, however, also allows for resistance and revolt which opens up a space of freedom and contributes to the constitution of the subject, to its "becoming."

In line with the framework above, it should be argued that there is a consonance between the workings of the dance hall space in 1930s Ireland and Foucault's ideas on the exercise of power. Under strict supervision, the dance hall, like the prison or the hospital, is transformed into a space of confinement where power and knowledge operate to arrange bodies through a series of practices, processes, and procedures. Such

exercise of power, in Foucault's words, "incites, ... induces, ... seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely ..." (The Subject and Power" 789). Through rules, regulations, and a series of disciplinary technologies, the dancing bodies on the floor are expected to act in accordance with the norm, in other words, they are 'made subjects.' Since the dancing body with its 'fluidity' and 'mobility' goes against the idea of 'order' and 'stability' which have long been regarded as the norm by the dominant discourse, with Public Dance Halls act, a new form of Irishness, conforming to the rule, is produced on the dance floor. However, as Foucault emphasizes, such submission to the law and order can always be a trigger for revolt.

The ramifications of this cultural identity production under the effect of the Public Dance Halls Act and the issues of power and resistance can be traced both in *Wonderful Tennessee* and in *Molly Sweeney* but especially in the focal scene of *Dancing at Lughnasa* where Mundy sisters perform their frantic céili dance in the 'private' space of their kitchen. The sisters cannot go to the harvest dance in the back-hills but dance in their homespace because the big sister fears that they will be ostracized due to their marginal status as aged and unmarried sisters. This issue clearly illustrates that as subjects they have internalised the power operating on them. Moreover, even when they are dancing in the kitchen in a state of frenzy, they suddenly stop and resume their daily chores submitting to their mechanism of internal surveillance. Nonetheless, the sisters in the remote village of Ballybeg performing their own céili dance, foxtrot and the ballroom dance actually challenge the dominant discourse of the dance hall. Similarly, in *Wonderful Tennessee* the couples' frantic dance on the pier which helps them release their Dionysian energy as well as the dolphin's dance in Frank's Ballybeg epiphany; and Molly's 'mad hornpipe' on the eve of his cataract surgery in *Molly Sweeney* reveal how dance serves as a tool of subversion for these characters and helps them through their journey from Being towards Becoming. The dance creates another space for them, a space which is far more different than the disciplinary space of the dance hall. It is not a space of control or of close observation but a space of flows, and in Massey's words, a "space of many

trajectories, the simultaneity of stories so far” (For Space 9), a space envisaged by Friel to be a redefinition of Ireland.

#### 2.1.2. Ireland in the 1990s: The Celtic Tiger

At its core, Celtic Tiger phenomenon refers to the time from the late 1990s to early twenty-first century when Ireland experienced a rapid transition from a traditional, agrarian society to a greatly globalized ‘modern’ country having a say and share in the international market. As O’Toole expresses, during the Celtic Tiger phase, Ireland changed to such an extent that there was actually a reversal in terms of its status among the world’s greatest countries: “For most of the twentieth century, Ireland had struggled to be like other countries. But between the late 1990s and 2008, other countries were told they must struggle to be like Ireland” (Ship of Fools 24). What attracted the attention of the world about this small place as the Republic of Ireland was the rapid economic growth it achieved during the global boom of the 1990s. During the time, there was a considerable investment flow in Ireland, mostly encouraged by the American companies which probably regarded the place “a stable, Anglo-phone country with EU membership, relatively low wages and a well-educated workforce” (O’Toole, Ship of Fools 35). By the late 1990s, Ireland was enjoying a time of prosperity, and the figures for economic growth were “twice the rate of the USA, and four times the rate of the rest of Europe” (Jones 153). In parallel with the growth was the employment rates and the incomes, which resulted in a strong economy and big boost in profits. In a lecture titled “Irish National Identity after the Celtic Tiger,” Gerry Smyth describes this situation almost as a mania: “People could afford to buy lots more stuff, and they did buy lots more stuff: cars, more cars, holidays, more cars, houses, more houses and more cars! Ireland became a bastion of conspicuous consumption” (132). However, it was soon revealed that the period of peace and prosperity was in fact temporary, and the country’s economy was on a shaky ground due to the uneven development caused by the uncontrolled business ventures of the companies. Consequently, as Kieran Keohane and Carmen Kuhling claim, the Celtic Tiger boom “short-lived, uneven in its effects, unstable and insecure, has amplified and exacerbated the experiences of accelerated modernisation.” (123)

Ireland's relocating itself and taking a new position among the world's strong economies has had a detrimental impact on its society. As observed by Peadar Kirby and Pádraig Carmody in "Geographies of the Celtic Tiger," the global economy projects while making profit-based decisions actually created an atmosphere where there was great competition between the companies, which equally turned the society into a basis of "competitive advantage" (3). Accordingly, with the Celtic Tiger Phase, the relationship between people and place changed becoming more material because the land became commodified and commercialized due to the booming construction industry in the country. Once the country started to enjoy its 'modern' phase, people tried to find ways of coming to terms with their place and mend the gap between the self and the site. As Eoin Flannery notes, "the hangover from the Celtic Tiger period leaves many Irish citizens scrambling for a new set of codes by which to live their lives and with which to engage with the altered landscapes of the country." (2)

Written and performed in the 1990s, the plays discussed in this dissertation all bear references to the Celtic Tiger Period and its impacts on Irish society. However, it is actually *Wonderful Tennessee* where Friel dramatizes the beginning of such 'hangover' as Flannery describes, and points out the effects of the Celtic Tiger economy on the spaces of Ireland. It is 'consumerism' in the play, as a dimension of globalisation, which defines the limits of value and provides a 'new code' for the characters mainly in the form of luxury foods and luxury retreats. As Terry, the bookmaker, lists the food supply he has ordered for their weekend vacation on the desert island on which he bought an option, it is understood how significantly the food serves as the harbinger of a new period, globalisation: "Venison and apricot compote? Honey gâteau? Ever hear of honey gâteau? ... Cherry and mandarin chartreuse -? ... Marinated quail and quince jelly. God! The delights of the world – you have them all here" (WT 387). For the characters, the pleasure of life derives its meaning from a pack of exotic foodstuff they have neither heard of nor tried or purchasing an option on the desert island, which is a reflection of their pleasure-seeking and self-indulgent attitude, and a reference to the property boom of the Celtic Tiger Ireland.

In *Molly Sweeney*, the rise and fall of the Celtic Tiger economy and the country's ventures are reflected in the enthusiastic and amateur entrepreneur Frank

Sweeney, who seeks his fortune outside Ireland by trying to turn his weird ideas into a functioning business. Even though the play is set in the 1930s, the issues related with the Celtic Tiger Period in Ireland also find an echo in *Dancing at Lughnasa*, especially through the narrative time and the strategies employed by Friel. The narrator-character Michael relates the events with a span of eighteen years when he has had a chance to experience the fusion of communication devices and modes of transportation and machinery: the wireless, gramophones, sewing machines, motor cars, motorbikes, and aircrafts. All these influences affected the way how people relate to time and space, and how they conceived place when all the geographical borders were broken down, and the invasion from both within and outside became inevitable.

## 2.2. “Friels on Wheels:”<sup>14</sup> The Field Day and the Fifth Province

As an artistic and cultural response to the ongoing political and sectarian challenges of the Northern Ireland, Field Day Theatre Company was formed by Brian Friel and his actor/director friend Stephen Rea in 1980 in Derry. Later joined by Irish artists and intellectuals including Seamus Heaney, Tom Paulin, Thomas Kilroy, Seamus Deane and David Hammond, Field Day played a pivotal role in Irish dramatic history. The initial aim of the company was to introduce Irish drama to various parts of the country especially the culturally-deprived areas. Friel and Rea wanted to establish “a theatrical voice free of the constraining influence of either London or Dublin and to offer that voice to Irish people, primarily in the North, who had lacked access to professional theatre” (“Why Friel and Rea” 127). Along with theatrical productions, Field Day opened up the way to various projects ranging from the publication of a series of pamphlets, the *Field Day Pamphlets* (1983-1988) to the compilation of the five volume *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* (1991, 2002). Published in 1991 and edited by Seamus Deane, the anthology brought together a series of articles written in Irish and English on a variety of topics from political to

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<sup>14</sup> In his introduction to the *Brian Friel in Conversation*, Paul Delaney informs that people used to refer to the enterprise of the Field Day as “Friels on Wheels,” which prompted Friel to have the decision to keep a “lower profile” in this project because he found it difficult to strike a balance between being constantly in public and trying to suppress his personality for the sake of his work. (6 -7)

philosophical concerning historical revisionism and ways of raising awareness about Northern Ireland as part of the residue of a colonial approach. Through these publications, Field Day has contributed to the development of Irish literary criticism and cultural theory becoming “a focus for scholars seeking to question the paradigm of Irish history and literature.” (“Field Day-A Brief History”)

When Friel and Rea initiated the Field Day project, they had a clear agenda, and, contrary to what most critics thought, their aim was nothing to do with nationalism but with questioning certain contemporary issues of Ireland in a historical perspective. As Elgy Gillespie of *The Irish Times* states in “The Saturday Interview: Friel,” “His passionate involvement in Field Day, we can safely hazard, is not about nationalism in a narrow way. It’s about questioning everything, just the way he questions everything as he talks” (154). The Field Day founders, in Rea’s words, simply wanted to “probe the condition that the country was in and ask questions about it.” Even though they were criticized being nationalist in a narrow way as Rea declared they “were far from that” (qtd. in Morash and Richards 14). However, by saying this, they also emphasized the need to be artistically and intellectually free in the sense that they did not have a mission to offer solutions to the conflicts in the country. Friel clearly expressed this in a 1981 interview with Donal O’Donnell: “We haven’t an institution that we have to serve and we don’t want to acquire a roof. We want to be transient in the aesthetic sense as well as in the practical sense, which gives us independence” (“Friel and a Tale” 151). In a way, by foregrounding the political situation that Ireland was in and specifically focusing on Northern Ireland in their theatrical productions, Friel and Rea did not simply want to essentialize the ‘Northern thing’ or reduce Northern Ireland to a problem that needs to be solved. Instead, there was an emphasis on ‘impermanence,’ on change, or the flux which Friel identified with both Field Day and Ireland.

When founded in 1980, Field Day Theatre Company aimed at providing theatrical productions which would represent Ireland and Irishness anew. In an interview in 1981 with Victoria Radin, Friel explains that the purpose of Field Day is “to provide a brave and vibrant theatre that in some way expresses his country” (Essays, Diaries 95). Whereas, to Richards and Morash, the main objective of the

company was not only to rise as a theatrical enterprise but “as one that defined itself in terms of a very specific geography: a company based in Derry, but committed to touring, tracing a new map of Ireland through its tours” (Mapping Irish Theatre 100). Referring to their choice of Derry as the central locale of the Field Day Theatre Company, Friel would once state: “I believe in a spiritual energy deriving from Derry which could be a reviving breath throughout the North. I think there is more creative energy here than anywhere else. Derry doesn’t look to either Belfast or Dublin, but to itself, that’s why I want to work here — piety perhaps” (“Friel Takes Derry” 159). When the interviewer Ulick O’Connor asks what makes Derry different from the other counties in the Northern Ireland, Friel explains that Northern people were dispossessed and they were living in a liminal state, which made their situation worth drawing attention to: “Janus-like they had one head looking to the North and one looking to the South. Now, however, the dispossessed are coming into their own and if this island is to be redefined the essence of redefinition could come from here” (“Friel Takes Derry” 159). Friel attached great importance to the issue of Northern Ireland; however, while doing this his intention was not to essentialize Northern Ireland or Northern Irish people, instead he wanted to emphasize the complementary nature of the South and the North. Ireland needed, in his own words, the “whole Northern thing” to be complete (“The Man from” 174).

In a similar vein, in his article “Derry: City Besieged within the Siege” Seamus Deane would describe Derry as an interface hosting various dichotomous elements:

Its two names – Derry/ Londonderry; its two communities; its history of siege; its absorption of the effects of violence and economic demoralisation along with economic subsidy; the contrast between its beautiful setting and its ruined cityscape; and above all, its isolation, allow a visitor native like myself to see it as a place small enough to be understood and big enough to be typical of others, as the North’s, maybe the whole island’s exemplary town. (18)

Choosing Derry which he describes as “an important psychic town” (“Rehearsing Friel’s New Farce” 164) literally a divided city as a border to the Irish Free State, for their launch-pad, Field Day intellectuals would surely evoke certain ideas associated with Ireland and the political struggles experienced over the years. Geography, thus, merging into history and culture would lend itself into dramatic narratives of space,

place, and landscape through the works of Field Day, and specifically the plays by Friel.

As a Derry-based, northern-focused enterprise, Field Day Theatre Company was strongly conscious about the events concerning Northern Ireland, namely the Troubles and the Northern Ireland Peace Process. All the members of the group were Northern people who shared a certain “sense of exile” placed upon them. As Friel once stated:

We’re a Northern accented group with a strong political element (small p) and that would concern itself with some sense of dissatisfaction most of us would feel at the state of two nations, which is strongly reflected in the work we are doing this year. I would say that all six of us are not at home in Northern Ireland and indeed all six would probably not be at home in the 26 counties. (“Field Day’s New” 193)

The actors of the Field Day, on the other hand, come from different parts of Ireland from both the North and South, and they were from diverse backgrounds which “represent the blend which Brian thinks should be part of the New Ireland” (“Friel Takes Derry” 159). In their efforts to raise awareness about the idea of a new sense of Ireland and of Irishness which is fluid and open to change rather than fixed and stable, and characterized by history, tradition and metanarratives, the Field Day members opened the way for a rethinking of Irish space and the self through theatrical productions and publications thereby achieving Friel’s ideal of “de-colonising the imagination<sup>15</sup>.”

What makes the Field Day Theatre Enterprise a special concern for Irish dramatic studies and specifically for Friel’s drama is its association with a concept

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<sup>15</sup> Referring to the difficulty of performing Chekov on Irish stage due to the limitations on language and translations and emphasizing the significance of imagination as the key to success, Friel once states, “I think one of the functions of Field Day enterprises is in some way to de-colonise the imagination” (“Friel and a Tale” 150). In the same vein, when Friel talks about how he wrote *Translations* in an Irish idiom and required the actors to pretend that they are English, he reiterates, “The decolonisation process of the imagination is very important if a new Irish personality is to emerge” (“Friel Takes Derry” 159).

called fifth province which the group borrows from Richard Kearney<sup>16</sup>. The term fifth province first appeared in 1977 in the Editorial to the first volume of *The Crane Bag*, a periodical which aims at offering an alternative discourse for a re-consideration of Irish issues. Through publication of various essays, the editors Richard Kearney and Mark Patrick Hederman set out to remove all traces of political implications along with historical and mythological frames of reference which they thought to be dominating the discourse in Ireland and in Irish Studies. For this reason, Kearney described *The Crane Bag* as a “neutral ground where things can detach themselves from all partisan and prejudiced connection and display themselves as they are in themselves” (*The Crane Bag* 4). Drawing attention to the then current situation of Irish Studies and the dominance of the colonial binary logic of Self and Other in Irish critical studies, Kearney and Hederman proposed that Irish history and culture should be considered in a different light. Therefore, through questioning the validity of certain concepts as culture, tradition, history, myth, and identity, *The Crane Bag* editors opened the way for a redefinition of Ireland. Challenging mythical narratives of the Mother Ireland and the idyllic spaces of Ireland, they aimed to offer a new realm, an alternative space to the Irish Studies. The main purpose of *The Crane Bag* was to “promote excavation of unactualized spaces within the reader, which is the work of constituting the fifth province. From such a place a new understanding and unity might emerge” (*The Crane Bag* 4). The editors proposed the idea of the fifth province within the context that Modern Ireland is composed of four provinces and the Gaelic word for ‘province’ is *coicéd*, which means a ‘fifth. However, the nature of this “fifth” has never been thoroughly defined because there were two different beliefs relating to its origin and meaning: The first tradition considers the Stone of Divisions on the Hill of Uisnech as the meeting point of all provinces and the mid-point of Ireland. The second tradition however states that Meath (Mide) was the “middle” and therefore the fifth province (*The Crane Bag* 4). Neither of these traditions proved to be conclusive but both believed in the existence of a “second centre,” a fifth province which is artistic

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<sup>16</sup> Richard Kearney is an Irish philosopher specialized in contemporary continental philosophy, and together with Mark Patrick Hederman, he reintroduced the medieval notion of “fifth province” in the first editorial of the periodical *The Crane Bag* (1977).

and mythical rather than political. Accordingly, the fifth province remained as a mystical, no-where land whose territory was never drawn but imagined through the creative power of the priests, poets, and sages, seers and magicians. As Kearney emphasizes, “This province, this place, this centre, is not a political position. In fact, if it is a position at all, it would be marked by the absence of any particular political and geographical delineation, something more like a dis-position” (The Crane Bag 4). Similarly, Mark Hederman defines this province as “an aesthetic analogy which describes a space which is neither physical, geographical nor political. It is a place beyond or behind the reach of our normal scientific consciousness” (“Poetry and the Fifth Province” 111). Accordingly, the fifth province provided an open ground for intellectuals enabling them to approach matters regarding identity and nation in a politically neutral way, which opened the way for a new sense of understanding and unity as Kearney emphasized.

Twenty years later Kearney revises the notion of the fifth province stating that the fifth province cannot be fixed or regarded as a totalizing view. “If anything, it may be re-envisaged today as a network of relations extending from local communities at home to migrant communities abroad” (Post-nationalist Ireland 80). This fifth province can be “imagined and re-imagined; but it cannot be occupied. In the fifth province, it is always a question of thinking otherwise” (Post-nationalist Ireland 81). Consequently, the term assumes a more liminal position standing between the local and the global keeping an eye with the Irish culture and tradition while also embracing the idea of the globalisation of Irish culture and its transnational ties. Evidently, Kearney’s revision of the concept calls for a reconsideration of Irish identity and discourse in plural terms opening the ground for hybrid identities, the Irish diaspora. The term then by the 1990s changes direction and assumes renewed meanings and comes to be regarded as a space which is on the making and in flux rather than a stable image created in one’s mind. Hence, the mythical and mystical features of the concept is replaced with the idea of a space which is yet to be reached, a space of flows, an ever-shifting signifier.

When the Field Day Theatre Company borrows the term fifth province from Kearney, they appropriate it in accordance with their own agenda and use it as a

foundational concept for their policy. With Field Day's appropriation of the term, the notion, in addition to its renewed feature as a fluid ground, assumes political meanings and comes to be regarded as a space which is openly political with regard to its approach to and interpretation of the political and sectarian conflicts in Northern Ireland. Nonetheless, Friel rejects the idea that the whole Field Day project should be interpreted as a venture based on political nationalism and the idea of a united Ireland. Instead, he thinks that "it [the Field Day project] should lead to a cultural state, not a political state. And I think out of that cultural state, a possibility of a political state follows. That is always the sequence" ("The Man from" 175). Therefore, with Field Day, Friel aims at creating a cultural ground where political matters in Northern Ireland could be considered in plural terms without rendering the Irish experience essential, and through accepting the proximity of Ireland to England. Accordingly, in an interview for *The Irish Times* in 1984, Friel defines his interpretation of the fifth province as an alternative, an option among many other, a different dimension from which things can be viewed differently and alternately: "'Fifth province' may well be a province of the mind through which we hope to devise another way of looking at Ireland, or another possible Ireland – an Ireland that first must be articulated, spoken, written, painted, sung" ("Field Day's New" 193).

This dream of the fifth province, a neutral ground for a re-evaluation of the political and cultural unrest in Ireland, primarily in the North was first actualized on the opening night of Friel's *Translations* (1980) in Derry's Guildhall, a space speaking for itself. As a neo-Gothic building with stained-glass windows and the busts of various British monarchs including Queen Victoria, Edward VII and George V, Guildhall has long been a place associated with power and control, later with firearms and bombs in the events of Bloody Sunday in 1972. However, as a touring theatre company with no intention of having "a roof" of their own Field Day by choosing Guildhall as a departure point for their venture challenges and subverts the power mechanism inherent in Northern Ireland. *Translations* brings together Northerners and Southerners, unionists and nationalists creating a neutral ground for approaching many grand issues foregrounded in the play as culture, history, identity and language with a

special focus on the anglicisation of place-names as signified in Friel's fictional town Ballybeg and its shifting appellation.

Following *Translations* three of Friel's plays, *Three Sisters* (1981), *The Communication Cord* (1982), and *Making History* (1988), also have their world premieres as Field Day productions. However, by the year 1994, with *Dancing at Lughnasa* and *Wonderful Tennessee* which received their premieres at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, Friel announces his break with Field Day with the aim of "going on a new artistic journey" in another Field Day director, Mr Hammond's words ("Playwright Brian Friel" 237). Friel himself makes no explanation regarding his resignation from the company other than clearly stating that he has "nothing . . . to say." ("Playwright Brian Friel" 236)

No matter what Friel's motives lying behind his resignation were, Field Day has always been a significant influence on Friel's career forming the backbone of his dramatic artistry. As a touring company lacking a centre or a fixed location, Field Day Theatre enterprise signifies the way how Friel's plays provide new insights into people's experience of space and place along with the spatial shifts in Ireland. As an amalgam of social and spatial change, Friel's drama offers diverse way of thinking about space because his plays illustrate how the historical shifts and the geographical change converge on the spaces Ireland. For this reason, space on Friel's stage assumes a 'special' role and takes different forms evolving from the colonial, power-laden, gendered, public spaces to the transitional and transformative ones, to liminal spaces occupied by liminal subjectivities, and to the spaces of possibility and multiplicity as emphasized in Friel's idea of the fifth province.

## CHAPTER 3

### 3. FROM ABSOLUTE TO RELATIONAL: SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES OF SPACE AND PLACE

We do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things. We do not live inside a void that could be coloured by diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another.

— Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces”

We know that time never stops; but we are less familiar with the fact that neither does space.

— Anna Madoeuf, “Murder On”

Can't we rethink our sense of place? Is it not possible for a sense of place to be progressive; not self-closing and defensive, but outward-looking? A sense of place which is adequate to this era of time-space compression?

— Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*

Spatiality and discussions pertaining to its nature and prevalent appropriation are informed by the study of a variety of disciplines and discourses including philosophy, geography, environmentalism and architecture. Drawing attention to the abundance and variety of such studies, this chapter explores the changing perceptions of space and human-place relations in the decades following the end of the nineteenth century with specific references to the Antiquity and Enlightenment. What is aimed is to draw a trajectory of the spatial turn in the twentieth century by addressing the significance of the spatial concepts ‘space’ and ‘place’ and ‘spatiality’ before moving

on to explore the echoes of such ideas of space in the plays of Brian Friel and in relation to Irish culture and dramatic history.

Providing the context for the analyses of the plays in the following chapters, this chapter focuses on the spatial turn in the twentieth century and the changing definitions of the concepts space and place with a special focus on the discussions surrounding their conceptualization as binaries. This part is followed by tracing the origin of these concepts from Antiquity to the seventeenth century and its aftermath referring to the way how they have evolved from being geometrical concepts to phenomenological ones and finally moving towards a relational approach. Drawing mainly on the Cartesian understanding of space as real and unproblematic, this genealogy provides a basis for the problematization of the concepts space and place as epistemological categories. Following this genealogy is a section which introduces the philosophical approaches of Martin Heidegger who challenge the Cartesian understanding of subject-object dichotomy and emphasizes the human dimension in space. Along with Heidegger, Gaston Bachelard's ideas on interior and intimate spaces feed into this chapter as they are instrumental in challenging the constructions of geometrical and absolute space. Following this part is an intersection on the social construction of space as emphasized in Henri Lefebvre's relational spatial theory which has been a significant influence on various philosophers to come, specifically Edward W. Soja and his conceptualization of Thirdspace. This theoretical chapter concludes with providing a detailed framework for Doreen B. Massey's relational view of space focusing on her key conceptual tools regarding space, place, and landscape.

### 3.1. The Spatial Turn in the Twentieth Century

Space and place are integral parts of one's existence and experience in the world. Conceptualized in different ways and interpreted in multiple ways in various texts these two concepts have always attracted attention in the humanities and the social sciences. In geographical formulations, space is always regarded as abstract with no special features, whereas place is considered as the lived coordinate with meanings

attached both clear and complex. The last two decades have witnessed an increasing interest in the ways in which space and place frame the privileged perspective in social theory and come to inform a variety of fields of study from aesthetics to politics. A critical attention to space has now replaced the strong preoccupation with time. This turn to space, as the geographer David Harvey comments, is related to “the widespread appropriation of spatial metaphors within social, cultural and literary theory” (Spaces of Global Capitalism 129). Different approaches such as colonialism, globalisation, gender issues, environmentalism and architecture risen in the light of social and political changes in society are observed to bear certain spatial aspects. Arguably, this dimension added by space to such variety of fields has proven to be an effective intermediary for weaving together a set of different disciplines. Developing comprehensively in the latter half of the twentieth century in social sciences and humanities, the spatial turn has extended into a variety of disciplines and been a concern for various critics. Replacing temporality and its scope, space has come to be regarded as an overarching concept which dominates “our daily life, our psychic experience, our cultural languages” (Jameson 64). While nineteenth century overvalued ‘time’ and ‘history’ as the dominant categories, twentieth century witnessed a growing interest in and attention to ‘space’ and ‘place.’ Drawing attention to the impact of spatial understanding on our present period, Foucault, in a speech delivered in 1967, made the following observation:

The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history: with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis, and cycle, themes of the ever-accumulating past, with its great preponderance of dead men and the menacing glaciation of the world. The nineteenth century found its essential mythological resources in the second principle of thermodynamics. The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein. (Of Other Spaces 22)

As Foucault emphasizes, unlike nineteenth century which was highly preoccupied with discourses of time and teleological developments, our historical moment is

composed of variables and appositions. Not having a fixed pattern, our experience of the world is a culmination of heres and nows, trajectories rather than roads.

What makes Foucault insist on pondering on space and on spatial metaphors is his claim that space has been long neglected and set aside as being a part of ‘nature,’ “a sort of prehistoric stratum” or it came to be regarded as “the residential site or field of expansion of peoples, of a culture, a language or a State” (“The Eye of Power” 149). Elsewhere he states that such devaluation of space had been the case for over a long period of time: “Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time, on the contrary, was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic” (“Questions on Geography” 70). Among the many reasons to which Foucault attributes this issue one stands out: the developments in theoretical and experimental physics. The development of spatial politics at the end of the eighteenth century coincided with the process of scientific advancements in physics, which caused philosophy to lose its authority in matters of universe and space, and limit its scope to pure critique of time, consequently devaluating space. To Foucault, this lack of attention to space, therefore, was mainly due to the treatise of certain philosophers like Kant, Hegel, Bergson, and Heidegger whose discussions on space remained on a superficial level when compared to their preoccupation with time. Even though Foucault attempted earlier to react against this general direction in which time and space were moving, he would only be able to draw attention to the significance of the matter during the 1960s with his influential lecture “Of Other Spaces,” and emphasize the need to realize the reassertion of space into our lives. As the decades went by, Foucault’s ideas would be cherished by more and more critics and philosophers to come, all agreeing on the view that our time is first and foremost the ‘epoch of space.’

Before this active engagement with space and spatiality, for over a long period, as the literary scholar Bertrand Westphal also observes, time was regarded as “the main scientific coordinate—of human inscription into the world. Time was aristocracy. Space only was a rough container, a plebeian frame for time. ... Spaces were marginalia” (Geocriticism ix). However, with the spatial turn began the space’s movement from the margins to forward to the mainstream. Westphal lists a couple of

contributing factors which he thinks to have played a role in such a move. He states that with the technological advances and developments in communication came the mastery of space, “time itself finally became unhinged, ruptured and lost” (Geocriticism 11). It was actually around and after 1945 that people really felt the ambiguity associated with time and space. Once a thorough reconfiguration process of the society was underway, there was no longer a dominance of the determining categories, which was a total shattering of the hierarchies. The idea of time as an ever-flowing stream was not valid anymore and that historical time was to be understood and interpreted in multiplied durations and split lines. When time and historicity lost their significance after the Second World War, space came to be celebrated in various ways unfolding its realities. Drawing attention to this interest in space, Robert T. Tally in *Spatiality* asserts that the aftermath of war was characterized by ‘movement,’ a great level of kinesis in the form of migration, exile, and displacement, which according to Tally stressed “geographical difference: that is, one’s place could not simply be taken for granted any longer” (13). As Tally’s remark indicates, in the post-war era the borders were redrawn and ideas were constantly being reconsidered in the wake of a variety of different epistemologies including mainly post-colonialism and globalism. Accordingly, there was a transformation on both geographical spaces and their re-conceptualisation, as people, deprived of particular location markers, were now more alert to the issues related with space and place.

In recent years, ‘space’ and ‘place’ in literary and cultural studies have received much critical attention. Space along with place has been defined in a variety of ways and within various discourses from mathematics to communication studies. However, in Massey’s words, it has remained as “one of the most obvious of things which is mobilized as a term in a thousand different contexts, but whose potential meanings are all too rarely explicated or addressed” (*Space, Place, and Gender* <sup>17</sup> 1). To Massey, even though the academics and thinkers in human geography and other fields make space a common starting point of discussion, they do not really think about it nor do they fully grasp its meaning. Consequently, recent years have witnessed a tremendous

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<sup>17</sup> Hereafter abbreviated as *Space*.

effort in theorizing space and place, which eventually resulted in various versions of these two concepts, either synonymous or even contradictory.

As a geographer, Massey draws attention to the central importance of geography and space, communities and their cultures, relations and interactions with and across space. She, therefore, insists on the significance of conceptualising space and place together — thinking about them relationally, which she finds essential for one's making sense of the social world. Massey with her conceptualization of space, as the main reference point of this study, is but one among many thinkers — such as Heidegger, Bachelard, Lefebvre, and, Soja, to name a few—who have pondered upon the concept of space and place and used these notions in various ways as a critical tool during the second half of the twentieth century. Such multi-faceted nature of these terms space and place undeniably requires an understanding of their changing conceptions over time, which the following part aims to introduce.

### 3.2. Defining Space and Place

As intricate concepts associated with spatiality (the way people's lifeworld merges into space and place, and vice versa) space and place have always been difficult to analyse in human geography especially during the late 1960s and 1970s, which resulted in a variety of theoretical approaches and definitions, and indeed, in Doreen Massey's words "dualisms" (Space 9). Space is often regarded as abstract with no substantial meaning while place is considered to be space endowed with meaning, that is 'lived.' That is why, as Massey critiques, place stands for Being, it is local, traditional and feminine; it is "specific, concrete, and descriptive," whereas space is often associated with the global and the modern; it is "general, universal, theoretical/abstract/conceptual" and thus coded as "masculine" (Space 9). In such an understanding, there lies a clear distinction between the concepts space and place, which is addressed by various twentieth century geographers and thinkers.

In the 20th century defining 'place' has been a longstanding interest of social scientists and geographers, especially the human geographers like Yi Fu Tuan, Edward

Relph and Edward S. Casey, who drawing on the ideas of philosophers Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, have formed their notions of place. The conceptualization of place by these geographers has provided an insight into the reciprocal relationship between people and places and the way how places play a part in social and economic processes; however, the terms space and place are often set as binaries or place is either over-valorised or regarded only a part of space. For instance, according to Yi-Fu Tuan, place is “pause;” it represents “stability” and “security” while space is a source of threat because it is open and free, in constant movement (Space and Place 6). In the same vein, Edward Relph regards place as an essential concept, a pre-requisite for “dwelling” and “being in the world” in Heidegger’s sense. His understanding of place is based more on experience, observation and intuition, and therefore, to Relph, place is not only an insignificant component of space but also an idea beyond it, “profound center[s] of human existence” (Place and Placelessness 43). Edward S. Casey is another geographer who draws attention to the distinction between space and place, especially in his books, *Getting Back into Place* (1993) and *The Fate of Place* (1997). Much of Casey’s discussion regarding place draws on his critique of the subordination of place to space and time in the seventeenth century. Casey pays utmost attention to the conceptualization of place in relation to community, thereby forging the renewal of its significance in cultural theory. In that sense, he valorises place as an essential part of Being and contends that place is directly linked to our understanding of and involvement in the world: “[W]e are immersed in it and could not do without it. To be at all—to exist in any way—is to be somewhere, and to be somewhere is to be in some kind of place. Place is as requisite as the air we breathe, the ground on which we stand, the bodies we have” (The Fate of Place 11). With this emphasis, Casey aims at reconceptualising place in relation to self and body in a phenomenological sense.

Either set in relation to space or self, place through the conceptualization of these thinkers has remained as a notion counterposed to space, which has been a concern for various contemporary human geographers including Lefebvre and Massey, who have tried to bring place and space together and theorize them relationally. These attempts, as the political geographer John Agnew states, are mainly

categorized into four theoretical approaches: the neo-Marxist, the humanist, the feminist and the performative, each of which “reject[s] the either/or logic in relation to space and place” and, thus, succeeds in dealing with the space-place dichotomy (“Space and Place” 324). Agnew thinks that despite having certain problems these four propositions share some significant practical points which he neatly summarizes as follows:

[T]he most important [shared emphasis] is the common focus on the construction of places through social practices. Gone is the sense of places as natural units inherited from time immemorial. Another, . . . is the stress on the fluidity and dynamic character of places as they respond to interconnections with other places. Consequently, places tend to have permeable rather than fixed boundaries and are internally diverse rather than homogenous with respect to their social and other attributes even as they express a certain communality of experience and performance.

(“Space and Place” 326)

As Agnew’s statement indicates, considering the renewed interest in the conceptualization of place, there is a focus on social practice and process. The specificity of places is not determined by some innate characteristics, local and traditional qualities but through their connection and interaction with other places and people in a relational way. Indeed, place together with space would go through more revivals before they are put together and conceptualized in a relational way.

### 3.3. Genealogy of Space and Place as Epistemological Categories

Space and place as distinct geographical concepts have not only been an integral part of twentieth century human geography and thinking, but these epistemological categories also grabbed attention of the philosophers in the early modern period and long before that in the Ancient Greek philosophy. The main reason why space and place held so much attention is that the concepts were thought to have a direct relation with people’s worldview and their ‘being’ in the world. Time together with space was also paid much attention due to being a significant notion in scientific domains as physics and metaphysics. As items of philosophical inquiry, these spatial

terms appeared quite in an early period in Antiquity in different forms like *topos*, *chora* and *kenon* through the principles of a variety of schools such as the Stoic, Atomist and Pythagorean, and specifically in the teachings of the philosophers Aristotle and Plato. In its simplest sense, *chora* is the origin of the word chorology, the study of regions, and *topos* descends from topology. The modern terms space and place are often said to have been derived from *chora* and *topos*; however, there are subtle nuances between the Greek usage of the concepts and their modern meanings.

The Platonic concept of space, *chora* is mainly conceptualized in Plato's long dialogue *Timaeus* where he presents a very detailed and systematic account of the formation of the universe and its main principles, while at the same time problematizing the concept of space and people's relation to it. His main premise is focused on the existence of three different types of being. The first of these beings is unalterable and inviolable: it cannot be seen or felt by any sense. Whereas the second one can be conceived through thought and feeling; and it is always on the move. The third nature which he describes as space is ever-existing and indestructible; it is conceived by random reasoning with no sensation (*Timaeus* 44). This everlasting and absolute space (*chora*) identified by Plato is equal to matter. Similarly, Aristotelian idea of space which holds a valuable position in the Western thought admits an absolute position being immutable and heterogeneous. In Aristotle's theorization, space is not described within a relation to the form, rather it is regarded as an eternal entity, an uninterrupted extension. It is understood in accordance with its parts, the total number of the places taken up by bodies (*Categories* 83-84). Likewise, place is not equal to the form, the matter or the extension, it actually has a distinct nature being "over and above" them. Place, then, according to Aristotle, is a container; it is the inner boundary of the containing body, which necessarily should be in close proximity with the contained one in every circumstance (*Physics* 805). Although Aristotle's and Plato's understanding of and approach to space bear certain differences, they both attach a geometrical meaning to space and define it as matter which is not uniform in character and content.

Space along with place through the appropriation of the philosophers and mathematicians in the Antiquity is described in various ways and mostly equated with such stock expressions as ‘Euclidean,’ ‘isotropic,’ ‘anisotropic,’ or ‘incorporeal’ despite the subtle nuances of thought among the thinkers. Consequently, time being the main constituent of human experience, space had not received much interest for nearly the following two thousand years until René Descartes’ formulations and assertions came into prominence in the 17<sup>th</sup> century with modern science.

The rise of the modern science in the 17<sup>th</sup> century gave way to observation, experimentation and deductive reasoning as scientific methods. This a re-orientation in the medieval philosophy of scholasticism resulted in a model of eclectic science welcoming philosophy and science in one single reality, and it was first envisioned by René Descartes. Descartes’ intention to evaluate the concerns of the science and that of the Church separately led to miscellaneous questions surrounding this new approach. As Gary Hatfield in “Kant on the perception of space (and time)” contends, metaphysical questions around this new science were mostly related to the nature of space, time and matter, while epistemological questions dealt more with the understanding of space or extension in general. In both parts questions abounded and controversy surrounding the concept of space continued to the time of Kant (62). While laying the foundations of his system, Descartes was at the same time overthrowing a well-established system of natural philosophy, the Aristotelian physics which he criticized for being qualitative. In 1644, Descartes’ suggesting the asymmetry between *res cogitans* (thinking substance/mind) and *res extensa* (extended substance/matter) in his *Principles of Philosophy* put an end to the Aristotelian conception of space. As in the words of Lefebvre “with the advent of Cartesian logic, ... space had entered the realm of the absolute,” encapsulating each and every body and sense. (The Production of Space 1)

In Descartes’ theorization, space appears as equated with matter the essence of which is extension. There is no dividing line between matter and space; similarly, matter does not actually reside in space, but its extension is necessary for spatiality. The extension forming the nature of a body and that of the space taken up by the body are also equivalent to one another, which hints at the impossibility of imaginary space.

Since extension is impassable, the physical existence of two different extended things within the same place and time cannot be possible. Consequently, Descartes rejects the existence of atoms and their motions in the void and eliminates the idea of a true vacuum. In a letter to his friend Mersenne, he asserts that “it is, I think, just as impossible that a space should be empty as that a mountain should be without a valley” (qtd. in Skirry 118). Descartes’ analogy between the void and the valley suggests the improbability of an empty or container space because such a space connotes the idea of a non-extended body. Therefore, space in Descartes’ view is not a vacuum but a plenum occupied by particular bodies. His conclusion that space is mainly body-related and it is in relation with other bodies is clarified in Principles II. 13:

The terms 'place' and 'space', then, do not signify anything different from the body which is said to be in a place; they merely refer to its size, shape, and position relative to other bodies. To determine the position, we have to look at various other bodies which we regard as immobile. (AT VIIIA 47: CSM I 228)

Descartes’ understanding of space and its identification with body brought a different understanding of ‘space’ and initiated a replacement of Aristotelian physics taught in the universities all over Europe at that time. However, he was not the only thinker of the Enlightenment who promulgated on the traditional philosophical theorizing of space. Followed by Isaac Newton and Immanuel Kant, Descartes initiated an establishment of a proper theorizing of space during the Enlightenment, which focused on the idea that space was real, unquestionable, and unproblematic.

In his *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* which he titled in parallel with Descartes’ *Principia Philosophiæ*, Isaac Newton puts forward his ideas on space, time, and gravity, which brings the highly debated question of absolute time and absolute space. In contrast to Descartes’ views in *Principia Philosophiæ*, Newton’s classical mechanics maintains that space is a separate entity from body, and time passes exactly in the same way for everyone:

Absolute, true, and mathematical time, in and of itself and of its own nature, without reference to anything external, flows uniformly and by another name is called duration. Relative, apparent, and common time is any sensible and external measure a (precise or imprecise) of duration by means of motion; such a measure—for example, an hour, a day, a month, a year—is commonly used instead of true time. (408)

As the above quotation indicates, “absolute time” refers to a kind of universal time which runs independently of anything. “Absolute time” is also an indication of an absolute synchrony in which each and every moment of time is demarcated everywhere. This is an objective fact which is independent from any outside process. In a similar vein, Newton’s “absolute space” also does not bear any relation to the objects in the outside world, nor does it depend on any material substance in the external world:

Absolute space, of its own nature without reference to anything external, always remains homogeneous and immovable. Relative space is any movable measure or dimension of this absolute space; such a measure or dimension is determined by our senses from the situation of the space with respect to bodies and is popularly used for immovable space, as in the case of space under the earth or in the air or in the heavens, where the dimension is determined from the situation of the space with respect to the earth. (408)

Newton’s understanding of time and space and his conceptualizations have received much critical attention over the years and have been exposed to a variety of objections and discussions because the idea of a fixed infinite time and space was regarded as metaphysical rather than empirical. One of the important names indulging such a debate with Newton was Gottfried Leibniz, whose correspondence with Samuel Clarke, the spokesman of Newton, illuminated the discussions around absolutist space and relationist space. Newton asserted that space was “out there,” very much in the form of a container that could be occupied by other material objects. However, Leibniz strictly opposing to this view, proposed that there was a certain spatial relation between material objects constructing the space. There was also a differential relationship between place and the body occupying that place which was “abstract” and “ideal” like space itself in Leibniz’s elaboration (704). It should be emphasized that Leibniz’s idea of space appears in contrast to Newton and Descartes, who, though with nuances, both defend the thesis that space is a real entity. In Descartes’ view space is a “matter,” whereas it is regarded as a “pseudo-substance” by Newton. However, Leibniz’s space is entirely different, it is something ideal, a kind of construction dependent on mind, an entity existing in its own right, which has its resonances in the theories of Immanuel

Kant. In his early preoccupation with space, Kant aligns himself with Leibniz's idea of space, trying to reconcile Newton with Leibniz. However, his relational view of space was more real rather than ideal, and based on the material and mutual relationship among the substances. Nonetheless, in 1768, with the publication of *Concerning the Ultimate Ground of the Differentiation of Directions in Space*, Kant shifts from this relational approach to the idea of an absolute and subjective space, towards the Kantian transcendental, ideal space.

### 3.4. Challenges to the Absolute Space: Heidegger and Bachelard

Over the years, there have been many challenges to the notion of “absolute space” by various philosophers, the most important of which to be considered within the scope of this study is the German philosopher Martin Heidegger. Heidegger in his seminal work *Being and Time* (1927) offers a new theory of space coming to criticize the conventional doctrines known as the absolute theory, Kantian theory, and Cartesian conceptualization of space through the Divisions I, II and III. As it is stated above, absolute theory regards space as a container standing independently of other objects which is refuted by the relational theories with the view that the existence of space depends on the existence of objects. Whereas, Heidegger draws attention to the human immersion in space and the spatiality of beings rather than relying on the subject-object dichotomy. Departing mainly from the conventional idea that space is endowed with a physical reality and critiquing it, Heidegger claims the spatial nature of Dasein, the human mode of existence. Dasein, in Heideggerian, sense symbolizes ‘being there,’ and together with the entities in the world it is pre-eminently spatial and is in a relational deal with them. According to Heidegger, there are three different means through which the world is spatially defined: the spatiality of innerworldly things at hand; the spatiality of Being-in the world; the spatiality of Dasein and space. (*Being and Time* 290-291)

With this proposition relating to Dasein, Heidegger makes a distinction and offers a new theory of space disregarding the division between subject and object. In this sense, contrary to the concerns of the history of ontology whether the nature of space is objective or subjective, Heidegger focuses on the possibility that space being

either one is comprised of our daily practices and is characterized by Dasein's spatiality:

Space is neither in the subject nor is the world in space. Rather, space is "in" the world since the being-in-the-world constitutive for Dasein has disclosed space. Space is not in the subject, nor does that subject observe the world "as if" it were in space. Rather, the "subject," correctly understood ontologically, Dasein, is spatial in a primordial sense. (Being and Time 314)

As the above quotation indicates, Heidegger attributes constitutive characteristics to space by defining it as a site of interaction and experience, as a part of man's existence. Within the context of being-in-the-world, space is not a separate entity existing independently from its beings, instead, "Dasein itself is 'spatial' with regard to its being-in-the-world" (Being and Time 297). Hence, Heidegger disregarding the Cartesian subject-object dichotomy maintains that man exists spatially in the world through his being and spatial activities. Space is, therefore, co-constitutive of the world with regard to Dasein's spatiality. (Being and Time 318)

Dasein's spatiality has a double effect in the sense that it both refers to its own body as a spatial form and as an aspect of conceptualization of the things and the world. Through recognizing such spatiality, subject comes to understand his/her 'place' in the world and dwells in through his/her relations with it. This idea of "dwelling" is based on the relationship between man and space, which is formed up through locales and building. Through making a home man dwells in world-space and his dwelling is constitutive of his being. Hence, the essence of the relationship between man and space lies in man's dwelling which is the basic character of Being (362). Heidegger's conceptualization links space, place, and belonging, bringing out questions of identity as it is through such dwelling that people try to inculcate a sense of value to space and establish a basis for being in the world.

Heidegger, in a series of essays and lectures further suggests that there lies a special relationship between space and place. In "An Ontological Consideration of Place" he asserts that man's being in place is two dimensional, horizontal and vertical. The vertical dimension of Being is regarded as the 'House of Being' which is materialized by thought, communication, and action. The House of Being also points to "dwelling of being" which is an indication of man's idiosyncratic ontology (19-20).

To Heidegger, “man is a dweller” in this world and his dwelling equates to his Being. ‘Place,’ in this sense, gains utmost importance because it provides the basis for man’s situatedness in the world (26). Being a man requires having a place for one’s existence that is the House of Being where Being unravels its strands and opens out to the world.

Another twentieth century thinker to mention at this point is Gaston Bachelard who dealt with space as a category and is highly indebted to Heidegger for conceptualizing space. However, while Heidegger focuses on human involvement in space and the spatiality of beings, Bachelard concentrates more on interior spaces and their emotional resonance in human psyche. In his *The Poetics of Space* (1958) Bachelard provides a theory of interior spaces such as the houses, corners, nests, drawers and chests. Bachelard’s analysis of such intimate spaces helps to elaborate on the meanings of domestic space and shows how such inhabited spaces go beyond the boundaries of geometrical space (47). In his introduction to *The Poetics of Space* which he describes as “philosophical,” Bachelard examines the nature of poetics and the significance of poetic image and phenomenology. Bachelard disregards positivist research as a method of analysis, and he thinks that science does not prove enough to discuss the metaphysics of imagination thoroughly. Therefore, he focuses on poetic imagination which he calls the “phenomenology of soul” (xvii). Moreover, Bachelard believes that in order to be able to grasp the significance of “the topography of our intimate being” one should turn to ‘topo-analysis,’ which he describes as the ample scrutiny of human encounter with space, especially the domestic space (xxxvi). Topo-analysis in Bachelard’s words is the study of “the space we love” or the “images of felicitous space,” that is, topophilia (xxxv). In this sense, the space Bachelard intends to examine is eulogized space, which is loved by people and can be protected against hostile intrusions. It is both lived and filled with imagined values, which suggests that there is a constant production of new images, it is always dynamic (xxxv-xxxvi).

Elaborating further on the images of intimacy, Bachelard emphasizes the significance of “house” as an intimate space. Regarding the house as a micro representation of all existence, he states: “our house is a corner of the world [...] it is our first universe, a real cosmos ...” (4). To Bachelard, houses evoke such varied feelings and produce myriad meanings that they should be dealt with in

phenomenological as well as in psychological terms, for the house image is directly related with intimacy and human soul: “Our soul is an abode. And by remembering houses and rooms, we learn to abide within ourselves.” (xxxvii)

What Bachelard posits by this is that houses and the objects inhabiting those places bear the traces of memories, dreams and practices. Certain rooms in houses may store up recollections, past affairs as well as personal/private experiences of childhood. Moreover, images like drawers, chests, wardrobes, nests and shells can also be considered as the “houses” of things and, thus, reveal significant spatial features. These objects bear secret passages, hidden keys and mysterious locks within them, inciting memory and imagination (xxxviii). Within this argument, Bachelard draws attention to the mutual relationship between the houses we inhabit and the places they inhabit within our souls. It should be noted that such places and objects as well as the feelings they evoke reveal certain facts about human soul, his place and subjectivity providing a spatial poetics.

### 3.5. The Social Construction of Space and Time: Towards a Relational Theory

Heidegger’s views on Dasein and its spatial position also have found reverberations in the ideas of the French Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre who in his seminal work *The Production of Space* (1974) focuses on the individuals’ active constitutional role in space: “Each living body is space and has its space: it produces itself in space and it also produces that space” (170). This dialectical relationship between man and space brings forth the notion that like identities space is also in the making, and that there is no distinction as such built and the non-built environment because the focus is always on the process.

Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* sets out to examine carefully the two key concepts “space” and “production” as suggested in the title. The space Lefebvre intends to explicate thoroughly is a social phenomenon which is produced and reproduced by means of human actions and interactions. Such conceptualization of space is in relation to Julia Kristeva’s *semeiotike*, to Jacques Derrida’s *grammatology*, and to Roland Barthes’s *semiology*; however, there is an emphasis on social space and physical space. In fact, Lefebvre’s theory of space is a “unitary theory” (14) which

incorporates different types of spaces; the physical, the mental and the social as opposed to the “schism” among different representations of space especially due to the metaphysical understandings of space like the Cartesian absolute space.

Lefebvre’s main premise in the studies of space is related to the issue how space is socially constructed and how it should be understood. In the introductory chapter of his *The Production of Space*, elaborating on the changing nature of the concept of space he claims that not so many years ago “space” used to have a strictly geometrical meaning and it often came to be associated with the idea of an empty area and bear the titles as “Euclidean”, “isotropic”, or “infinite” and “absolute”. Surrounded by such mathematical associations at one time, Lefebvre continues, it would have appeared strange to speak of “social space” (1). Lefebvre also critiques the traditional conceptions of space explaining that it has always been a challenge to philosophy to move forward from such dualistic views as subject, object, *res cogitans* and *res extensa* of Descartes; Ego and non-Ego of the Kantians (39). Therefore, he offers a spatial triad to get beyond the Manichean theorizing and forms the basis of a new theory of space, a spatial triad.

The first element or the ‘moment’ of Lefebvre’s three-partite model is ‘spatial practice’ which is also referred to as the ‘perceived’ or physical space, the realm of social life and everyday practice. The other leg of the spatial triad is the ‘representations of space, ‘conceived’ space which is more related to the productions of space and is a mental, imagined construction. These two legs are distinguished from the ‘representational space,’ in the sense that it is regarded as ‘lived’ space and is not as straightforward as the others because it bears certain non-verbalized symbolisms and signs, can be altered and invested with meaning over time. There exists a dialectical relationship within this triad of the perceived, conceived and the lived space. Similarly, these three moments, though different from one another, are all interconnected and each has the ability to produce space.

Lefebvre’s model on social space has contributed significantly to a different understanding of space which is never simply there, never absolutely empty but produced through human practice. This social space hosts the actions and interactions of subjects who are in a symbiotic relationship with it because “within it they develop,

give expression to themselves, and encounter prohibitions; then they perish, and that same space contains their graves” (34). Directly belonging to society and social life, this is a kind of space which inhabits all kinds of subjects who either define this space or are defined by it in different ways. In Lefebvre’s own words, “(Social) space is a (social) product” (26). Lefebvre defines this social space as both abstract and real; it is also concrete and instrumental, and it bears within itself the idea of ‘multiplicity.’ Such a focus on the notion of multiplicity in space calls attention to the traditional viewing of time as the superior of space and destroys the already accepted notion that space is a subsidiary element to time. Stuart Elden in his article on the politics of space in Lefebvre’s works, explains that Lefebvre’s propositions revised the modernist understanding of time over space, also; deconstructing Kantian philosophy, they attracted the attention to the authenticity of their experience. With Lefebvre, Elden indicates, the experiential understanding of time and space or the idea of space’s being a ‘container’ loses its validity, opening the ground for a reconsideration of such experiences in relation to their historical environment (108). In that sense, thinking temporality and history in relation to spatiality, Lefebvre marks the beginning of a period in which space would enjoy its balanced quality over time and reveal itself not as a component in empty space but a counterpart in a space of relations.

Lefebvre in his discussions of space also explores the relation between capitalism and space. Of the many aspects of capitalism Lefebvre focuses more on hegemony, put forward by Gramsci because it is directly related with the use of capital and the social relations of production. To Lefebvre, hegemony does not have a specific circle of influence as it is practiced on both public and private domains in individual and institutional levels. In other words, not only people but also ideas are touched by hegemony and neither of them remains intact. All the units including culture, knowledge, politics, policies and academia are all affected by hegemony. Those in power try to maintain their power by using various ways, one of which is knowledge. In this atmosphere of distinct and diverse relations space is by no means open to interventions. Accordingly, changing life and changing society can only be possible by the production of a proper space since it is always the political power and hegemony which bring together and link different kinds of space as work space, leisure space and

living space. In this vein, Lefebvre's theory of space incorporates a certain politics of space, but it also aims beyond encompassing both spatial politics and politics in general. It is in fact an emphasis on conceptualizing "a different space, towards the space of a different (social) life and of a different mode of production" bridging the gap between real and ideal, conceived and lived. (*The Production of Space* 60)

### 3.6. Beyond the Binary Logic: Edward Soja's Thirdspace

Edward William Soja is another thinker central to the scope of this dissertation, who, like Lefebvre, emphasizes the integral role of space in constituting social life and draws attention to the significance of spatiality of social life. Criticizing social theories of spatiality which he thought to have failed to explain the problems relating to geographies of uneven development, Soja strongly argues for a social theory which is spatial in every respect. Proposing his ideas mainly in his major works *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (1989), *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-And-Imagined Places* (1996), and drawing mainly on Lefebvre's idea of the production of space and his claim that social is spatial, Soja stresses the need to conceptualize the social and the spatial relationally, in a more flexible and balanced way.

Similar to Lefebvre's spatial triad, Soja's approach is based on "a triple dialectic of space, time and social being; a transformative re-theorization of the relations between history, geography, and modernity" (*Postmodern Geographies* 12). Besides drawing on Lefebvre's trialectics of spatiality, spatial practices, representations of space, space of representations, Soja also borrows from the postcolonial critic Homi Bhabha and his notion of the "Third Space," bell hook's ideas on choosing margins and radical openness as well as Foucault's conception of heterotopology to theorize Thirdspace and develop his ideas on the spatiality of social life.

Soja holds the view that the current conceptualizations of space and spatiality fall short of describing the contemporary flux in society. Opening Thirdspace with his agenda Soja states that his intention is to call forth a different understanding of spatiality and reconceptualisation of "space and those related concepts that compose

and comprise the inherent spatiality of human life: place, location, locality, landscape, environment, home, city, region, territory, and geography” also allowing room for conventional theories of space and spatiality (Thirdspace 1). He, therefore, urges us to “keep our contemporary consciousness of spatiality – our critical geographical imagination – creatively open to redefinition and expansion in new directions; and to resist any attempt to narrow or confine its scope” (Thirdspace 2). It is with this aim in mind that Soja forms his notion of the Thirdspace which addresses novel directions towards an alternative approach to space, spatiality, and its social dimension. Thirdspace does not totally reject the traditional dualism of the Firstspace epistemology which focuses on the material, mappable nature of the spatial, and the Secondspace perspective which centres on the cognitive aspect of human spatiality, but it draws on them while also pushing the boundary and going beyond the binary logic. It is, in this sense, both a combination of the real and imagined and its extension in the form of “real-and-imagined.” It is, in Soja’s words,

[T]he space where all places are, capable of being seen from every angle, each standing clear; but also a secret and conjectured object, filled with illusions and allusions, a space that is common to all of us yet never able to be completely seen and understood, an “unimaginable universe,” or as Lefebvre would put it, “the most general of products.” (Thirdspace 56)

In a nutshell, being “simultaneously real and imagined and more” (Thirdspace 11), Soja’s Thirdspace is “an-Other form of spatial awareness,” an alternative way of approaching space, a new direction which addresses the openness of space, its radical contemporaneity and the multiplicity of real-and-imagined places. Accordingly, this idea emerges in parallel lines with Brian Friel’s idea of the fifth province, his conceptualization of the spaces of Ireland in his plays and his alternative vision of Ireland and Irishness.

### 3.7. A Relational Theory of Space: Doreen Massey’s View of Space and Place

When such twentieth century figures as Heidegger, Bachelard, Lefebvre, Soja and others adhered to the idea of thinking about space in a different way and developed the spatial theory accordingly, the geometrical conception of space came to be regarded as implausible. Initiated by Lefebvre, the challenge to the notion of ‘empty

space' was taken over by many leading geographers including Doreen Massey, the key theorist of this study, and re-conceptualised in diverse ways. Space through these re-conceptualizations has now been conceived as non-static, "open and porous," in Massey's words, viable to various invasions and invitations (Space 121). Such openness in space indicates the fact that space is produced through interrelations, and thus should be conceived in relation to different spaces and places which are always in the making.

Like Soja, Massey also argues that there has been tremendous effort in theorizing space which eventually resulted in various and even contradictory versions of space. Even though the academics make space a common starting point of discussion, they do not really "think about" it nor do they fully grasp its meaning (Space 4), which Massey thinks is necessary to challenge current conceptualizations of space and place, and offer alternative ways to thinking in spatial terms.

Putting forward her ideas in *For Space* which she describes as "an essay on the challenge of space" (13), and which has become a keystone in geographical studies, Massey calls for an alternative approach to space for which she proposes a few steps to create a theoretical premise. Firstly, space should be considered as a natural outcome of interrelations, formed up through reciprocal relations, both global and local. Secondly, space should be recognized as the plane of possibilities, multiplicity, plurality, and heterogeneity. Lastly, space should be understood as process which never concluded or perfected but it is always in the making. Space, in this sense, is a "simultaneity of stories-so-far" (For Space 9). This is an understanding of space as "a cut through the myriad stories in which we are all living at any one moment," a kind of space which is "intimately connected" to time, leading to a process of 'becoming' (Doreen Massey on Space). Massey's focus on the interrelated nature of space and time has led to the development of an alternative understanding of space as "space-time," a concept which emphasizes the connectedness of space and time and the continuity between them. This notion also signifies how Massey firmly holds the belief that both spatial and temporal are necessary for the production of history, politics and geography. As she reminds us,

If space is conceptualized in terms of a four-dimensional 'space-time' ... as taking the form not of some abstract dimension but of the simultaneous coexistence of social interactions at all geographical scales, from the intimacy of the household to the wide space of transglobal connections, then place can be reconceptualised too. (Space 168)

Another key trope of Massey's relational approach is that she emphasizes the need for conceptualising space and place within the context of social relations which she thinks to have a spatial form. She maintains that if social relations are spatially formed through their interactions place might be defined as the assemblage of social relations, the links of which have been shaped and reshaped, broken and rebuilt as trying to form ties with wider relations and other places. In this sense, Massey's space is formed of a variety of interrelations and interactions and thus should never be regarded as a closed system, but one which is always in the process of becoming. With an emphasis on the boundless nature of spaces, Massey states, "space in [the] way of telling things, is an expanse we travel across" (For Space 4). This vastness and openness as the given space of mountains, rivers, the land, and the oceans give the space an impression of a surface. However, once a stroll is taken along this surface, it is seen that it is an "unthought cosmology" and it bears with itself the social and political products. Hence, imagining space paves the way for envisaging different places, people, cultures and their reverberations, the "meeting-up of histories" (For Space 4). Space, in this sense, promises an amalgam of relations formed up of varieties and multiple entities. It is not closed or fixed but rather open to possible invasions from various corners. Apart from this idea of the openness of space, Massey also draws attention to the multiplicity and heterogeneity of space. Space in Massey's alternate model is always alive, away from essentialisms and open to a myriad of possibilities, reciprocations and connexions. It is not that intact and impenetrable phenomenon in which all relations between things and all connections between places have already been set.

This depiction of space as wide open brings out the question of place which is usually discussed either in relation to or in opposition to space. Massey, however, suggests refusing the distinction between space and place, and insists on the significance of conceptualising them together in a relational way, which she finds

essential for one's making sense of the social world. Separating space from place and opening a breach between them manifests how space is not thoroughly conceptualized, or when it is done the actions are often "unthought." Such distinctions or "unthought" conceptualizations of space are indications of "failure of spatial imagination" in the sense that people do not prove enough to tackle with the problems of space; they fail to accept and understand its "contemporaneity," its "coeval multiplicities" and its "constitutive complexity" (For Space 6-8). Therefore, one should take a particular course of action to master the challenge presented by the spatiality of the world. In general terms, Massey tries to strip space off its fixed connotations as 'dead' or 'static' and bring it to a sphere where its plurality, contingency and contemporaneity could be celebrated.

These propositions Massey puts forward bring with themselves the questions of identity politics in the sense that spatial imagination can open up new horizons to approach and evaluate the political in alternative ways rather than relying on essentialisms. The political, therefore, is understood in relational terms and is based on the idea of the constructedness of identities and their relations. Massey equates such an approach with spatiality maintaining that the relation between people and their relations with space are actually part of a whole. Hence, the efficiency of politics is highly dependent upon the openness of future. In this sense, both history and space are open and such a space is subject to various reciprocal actions, possible connections, and relations, and it is always a process of Becoming:

Space can never be that completed simultaneity in which all interconnections have been established, and in which everywhere is already linked with everywhere else. A space, then, which is neither a container for always-already constituted identities nor a completed closure of holism. This is a space of loose ends and missing links. For the future to be open, space must be open too. (For Space 11-2)

Characterized by diversity and plurality, Massey's conceptualization of space breaks with the traditional meanings of space which limit it to stasis and closure. Space is formed through relations which are themselves in the making. In this vein, the space Massey talks about does have its own problems such as issues of subjectivity and questions related to connections and associations in and through its production, very

much like the spaces of Ireland which are often depicted as contested and turbulent; and Irish identity which is fluid and always in the process of becoming.

### 3.7.1. Time-space Compression and Globalisation

Time-space compression, as Massey argues, is usually defined as people's conversancy with the geographical expansion of social relations, movement, and communication across space, which is mostly thought to be a product of capitalism and necessarily anxiety provoking. This definition, Massey believes, is not sufficient to form our relation to space. Therefore, Massey often problematizes the tendency to define time-space compression and globalisation in a restrictive manner, that is, without taking into consideration the multiple determining factors such as race, gender, and mobility which play significant roles in determining how people experience global processes. In this sense, Massey's interpretation of time-space compression and globalisation is not simply based on the recurrent idea of the annihilation of space by time, the speeding up of the social relations or the economic policies. It is more about "inequality" and "power" regarding mobility and access. In other words, time-space compression does not happen for everyone in the same manner and pace as the way individuals and groups are placed in social life or their relation to the flows and interconnections in place vary, which Massey calls "power geometry" (Space 149). Therefore, as she explains, "different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway differentiated mobility: some people are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don't; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it" (Space 149).

This "differentiated mobility" Massey talks about also brings out the issue of power. For instance, there are some groups such as the jet-setters who are in charge of time-space compression as their life style is characterized by movement and communication. On the other hand, there are some people who do a lot of moving, yet they cannot control this process of mobility because they are refugees or migrant workers. Similarly, there are people who through their labour contribute to time-space compression to a great extent; however, they do not have the means to experience it.

In that sense, the issue of time-space compression and the way people are situated within it has in fact very diverse dimensions in terms of mobility and its control.

### 3.7.2. A Global Sense of Place

One of the most significant conceptual tools of Massey pertaining to the scope of this dissertation is ‘a global sense of place’ which appears Massey’s 1991 essay ‘A Global Sense of Place,’ a call for a reconceptualization of places as open and inclusive permeated by flows and roots originating from somewhere else.

Massey’s ‘global sense of place’ departs from her contentions regarding time-space compression, globalisation and the “feelings of vulnerability” as these two notions are claimed to be producing. Massey argues that time-space compression and globalisation should not be necessarily regarded as the forces behind the conceptualization of places as sources of insecurity and uneasiness. Nor should the search for a sense of place be interpreted as a search for a safe haven to reside to avoid the complexity and the chaos outside. Similarly, place and locality should not be necessarily thought as “reactionary” movements. What Massey wants to emphasize is, in fact, a progressive sense of place which would embrace the multiple dynamics of the local and the global along with the political baggage of that very same place.

Massey in her Introduction to the Geographical Worlds draws attention to the interconnected nature of the global and the local arguing that our local world is constantly exposed to the influences of the global world around us. She calls for the need for an understanding of the “local character of our lives” as well as the “changing nature of the places” we live in so that we would be able to gain an awareness of the “wider, global context of which we are a part and what it is that makes us distinctively local” (1). What is emphasized here is that places do change in varying ways, which plays a certain role on the formation of places somewhere else and their possibilities in a relational manner. As Massey reminds us:

The global is in the local in the very process of the formation of the local. . . . The geography of social relations forces us to recognize our interconnectedness, and underscores the fact that both personal identity and the identity of those envelopes of space-time in which and between which we live

and move (and have our 'Being') are constructed precisely through that interconnectedness. (Space 120-22)

In this vein, in Massey's view, places do have a character of their own but they are not characterized by a singular and seamless sense of place shared by everyone. Massey states, "people's routes through the place, their favourite haunts within it, the connections they make (physically, or by phone or post, or in memory and imagination) between here and the rest of the world vary enormously" (Space 153). Like people, places also have multiple identities, and, therefore, it is quite problematical to identify a place with 'community.' Places have many identities which are the product of their relations with other places. Therefore, it is never possible to grasp the significance of a place without considering its stretching ties and wider relations with other places. "This is place as meeting place: different stories coming together and, to one degree or another, becoming entangled. This is the thrown-togetherness of physical proximity, and it is even more marked in an age of globalisation. 'A global sense of place.'" (Massey "Globalisation" 294)

In Massey's approach, therefore, the character of a place is not only dependent on its history nor is it on its industrial growth or decline, but it is also in relation to the construction of its identity, its social structure, political identity or its local culture. This interaction is also related to the idea that space is both the product of social relations and is constituted by those social relations themselves. In this sense, Massey conceptualizes places as open and porous areas rather than bound ones; they are processes rather than end-products and they are the domain of multiple identities and histories. Their characteristics are formed up through their interactions and relations with other places rather than by their opposing natures, which help establish an anti-essentialist conceptualization of place freed from its conventional associations as nostalgia and stasis, and come to be perceived as more progressive and porous.

### 3.7.3. Landscape as a Simultaneity of Stories-so-far

Recent research on landscape studies indicates that landscape as a term in geography has direct links with space and place, in fact it "has particular value as a mediating term" between these concepts (Land/scape/theater 3). Landscape not only

helps clarify the ideas around the notions space and place but also provides further views regarding people's experience of and practice with them. For this reason, much can be said about the significance of the dimensions of landscape regarding conceptualization of space and spatiality. One starting point, however, might be Massey's idea that landscape is "a simultaneity of stories-so-far" ("Landscape/Space/Politics" 14).

Massey in her conceptualization of place moves beyond the conventional understanding of place as fixed, denoting an authentic existence. Instead, she emphasizes various dynamics of place-making such as globalisation and migration focusing particularly on cultural and economic factors. She also draws attention to the importance of exploring landscapes to comprehend and pinpoint the constellation of both local and global changes and their effects on societies. As she argues, along with Pat Jess, in "The Conceptualization of Place," within the context of a globalizing, high-tech world in flux where the place identities are always questionable and problematical, it is essential to realize and note what places and landscapes signify (1-4). In Massey's thinking, therefore, place and landscape are co-constitutive in that they amend and reshape one another while at the same time acting as the agencies in both the formation and critique of cultures, communities, and alternative spaces. Massey's views on landscape take their cue from her studies attached to the reconceptualization of space and place over the years especially in *For Space*. However, there is one particular article which might be said to befit the scope of the present study: "Landscape/Space/Politics." In this essay, Massey reflects upon the results of a funded research project of three years, "The Future of Landscape and the Moving Image" in which she collaborated with the film-maker Patrick Keiller, and the academics Patrick Wright and Matthew Flintham. The project focuses on exploring the United Kingdom's landscape, "its histories and possible futures by creating images and texts" following a political trajectory (1-2). As well as writing up British landscape, the research also engages in a critique of the widely accepted and discussed concepts such as "migration, mobility, belonging and displacement," which Massey thinks to have taken their place in people's lives with globalisation. Such a period that necessitated a process of rethinking certain economic issues, to Massey, also required a critical

undertaking of landscape along with the issues of 'dwelling' and 'belonging.' Therefore, in "Landscape/Space/Politics," Massey explores how one can comprehend the ways landscape unfolds against political, economic and cultural upheavals; what happens as a result of such comprehension or how such an understanding contributes to conceptualising future spaces characterized by openness and multiplicity.

In a nutshell, Massey's conceptualization of landscape is much akin to her approach to space as a multiplicity of stories-so-far. Such an understanding of landscape in fact allows for a political reading of landscapes, undermining the authority of the prevalent interpretations of landscapes as palimpsests and heritage sites. To Massey, such conceptualizations equate landscapes with a timeless past; however, if one considers landscapes as stories-so-far, they gain a political resonance because "stories are ongoing and they arrive at today" ("Stories So Far" 264), posing questions and challenging the present.

A key observation in my reading of Friel and Massey against the background of this theoretical discussion is that they meet in converging paths with their mutual focus on liveliness and heterogeneity in space, place, and landscape together with people's relation to them. As I aim to expound, the spatial dynamics of Brian Friel's drama lends itself into more comprehensive analysis within the frame of Massey's relational approach to space which is open and filled with a multitude of narratives. Such a conceptualization of spatiality challenges the conventional understanding of space as fixed and closed, and places as sites of nostalgia, proposing a 'space-time' model, as the temporal integrated to the spatial. The term 'spatial,' addressed in Massey's case refers to the heterogeneity of social relations and interrelations covering a large scope including finance, telecommunications, politics as well as relations in the family and the workplace. Examining the nature of the spatial with such features in mind foregrounds the dynamic nature of space configured as fluid, heterogeneous, relational, and is characterized by "chance," "coevalness," "right-nowness" and "throwntogetherness" in Massey's concepts. Moreover, as a significant constituent in Massey's spatial thinking, landscape is also dynamic. Reading it politically as well, Massey conceptualizes landscape in relation to space and place, as open and the bearer of multiple stories; an event, a Becoming, an instant "that will again be dispersed"

(Massey, "Landscape as a Provocation" 46). As opposed to the contentions in which space is regarded as a neutral plane upon which always-already constituted identities are placed, in Massey's approach there is a focus on the diversity of subjectivities in space, "human sociability" and "material engagement" as well as "interaction" through and within space. In other words, what Massey calls for is "a relational politics for a relational space" (For Space 61), a realm of continuous production and reconfiguration of heterogeneity, an idea which sings in unison with Brian Friel's vision of conceptualising Ireland as a neutral ground, a Thirdspace in Edward Soja's terms, embracing difference and multiplicity in terms of both space and subjectivity.

Another important point pertaining to Massey's theory and the scope of this dissertation is the issue of power which manifests itself through social relations and the production of space in Friel's plays. Massey argues that being socially constituted, space is "full of power and symbolism, a complex web of relations of domination and subordination, of solidarity and co-operation" ("Politics and Space/Time" 81), a contention which finds its resonance in the chosen plays of this study through religious orthodoxy, familial control and patriarchal domination. From this vantage point, reading space becomes multi-layered in Brian Friel's drama where spaces and places, as power-laden, both public and private, interior and exterior, or local and global— all convey their echoes and engagements with spatiality as put forward in Doreen Massey's relational view of space.

A further significant point which brings together Friel and Massey in the space of this study is their understanding and interpretation of the notion of the sense of place. Irish literature has long tended to depict rural images and pastoral landscapes of Ireland with people firmly rooted and preserving secure and stable ties with the past. However, in the twentieth century there have been many changes which resulted in the disruption of that stability, a situation which Friel has drawn attention to through his work. Due to rapid urbanization and the advancements in technology and communication, people have come to experience places and spaces in a more relational way. As Massey states, amongst all the movement and time-space compression it is not very easy to maintain a solid understanding of "a local place and its particularity" (Space 146). In Massey's conceptualisation, place is globally viewed as a meeting

point consisting up of social relations and cultural connections. These places are characterized by fluidity, openness, mobility and indeterminacy rather than rootedness, authenticity, fixity and being-in the-world. As I will argue in this study, Massey's theorization of place as open, formed out of interconnections and of flux calls into question the previous conceptualizations of place as essential for a stable sense of identity, of home and dwelling, and draws attention to the recognition of things as processes, as a continuous Becoming, an idea which resonates in Friel's contextualisation of Ballybeg, of Ireland and Irishness in his drama, especially in his late plays *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Wonderful Tennessee* and *Molly Sweeney*.

## CHAPTER 4

### 4. BALLYBEG AND BEYOND: A GLOBAL SENSE OF PLACE IN DANCING AT LUGHNASA

Dancing as if the very heart of life and all its hopes might be found in those assuaging notes and those hushed rhythms and in those silent and hypnotic movements. Dancing as if language no longer existed because words were no longer necessary ...

— Brian Friel, *Dancing at Lughnasa*

Brian Friel, in his plays, often addresses the issue of change, by forging “a new sense of place,” a notion which has come to characterize the Irish theatre since the 1990s<sup>18</sup> and has been defined as a move towards global perspectives from the nationalistic themes. It is this new understanding of place with regard to Ireland and its place in the global space alongside one’s perception of his/her own place in the community that Friel presents in *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990).<sup>19</sup> The play written in 1990 and premiered at the Abbey Theatre in the same year, presents the story of Mundy sisters, Kate, Christina, Maggie, Rose, Agnes and their brother, Father Jack, a missionary priest recently back from the colonies in Africa. There is also the

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<sup>18</sup> In *Modern Irish Theatre*, Mary Trotter devotes a chapter to the plays of the 1990s defining them as plays which focus on a new sense of place regarding Ireland and its identity. In her chapter titled, “A New Sense of Place: Irish Theatre since 1990s,” she draws attention to the increasing interest in Irish theatre in the 1980s, which tried to find ways of pushing the limits of traditional representations of the nation and national identity in Ireland so as to forge a new understanding of Ireland and Irishness. This tendency, as Trotter explains also corresponded to the social panorama of the 1990s which was characterized by a variety of paradigm shifts, social, spatial and political changes encountered in and across Ireland due to the economic growth of the Celtic Tiger Period, Northern Ireland peace process, and Ireland’s receiving immigrants from all across the world. (176-94)

<sup>19</sup> Lugh – pronounced ‘Loo’. Lughnasa – pronounced ‘loo-na-sa.’ Hereafter abbreviated as DL for parenthetical references.

(imaginary) ‘boy’ Michael, the narrator, Chris’s out of wedlock seven-year-old child who recounts the story looking back on his childhood years in the summer of 1936 in Friel’s imaginary town Ballybeg, a remote part of County Donegal in Ireland.

The play revolving around the chaotic lives of Mundy sisters living in the marginal space of the little town Ballybeg presents the relationship between religious identity and social change, which manifests itself through the clash or the blend between pagan and Christian elements, or the Dionysian and Apollonian forces in the shifting space of the 1930s Ireland. As the central locale of the play, Ballybeg is portrayed within its geographical constraints as a town occupying both physically and metaphorically a liminal position outside County Donegal, caught up in the wave of modernisation though preserving its traditions and culture. In the same vein, Friel’s characters, the Mundy household is depicted as placed amidst the changing world of Ballybeg and their responses to the circumstances of life in a society which controls their actions through religious oppression and dictation of societal norms as represented by the policies of the Catholic Church and the Irish Free State government. Against the persecution of the Church and the State, the Mundy sisters, however, have their revolutionary act: ‘the dance’ which stands for the subversion of the power and authority in Ballybeg which has long tried to structure the sisters’ space and define their identity, both of which are actually rendered as fluid and open to gradual resolution. The dance, most importantly, bespeaks independence and unity; transgression and transformation providing the sisters with a space of their own where they would re-define their identity and reclaim their subjectivity. I argue that reacting in their own ways to their changing circumstances and trying to orient themselves within as Ballybeg slides into modernisation, Friel’s characters go beyond the conventional depiction of human-place relations and emphasize the integral role of space and place as the grounds for negotiating with others. For all these reasons, this chapter explores the changing categories of space and place which bring together the individual and the community; the local and the global in the shifting space of Ballybeg and / of Ireland. To be able to address the significance of social relations and spatial structures in *Dancing at Lughnasa*, I will draw on Doreen Massey’s relational understanding of space with a special focus on her idea of “a global sense of place”

which applies to both Friel's portrayal of Ballybeg and his envisioning of Ireland and Irishness in progressive terms. Massey's emphasis on the conceptualization of space as formed out of relations between people and places, a plane of multiple possibilities which is open and plural, and her insistence on the consideration of its temporal dimension as space-time help clarify the points Friel makes in the play with regard to space and society.

This chapter falls into four main sections which are not drawn by strict lines as there are many overlaps between the issues treated in each part and within the context of Massey's approach to space and place. The first part, narrated through the space Michael creates in his real-imagined narration, is devoted to the Mundy household and their relations in the structured social space of Ballybeg. This section is followed by the exploration of the architectural space of the Mundy house with a certain emphasis on the dialectics of inside and outside along with the concept of 'home.' To be able to show how Friel's depiction of the Mundy house breaks away with conventional understanding of home as a safe haven, in this section, along with Massey, I will employ Bachelard's ideas on house as the 'felicitous space' which he puts forward in *Poetics of Space* (1958). The subsequent part focuses on the frantic céili dance in the Mundy's cottage kitchen as the extended metaphor of the Mundy sisters' transformation in the play and as the Dionysian force which changes the way the Mundys relate to space and place in Ballybeg. The chapter concludes with some ideas on time-space compression and globalization with regard to the changing status of Ballybeg and Ireland, drawing attention to Mundy sisters' place in society and Ballybeg's / Ireland's place in the globalized space.

#### 4.1. Through the Illusory Space of Michael's Narration: The Mundy Household

Dancing at Lughnasa opens and ends with Michael's monologue which introduces the Mundy household in their cottage outside Ballybeg and offers glance into their hard lives during the 1930s. The Mundy house is a place where depravity prevails alongside gaiety. Amidst all the daily chores like ironing, stitching, baking bread, feeding the chicken, and, despite having very little food to feed seven people, Mundy sisters have a great zest for life. Most of the time they know how to turn their

misery into happiness, and anguish vanishes in a puff of a Wild Woodbine cigarette or a fox-trot that Maggie constantly asks for to dance. In his opening speech, Michael recalls how their cottage kitchen was often filled with the lively beat when the sisters danced to the Irish dance music beaming to them from Dublin through the new wireless set Marconi. Giving themselves to the rhythm and movements, as Michael narrates, the Mundys would be “laughing – screaming! – like excited schoolgirls” (DL 8). Nonetheless, Michael’s depiction of the Mundy house with the wild exuberance of the dance is not exempt from troubles nor is it the exact representation of the “felicitous space” as described in Bachelard’s *Poetics of Space*. The dire condition of the Mundy house is coupled with the conservative policies of the Irish Free State and the Catholic Church which structure the sisters’ space and control their life through a variety of ostracizing doctrines regarding morality. On one hand, the house serves as a shelter, a site of safety and nurture for its vulnerable and marginal members – unmarried sisters, illegitimate child, and a missionary priest; on the other hand, it is a space where control and restriction reign. In a sense, the Mundy cottage with its anomalous members stands as a mirror image of Ireland with its socio-political issues of patriarchy, poverty, unemployment and emigration, denoting a place which is far from the ideal, rosy and cosy Free State of Eamon de Valera.<sup>20</sup>

The Mundys, living in a faraway cottage outside the village, can be considered both spatially and socially marginalised; still, the restraining modes of domination reach their so-called private space. Helen Lojek in “Dancing at Lughnasa and the Unfinished Revolution” defines this community that the sisters living in as “patriarchal” and “claustrophobic.” Drawing attention to the male-dominated world of

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<sup>20</sup> In his St. Patrick Day’s Speech in 1943, Eamon de Valera explains the characteristics of the state which he was trying to establish. The speech was actually a radio address celebrating the 50th anniversary of the language-revivalist Gaelic League:

The ideal Ireland that we would have, the Ireland that we dreamed of, would be the home of a people who valued material wealth only as a basis for right living, of a people who, satisfied with frugal comfort, devoted their leisure to the things of the spirit – 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 contest of athletic youths and the laughter of happy maidens, whose firesides would be forums for the wisdom of serene old age. The home, in short, of a people living the life that God desires that men should live. (1)

Ballybeg and the sisters' position within it, Lojek states, "Endowed with wisdom and crankiness and often with grace, these women [Mundy sisters] neither know nor keep their 'place' but must exist within a patriarchal, claustrophobic society" (79). With Lojek's claim in mind, it is here that we might refer to a point made by Lefebvre regarding power and social space. In the *Production of Space*, Lefebvre contends that spaces are produced through social practice and that those secreted spaces function "as a tool of thought and action;" therefore, they are both "means of production" and "means of control," and of "domination" and "power" (26). In this sense, various dynamics constituting social life such as typical family structures, sexual relations, class differences and divisions of labour are all operated by space and on space. Spaces are thus filled with ideological concerns and practice which arrange the way how human beings think, act, and react in society.

In the same way, it can be argued that in *Dancing at Lughnasa* the space around Mundys is reconstituted as the "space of power" in Lefebvrian sense (240). Power operates in the play in many different ways the most overt of which is in the form of religious oppression that manifests itself through the relationship between the parish priest and the Mundy sisters. The priest never appears in person in the play, but he stands as a symbol of the policies of the Catholic Church and the State which defined the roles of citizens in society through constitutions and regulations in the 1930s. As the most dominant male figure of the play, the priest uses his power to dismiss Kate, the eldest sister, from her teaching job upon learning that her brother Father Jack, the once-famous local priest in Donegal, betrayed the Christian faith in the colonies and adopted the pagan beliefs of the Ryangan tribes. "He can hardly look me in the eye" (DL 28), Kate says, when she describes her encounter with the priest in the village. Although the sisters attribute this behaviour to his being a temperamental man, the priest actually avoids Kate out of disrespect and religious intolerance. He, in a way, disregards Kate's subjectivity in social space and locates himself on a different plane, in the abstract, imaginary space of the Catholic clergy and the State. The priest's motives clearly indicate that in the world of the Catholic clergy there is no room for Father Jack's pagan rituals or any forbearance for difference. As a result, terminating Kate's employment, the priest excludes her from public space and pushes her to the

rural margins of Ballybeg, her domestic space, condemning the Mundy family to further economic deprivation.

The priest's position in the play highlights how the Catholic clergy always exerted power on society, especially on small communities like Ballybeg, by focusing on what is right and what is wrong for the public. They dictated certain policies regarding knowledge and truth, and they disregarded any alternative forms of knowledge in society. This idea can be consequentially linked to Doreen Massey's claim about the "geographies of knowledge production" in Western history. Massey explains that many examples in Western history such as the spatial seclusion of the desert for early Christian monks, the appearance of monasteries for the privileged class and the medieval universities demonstrate the spatial structuring of place for knowledge production and science. Such places operate on a Cartesian dualism, a separation of Mind from Body and an understanding of science as detachment from worldliness and worldly things. They, then, become materialised through a politics of spatialisation and become instrumental in gender conditioning of societies. The places of clergy paid attention to the production of knowledge which they conceived to be the only "legitimate," "recognized," and "authorised" form. However, as it is suggested by Massey, there have always been alternative forms of knowledge in diverse places, lying beyond the walls of the villages in the distant parts of the desert and in the peripheries (For Space 144-5). The parish priest in the play testifies to such contested knowledge production history of Christianity. He would not tolerate any alternative forms of knowledge and truth such as the pagan culture and practice symbolized by Father Jack's African rituals or the ceremonial practices of the Festival of Lughnasa.

A former chaplain to the British Army in World War I, Father Jack has recently returned from Africa. After spending twenty-five years in a leper colony in Uganda, Jack now finds it difficult to remember the words in English to give an account of his experience in the colonies. He has lost his Irish accent and become a native speaker of Swahili, the language of his tribe in Uganda. Most of the times, the Mundy sisters help him in his search for words, a painful process which sometimes takes the form of "shuffling from room to room" (DL 8). In one occasion, Maggie even suggests using

name tags for objects to assist him in his process of recovering his language: “Put them on his windowsill with a wee card – ‘ROSES’ – so that the poor man’s head won’t be demented looking for the word” (DL 59). Moreover, Father Jack’s memories about Ballybeg and the spatial features of the Mundy cottage are also amiss, appearing “like a photograph” in his mind (DL 60). One day, when he intrudes on the sisters’ privacy in the kitchen by entering through the wrong door, he excuses himself feeling ashamed: “I don’t remember the – the architecture? – the planning? – what’s the word? – the lay-out! – I don’t recollect the lay-out of this home ... scarcely” (DL 30). In a way, the poor wavering image of the Mundy house in Father Jack’s mind becomes a synecdoche for the lost memories of the Mundy family and, in a broader sense, the Irish culture with its ruined legacy.

Nonetheless, language and memory are not the only barriers to Father Jack’s relation to Ballybeg and the Mundy household, he is, above all, experiencing a cultural loss. Having abandoned the principles of Catholic clergy as well as the British colonial ideal and having converted into African faith, Father Jack figure in the play as “the Irish Outcast” (DL 62) in Uganda and an outsider in Ballybeg actually epitomizes a cultural translation, a process of going native. In one sense, Father Jack, the leper with his shattered body and memory, with his “incomprehensible speech” and “inappropriate behaviour” along with a certain touch of the ‘abject’ due to his being described as “shrunk and jaundiced with malaria” (DL 8) embodies Julia Kristeva’s notion of the ‘foreigner’ (*Strangers to Ourselves* 6). Like Kristeva’s foreigner, there are not any markers or reference points to help Father Jack locate and emplace himself. His space is “a moving train, a plane in flight, the very transition that precludes stopping. . . . His time? The time of a resurrection that remembers death and what happened before, but misses the glory of being beyond: merely the feeling of a reprieve, of having gotten away” (*Strangers to Ourselves* 7-8). Moving on a shifting space, a slippery ground, and surrounded by shifting signifiers, Father Jack becomes a stranger in his own country and to his own culture and society. However, he embraces this situation wholeheartedly because such space of loss actually defines and strengthens his personal identity. Even though he cannot articulate himself through language, he believes that there will always be other possibilities, extralinguistic

means to communicate effectively: “And you can always point, Margaret, can’t you? ... / or make signs / or dance” (DL 63). Through this remark, Father Jack refers to the sacred spaces of ritual and religious ceremonies where people create alternative spaces through dancing, making some gestures and singing songs with no linguistic restrictions on speech.

Eventually, when Father Jack starts relating to his space through the alternative spaces he creates in his mind recalling the rituals of the Ryanagan tribes, he comes to restore both his lost words and memories. Whenever he is with the sisters, he talks about the “sacred and mysterious” practices of Ryangan people (DL 61), which opens the play for a discussion of the subjective space of the ritual experience. Among the many festivals specific to Ryangan people Father Jack focuses on two harvest festivals celebrated in the same period as the Festival of Lughnasa in Ireland, the Festival of the New Yam and the Festival of the Sweet Cassava, both of which are dedicated to a female deity, “Our Great Goddess of the Earth, Obi” (DL 73). During these festivals, as father Jack recounts, people make ritual sacrifices like fowls or goats to please the “spirits of [the] tribe” (DL 73) and thank them for the harvest. More significantly, in these festivals what begins as a ritual dance with chants and incantations grows into a “secular celebration” with the whole community dancing:

FATHER JACK. Well, they begin very formally, very solemnly with the ritual sacrifice of a fowl or a goat or a calf down at the bank of the river. Then the ceremonial cutting and anointing of the first yams and the first cassava; and we pass these round in huge wooden bowls. Then the incantation – chant, really – that expresses our gratitude and that also acts as a rhythm or percussion for the ritual dance. And then, when the thanksgiving is over, the dance continues. And the interesting thing is that it grows naturally into a secular celebration; so that almost imperceptibly the religious ceremony ends and the community celebration takes over. And that part of the ceremony is a real spectacle. We light fires round the periphery of the circle; and we paint our faces with coloured powders; and we sing local songs; and we drink palm wine. And then we dance – and dance – and dance – children, men, women, most of them lepers, many of them with misshapen limbs, with missing limbs – dancing, believe it or not, for days on end! It is the most wonderful sight you have ever seen! (Laughs.) That palm wine! They dole it out in horns! You lose all sense of time! (DL 74)

Father Jack’s description of the tribal dance with all the lepers participating regardless of any difference in terms of age, sex or status draws attention to the importance of

subjective space in the ritualistic experience. Through dancing, the lepers achieve a spiritual wholeness by sharing the ravishment of the dance and the palm wine as well as the subjectivities of other lepers present. Although leprosy made these people dismembered, they still have a great zest for life, “capacity for fun” (DL 74) and enthusiasm for carrying out their established practices. These festivals also lead one to think that England’s intention to dismember African culture and religion through missionary work did not practically work among the tribes as “the Ryangans have always been faithful to their own beliefs” (DL 73). They have kept their rites intact by sticking to their cultural ceremonies during which the line between the sacred and the profane is blurred creating a realm of multiplicity. In this interstitial space people are offered with a chance to experience an epic wholeness and produce a space of their own where they ‘lose all sense of time.’ As Jack’s description reveals, unlike the Catholic clergy which divides a strict line between what is religious and what is secular in Ballybeg, religious belief and practice in Ryangan tribes liberate the souls to a point that people attain a-temporality in space. Such carnivalistic atmosphere promoted by African culture and ritual practice, therefore, embodies a kind of space which cannot be located, domineered and violated by governmental or religious authorities. Here is a space where meaning is not fixed through dominant discourses, but it is always created anew through “interrelations” which, in turn, produces alternative spaces as in Massey’s relational understanding of space. Moreover, the seasonal and cyclical nature of such festivals and the repeated customary performances point out the open nature of space which is “never finished, never closed” but always in “the process of being made” and is “a simultaneity of stories-so-far” (For Space 9). Accordingly, with Father Jack, Friel depicts a character who orients himself outside Ballybeg community and seeks out possibilities in other spaces with other people and other stories.

As opposed to Father Jack who is acquainted with alternative beliefs and embodied practices, elder sister Kate conforms to the accepted behaviours and established practices in Ballybeg because she wants to belong in a society which is characterized by exclusionist codes. She often gets nervous whenever she listens to the stories of African ceremonies and wants to be reassured saying, “But these aren’t Christian ceremonies, Jack, are they?” (DL 73). Father Jack, however, keeps looking

for words and acts to reconnect himself with the rituals and festivals of Ryangan people in Uganda regardless of their ambiguous reception in Ireland and the Mundy house. For instance, when Kate tries to persuade him to say Mass again, Jack consents to do it in his own African way by “striking a huge iron gong” and making people “gather on the common in the middle of the village” as he used to do when he was with the Ryangans (DL 72-3). Kate is daunted by the idea that Jack has renounced his Christian faith and turned to African beliefs and practices. The reason why she is devastated by his state most is that Catholic church embodies a monumental space for Kate which she looks up to and places great value on. In Lefebvre’s definition, monumental space “offer[s] each member of a society an image of that membership, an image of his or her social visage. It thus constitute[s] a collective mirror more faithful than any personal one” (220). In this social space, as Lefebvre elaborates, everyone [takes] its right and proper place “albeit, naturally, under the conditions of a generally accepted Power and a generally accepted Wisdom” (220). Associated with Lefebvre’s statement above, it can be claimed that Christianity provides Kate with a sense of belonging through which she feels herself connected and accepted within her community. Ironically enough, while the sisters complain about their old mirror and long for a new one: [“When are we going to get a decent mirror to see ourselves in?” (DL 9)], Kate prefers perceiving herself through the image created and imposed by the Catholic clergy because she thinks that Christian religion and propriety will enable her to maintain stability in her life and in the Mundy house. The rationale behind her motives is, if they all behaved in the way the authority requires, they would not be ridiculed or ostracized but granted admission to society. Accordingly, she constantly reminds the household the norms of good behaviour in Christian religion and the necessity of abiding by its rules: “If you[Maggie] knew your prayers as well as you know the words of those aul pagan songs!” (DL 55-56). Through such religious and moral control in the house, Kate aims to secure the Mundys’ anomalous social position as unmarried sisters with a converted priest in trust, stricken by poverty, living on the margins of a town which is caught between tradition and modernity.

It is not only Father Jack’s beliefs or Maggie’s pagan songs that Kate fights against but she also cannot bear any leisure activity outside the teachings of Christian

religion. A case in point is the Celtic harvest festival Lughnasa<sup>21</sup> and the events revolving around it. The Festival of Lughnasa<sup>22</sup> was a harvest ceremony celebrated in Ireland in early August to mark the beginning of autumn and harvest season. Taking its name from the Celtic God Lugh who was thought to be the provider of crops and fruits, the festival was an important Celtic tradition. In Brian Friel's (Post)Colonial Drama, F.C. McGrath notes that the Festival of Lughnasa played such a significant role in Gaelic life that Christian authorities could not forbid it but consented to its celebration along with Christian rites (236). The festival was usually held outdoors, in sites with natural beauties like lakes, wells, river banks and hills which are particularly relevant to the play. In the time of the festival, people performed fire rituals, and they made offerings to Lugh who would be returning the favours by providing bilberries in large quantities in the season. Most importantly, it was customary to dance in the back hills during these festivals, a significant point which provides the background for Dancing at Lughnasa.

The idea of Kate's conservatism and her intolerance for beliefs and practices outside the traditional Christian religion runs through the play, but it is best revealed when she refuses to allow the sisters to go to the harvest dance in the Festival of Lughnasa. Kate thinks that "dancing at our time of day" as "women of our years" is completely an insane suggestion as dancing is "for young people with no duties and no responsibilities and nothing in their heads but pleasure" (DL 24-5). As a "proper woman" (DL 7) Kate often reminds the household that this is strictly "a Christian home, a Catholic home!" where pagan practices should never be mentioned (DL 29). Her views, whereas, are not shared by any of the sisters, especially by Agnes who protests openly: "I want to dance, Kate. It's the festival of Lughnasa. I'm only thirty-five. I want to dance." (DL 24)

Kate's reasons for refusing her sisters' suggestion is manifold, but she is mostly concerned with the public image of themselves: "Do you want the whole countryside to be laughing at us? – women of our years? – mature women, dancing? What's come

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<sup>21</sup> Brian Friel's source for the play was Maire MacNeill's book *The Festival of Lughnasa*, (1962).

<sup>22</sup> Also, referred to as "Lá Lughnasa" in the play.

over you all? And this is Father Jack's home – we must never forget that – ever. No, no, we're going no harvest dance" (DL 25). Kate fears that everyone in Ballybeg would laugh at them and even condemn them because of their age and marital status. Most importantly, she thinks that it would be improper to go dancing and enjoy themselves as practicing Catholics. In fact, as Anna McMullan claims, "in her desire to maintain respectability, [Kate] has internalized the contemporary strict monitoring of the female body as icon of national honour" ("In Touch" 92). That's why she demonstrates a strong subjection to the moral codes of Catholic clergy and the policies of the Free State.

Another significant reason for Kate's raising objections to the sisters' festival plans is that, to Kate, people attending those festivals and practicing pagan rituals are "savages" from the "back hills" (DL 26). Therefore, she wishes to distance herself and the Mundy sisters from the back hills where pagan practices are performed. Kate actually shuns everything that is not stable or settled. It is through order and control she clings to life and keep up the grounds. In that sense, anything that may go against or threaten her overall stability like the unorthodox views of Father Jack and the unruly behaviours of the sisters throws her into confusion and makes her distressed. Most significantly, all this talk of the Lughnasa festival, the uncanny space of the back hills and the fluidity of the pagan dancing bodies also unsettle her. In her article examining the public and private space in *Dancing at Lughnasa*, Ojrzynska asserts that while the village with its restrictive principles of Catholic clergy represents the public sphere, the back hills stand for the space of "hidden, subconscious tendencies and desires" of people in Ballybeg, materialized in pagan rites and ceremonies ("In Ballybeg" 300-1). As the back hills of the harvest festivals have not yet been touched by institutional rules and regulations, people here live spontaneously, dance and enjoy life to the fullest, feeling no sense of constraint. In that sense, it is this wilderness, the uncultivated and ungraspable nature of the back hills as well as the possible uncontrollable personalities inhabiting that space that makes Kate uneasy.

In *Place and Space in Modern Fiction*, Wesley A. Kort offers a categorization of novelistic space through various divisions one of which is cosmic or comprehensive space defined as space "sharply contrasted to spaces constructed and controlled by

humans” (151). Kort’s contention might prove an alternative way of approaching the significance of the back hills in the play because these highlands as off-targets for human control seem to be functioning as comprehensive space for Kate. Such kind of space is not characterized by “specificity” or “predictability” but “encountered as unexpected” which renders it “both a threat and a gift” (151). The hills with their unpredictable nature pose a threat for Kate whereas they become a gift for Rose who describes the site as a “very peaceful place up there” (DL 90) when she visits the place with her lover Danny Bradley. Rose here frees herself from the restrictive control of Ballybeg society and the overprotective parenting of the Mundy sisters, and she abandons herself to nature. She enjoys the tranquillity of the hills and the company of Danny Bradley. As Kort claims, “comprehensive space also can allow human beings . . . to feel a degree of kinship with one another and even with all living creatures. This is because . . . comprehensive space, unlike social space, is not perceived as structured by lines that include and exclude people” (151-52). In a sense, all-inclusive space of the back hills makes Rose feel whole giving her a sense of belonging unlike the social space of Ballybeg which ignores her subjective experience.

As opposed to Rose, Kate’s notion of the back hills is of ambiguity and uncertainty which makes her shun that space particularly rather than encouraging her become a space invader and cross the line that the patriarchy has drawn. Friel also reinforces this feeling of obscurity with the story of Sweeney boy which runs throughout the play as a mythological motif calling into question the possibility of telling the truth. The ambivalence regarding the Sweeney boy incident is that no one knows for sure what happened to him in the back hills. When Kate first brings the news from the town, she tells the sisters that “The word’s not good on that young Sweeney boy from the back hills. He was anointed last night” (DL 28). Whereas Rose relates the story to the Festival of Lughnasa and its common practices claiming that the Sweeney boy was doing nothing but dancing:

ROSE. First they light a bonfire beside a spring well. Then they dance round it. Then they drive their cattle through the flames to banish the devil out of them. And this year there was an extra big crowd of boys and girls. And they were off their heads with drink. And young Sweeney’s trousers caught fire and he went up like a torch. That’s what happened. (DL 29)

There are different versions of the story reported by each sister, but the truth is the boy was injured during the Festival of Lughnasa while performing a ritual sacrifice with a goat and leaping over the flames, which Kate speculates as “some silly prank up in the hills,” in fact “some devilish thing” (DL 28, 56). However, contrary to what Kate has told, Sweeney boy was not anointed, but he is “on the mend” and “is going to live” as revealed by Rose and Chris’s accounts (DL 90, 93). With this detail, Friel hints at the possibilities that the hills offer, which might be linked to Massey’s claims relating to what space gives one, “the element of surprise, the unexpected, the other.” (For Space 112)

Even though the Mundy family lives on the outskirts of Ballybeg and far from County Donegal, the power and surveillance of the Catholic Church and the State intrude upon their space in various forms. Social structuring of Ballybeg deters the sisters from acting against the authority; therefore, what determines their social practice in space is mostly related to the expectation of the authority. Both their discourse and actions conceal how they have been disciplined through power and how they have internalized the structuring of their world. Such spatial control and supervision undoubtedly disrupt the dynamics of the Mundy home. However, it also brings interaction and transformation to the characters’ world through which they cross the boundaries towards their ‘place’ in society as exemplified in their elusive moments when change happens, a certain ‘line of flight’ as in the sense of Deleuze and Guattari.

As the Mundy sisters waver between displacement and emplacement against authority and dominion in Ballybeg, Michael, the adult narrator, narrates their story in a retrospective fashion, which highlights the relationship between narrative and space in the play. Michael is not situated within the same temporal frame as his story. The child Michael, on the other hand, is located in story-time whose consciousness and memories as a seven-year-old child living with the Mundy family contour the narrative. In McMullan’s words, Michael is “both absent and present, then and now, real and imagined, originating yet other.” (“In Touch” 91)

Michael’s double role on stage as the adult narrator and the imaginary boy creates an unsettling atmosphere in the play because like his fractured self the story he is struggling to patch together is also fragmentary. In *Theatre and Globalization*,

Patrick Lonergan, drawing attention to Michael's position as an unreliable narrator whose hazy memories blur the distinction between appearance and reality in the play, questions the veracity of Michael's account. According to Lonergan, Michael's depictions and Friel's stage directions often contradict each other creating multiple versions and representations of truth. Therefore, the play is an example of the "impossibility of narrative control," and it foregrounds the power-laden nature of master narratives such as "imperialism, Catholicism, even Michael's monologue" (36-43). As Michael conveys a past account casting his mind back to his childhood, his narration creates certain gaps in the course of the play bordering on the contradictory tension between past and present, appearance and reality, fact and fiction as in Sweeney boy's case. In other words, like the tiny 'cracked mirror' hanging on the wall and its reflection in the Mundy house, Michael's narration is also distorting and digressive. Therefore, most of the times he leaves the audience in dark giving contradictory details about the Mundys and blurring the way they are represented. A clear example of this is that Father Jack's magnificent figure does not overlap with Michael's memory in which he is relegated to the status of a desperate man "shrunk and jaundiced with malaria" (DL 8). Similarly, in the end of the first act, Michael informs the audience that Gerry and Chris would dance once more in secret, yet "witnessed by the unseen sisters," which stood for an unofficial engagement for them (DL 65). However, in the second act, it is Agnes and Maggie with whom Gerry dances but not Chris. In that sense, that Michael's artistic vision and depiction run contradictory urges the audience to reside in imagination to cover the indeterminacy he creates in the narrative. Therefore, the reader is invited to make links and connections within the textual space to be able to relate the events and the characters to the spaces represented in the play.

Moreover, Michael not only distorts the sisters' account but also conceals the truth like how cruel he has been for all those years cutting loose from his aunts when he went away "in the selfish way of young men" (DL 107). A case in point is his recount of how he found aunt Rose and Agnes helpless dying in the streets of London. Michael narrates the wretched story of the two aunts following the scene where Rose returns home from the back hills, but the news comes not in the form of a revelation

but a statement: “And by the time I tracked them down – twenty-five years later, in London – Agnes was dead and Rose was dying in a hospice for the destitute in Southwark” (DL 91). Without previous thought or consideration, he combines the two stories creating an effect of alienation and allows no room for sympathy.

By leaving a question mark over Michael’s various memories and making his narrative waver between fact and fiction, Friel actually shows that his intention is not to impose a general view of Irish society in its transition or the characters in their transformation but to present people in relation to their social conditions in Ballybeg of the 1930s. Friel in that sense, as Richard Pine states, puts the audience “in touch not simply with a time but with a place” (The Diviner 273). Friel does not totally turn to past in a linear fashion but situates his narrator Michael in time-space through memories and historical references which have resonances of both past and present.

Christopher Murray drawing attention to the incongruous nature of Michael’s narrative argues that Michael’s account poses a threat to the realistic depiction of the lives of the Mundy sisters, which he relates to Friel’s method of shaping the truth (Theatre of Brian Friel 132-33). Friel forms the sisters’ story through Michael’s fixed paternal gaze and hazy memories owing “nothing to fact” (DL 107). Based on the subjective space he creates, Michael’s account, therefore, wavers between narration and fabrication, which in a way explains Friel’s attitude to the notion of “memory.” In his autobiographical broadcast “Self-Portrait” on the BBC, Friel explains that there exists a blurring line between fact and fiction when telling memories and offering an autobiographical account because “for some reason the mind has shuffled the pieces of verifiable truth and composed a truth of its own. For me it is a truth. And, because I acknowledge its particular veracity, it becomes a layer in my subsoil. It becomes part of me; ultimately it becomes me” (Friel 100-1). Friel believes that autobiographical accounts are not necessarily meant to be true or reliable, they can as well be composites, a blend of fact and fiction very much like Michael’s account of the Mundy family, a mosaic overlaid with fact and fiction, memories, and commentary.

It should be noted that the narrative pattern Michael follows in *Dancing at Lughnasa* in fact runs in parallel lines with Friel’s representation of the spaces of Ireland and specifically Ballybeg as open and always in a state of becoming. Like

Michael's narrative which builds upon contingency, Ballybeg is also conceptualised as a meeting place, an ongoing production rather than pre-given as in Massey's progressive sense of place. In this vein, narrative and space are interconnected in the play in the sense that both are fluid and ambiguous, and they are subject to change like the mutable geography of Ballybeg as presented by Friel in the play. Through Michael's zig zag narrative which digresses often while recounting the sisters' story, Friel undermines the possibility of a linear narrative in the Oedipal fashion. He emphasizes the significance of adopting alternative modes of narration in the same vein as he urges us to re-think Ireland and Irishness in plural forms. Moreover, Michael's twisting the truth and shaping his narrative in the subjective space of his memories shows how Friel problematizes and rejects the possibility of absolute universal truth thereby opening space for a re-conceptualization of Ireland as a space of openness and multiplicity. By undermining Michael's narrative authority Friel also draws attention to the impossibility of telling the truth and to the fact that like space truth is always mutable.

Another significant point to be noted regarding Michael's narrative is that Michael's story ends with the memory of the same spontaneous step-dance that he mentions in the prologue of the play, returning to that day of the summer of 1936. This circular style in narrative might be related to Friel's intention of discarding boundaries in narrative in the same way he rejects framing in social life. Friel in a way shows how certain rules, laws, regulations and perspectives cannot be taken as frames of reference in perceiving truth and communicating reality. Similarly, history cannot be taken as a frame of reference in shaping the nation or defining national identity. Like Michael's narration which blurs the distinction between fact and fiction, real and imagined, Ireland can be taken as a layered realm, a space bearing touches of its earlier forms overlaid by traces of the spatial trajectories through time but still has space for the new, altered, novel and the global.

#### 4.2. The Dialectics of Inside and Outside in the Mundy Cottage

Set in the famous Irish cottage kitchen, *Dancing at Lughnasa* seems to be reiterating the claims made earlier regarding Irish theatre and a nationalist sense of

place. However, rather than foregrounding the relationship between people and their places, Friel actually comes to undermine the very foundations of the notion of 'home' rendering it rather complex and fluid. The idea of home is thoroughly problematized in the play in the sense that Friel's representation of the Mundy house moves beyond the conventional portrayals of home as a 'felicitous space' as in Gaston Bachelard's *Poetics of Space*. For this reason, drawing on Bachelard's contentions regarding locations as places of intimacy and memory in the house, this section starts with an exploration of the Mundy house and the characters' lived experience within this inhabited space. It is then followed by a discussion on how the Mundy house as "a-place-called-home" in Massey's terms resists identification in the conventional sense as a source of belonging, identity, security and the embodiment of dreams.

In her "Introduction" to the edited essay collection *Women in Irish Drama*, Melissa Sihra claims that the interior features of home in Irish drama has long been associated with matters regarding family and nation as described in Eamon de Valera's Article 41. In accordance with this, certain issues such as marriage, parenthood, motherhood and childbirth were publicly encouraged, while 'home' as a concept has been marginalized in drama as the uncanny space evoking insecurity and menace (2-3). What Sihra emphasizes relating to the concept of home in Irish drama actually resonates with Friel's depiction of the Mundy house. The domestic space of the Mundys is highly vulnerable to threats and constant intrusion by Catholic clergy and the encroaching modernisation, which together turn it into a heterotopian space in Foucauldian terms. The intervention of these forces has grave repercussions for the entire Mundy family but specifically for Kate as the only wage-earner.

Mundy sisters, with the exception of Kate, spend most of their time in their domestic space dealing with the household routine, much in the same way the Constitution has demanded. Unlike the other sisters, Kate is granted access to the public space and the privileged realm of men thanks to her post in the local school. As stated before, Kate strives to be a good Christian believing in the importance of responsibility and propriety. As the keeper of the family, she constantly instructs and the sisters imposing Christian values and manners on them. Through her imperious demands, the teachings of Catholicism pervade the Mundy house affecting the ways

how the characters behave in a society on constant flow. In the end, no matter how hard Kate tries to hold the house together by working hard and imposing “good order,” she understands their space is losing its stability and they are all standing on a shaky ground:

KATE. You work hard at your job. You try to keep the home together. You perform your duties as best you can – because you believe in responsibilities and obligations and good order. And then suddenly, suddenly you realize that hair cracks are appearing everywhere; that control is slipping away; that the whole thing is so fragile it can’t be held together much longer. It’s all about to collapse (DL 56).

As Kate’s outcry conveys, even though she struggles hard to emplace the Mundy family within society, she fails since the chaos of the changing times encroach on their humble lives. Positioned marginally in Ballybeg, the Mundy sisters experience the domination of their space by religious doctrines, technological advancements, power and politics to a great extent. However, they also try to subvert the dominant discourse and re-appropriate their space to attain wholeness as exemplified in their dance in the domestic space, of their cottage kitchen.

The Mundy house with its traditional kitchen occupies the centrepiece in the play as the spot where the majority of the action takes place. The sisters spend most of their time in this kitchen which serves as a multifunctional space where they cook, iron, chat, listen to radio and dance. Because it is the sisters’ inhabited space the kitchen provides an insight into their lives and reveals certain clues relating to their psyche. As Bachelard notes, like many basic but significant images the house is also related with human soul, it is “a psychic state” and “it bespeaks intimacy” (168-69). Therefore, it is only in this ‘private’ domain that the sisters’ personality comes to light most giving way to their unvoiced thoughts. Moreover, the physical condition of the house appears as a significant factor in the characters’ approach to and experience of life. There is a womanly order in the house much in the form of a Victorian domestic space but with moderate, typical country furnishings such as table and chairs, an oil lamp, iron range and a turf box. In the stage directions, Friel also draws attention to the relationship between the characters and their humble space: “[B]ecause this is the home of five women the austerity of the furnishings is relieved by some gracious

touches – flowers, pretty curtains, an attractive dresser arrangement, etc.” Nevertheless, although the furniture fittings and other decorative accessories in the kitchen space provide a sense of home, the place is surrounded by walls, windows, and doors which set limits on the characters.

There are two doors and two windows in the Mundy kitchen. While one of the doors and the windows look to the front of the house the others view the “neat but uncultivated” garden as described in the directions. These architectural spaces play a significant role in *Dancing at Lughnasa* regarding the characters’s relation to their space. These spaces function in different ways in the play. First and foremost, they let the outside world enter into the house and become a means for the sisters to experience the chance of space. Providing the infiltration of the world outside into their world, these doors and windows give the sisters a sense of inclusion as well as exclusion. In most parts of the play, the Mundy sisters are spotted at the kitchen window looking out, thinking, and observing the world changing together with their lives in 1930s Ireland. In that sense, this small kitchen window becomes the sisters’ gateway to reality which they grasp gradually. Through its limited view, they “fleetingly glance at modernity, hope and possibility” (Sihra 3). As they both struggle to stick to the old ways of tradition and integrate themselves into the modern ways of the outside world, the kitchen becomes their private site of contemplation, action, and transgression. Accordingly, it is only in this intimate space framed with its doors and windows that the audience is granted a chance to witness the sisters’ lives fold and unfold as they look out facing the world, its promises, problems, and paternal figures.

The implication and significance of the doors and windows are manifold in the play. First of all, they can be regarded as threshold spaces which reveal a dialectics between the private and the public, openness and closure, departure and arrival, most importantly inside and outside. These boundary lines both bridge and disrupt the link between the characters and the outside world rendering it possible to have an insight into the characters’s relationship with their space and with each other which can initially be traced in their relations with Michael.

It is through the small kitchen window in the Mundy cottage that the sisters witness Michael grow up and complete making his kites. In the course of the play,

Michael is often seen outside, in the garden, fashioning the kites that will fly him to America when the time comes. Michael never shares the interior domestic space of the Mundy house with the sisters but spends most of his time in the garden or in the vicinity away from the troubles of the family. The garden, which the kitchen door views with its open space, therefore, becomes Michael's site of retreat and belonging where he feels most comfortable and liberated. Since there are no attics or cellars in the Mundy house in which he will be granted some privacy, Michael prefers to escape to the garden or the old well which is a possible site for Lughnasa festival. When the sisters cannot see him through the window they often get worried wondering where he might be. As his mother often complains, "He always vanishes when there's work to be done" in the house (DL 104). Like his father Gerry Evans, Michael is also mobile, and he belongs to the public sphere of men. Even though he can never get the 'manly' black bicycle his father promises to bring to him, he completes designing his own grinning faced kites by the end of the play, which is a sign of his passion for mobility and freedom.

Michael's constant movement in space, however, calls into question his relationship with his mother and the aunts as well as the living space of the Mundy house. Because Michael spends most of his time outside away from the house he only remains as a distant voice within the story. Rather than an insider relating to the "cosy space of the cottage kitchen," he appears as a free spirit wandering around. As Gerry Smyth notes, "in a typical patriarchal society such as Northern Ireland ..., the male's life is measured in terms of the increasing distance from the hearth he shared in childhood with mother" (Space 154). Smyth further adds, hearth in Irish cottage was often regarded as the core of the house where physical movement and psychological state were coordinated (Space 154). In that sense, like the mother who is regarded as the heart of the nation in the Constitution, the hearth is also considered to be the core of the house. However, Michael never experiences the warmth of the kitchen, the smell of the turf, or the smoke from the fire nor does he share the cosy retreat of the fireplace with his mother. His detachment from the family as a boy repeats itself in adulthood when he departs for America in search of a new life leaving his mother and the aunts in destitute. After all, as in the words of his mother, "Nobody can vanish quicker than

that Michael fellow when you need him” (DL 94). Moreover, since the play does not give any insight into Michael’s experience with the intimate, living space of the house except the day he witnessed the sisters’ frantic dance, his relationship with the sisters also becomes questionable. Even though the sisters all care for Michael and try to develop a close relationship with him, there is no clear indication of his attachment to them as a boy. As his narration reveals, he cannot interact with his mother or the aunts properly except a few instances of exchanging words. As a result of this, his experience of the house remains on a physical level never attaining a homely quality in the conventional sense.

Michael’s spending time outside the house and building his life accordingly foreshadows this loose relationship with the family and with Ireland. In the end, in an effort to find a securer place than the already shattering Mundy house he crosses the threshold and abandons these women with no initial intention of return. However, the place keeps returning to him as an elusive childhood memory which he struggles hard to grasp and repress. It is understood later on that he has always considered himself lucky to have immigrated to America and lived a life of his own. His aloof narration makes it plain that he had no regrets about life nor did he have any choice in those years of economic crisis. Like the most men in his country, during the 1940s and 1950s, Michael also had to leave Ireland for a new life overseas. Employment opportunities were low while mass emigration was as high as it had been during the Great Irish Famine years in the 1850s. In this sense, Michael’s going away, crossing the doors of the Mundy house and the frontiers of Ballybeg much in the tradition of the Irish young men epitomizes the spirit of those long years of emigration and spatial mobility. The sisters would have never guessed that the kites with their grinning faces would take Michael away as they observed him through the window glass in a blur.

On the other hand, the same window welcomes Gerry Evans to Mundys’ life as he walks up the lane towards the house one day in that summer of 1936. In an attempt to have a glimpse of him, the sisters all rush to the small window and cast a brief look at him who becomes a psychic space for them evoking desire and sexuality. However, as Gerry enters through the left door with his exuberant style, the sisters all pretend to be totally uninterested in his existence. Later on, they anxiously watch Gerry

and Chris dance round the garden before Gerry also dances Agnes and Maggie in the second act. On the surface, Gerry brings some colour to the mundane life of the Mundy sisters with his jokes and flirting suggestive of ball-room dances. Nevertheless, his fickle nature embodied in his rhetorical question “Would I tell you a lie?” (DL 49), disrupts Chris’s emotional balance. As Kate complains about his unexpected first Ballybeg visit and says: “You see, that’s what a creature like Mr. Evans does: appears out of nowhere and suddenly poisons the atmosphere in the whole house–” (DL 55). In fact, Gerry becomes a plane of possibility for all the sisters whom they admire and look up to except Kate who calls him “that Evans creature” (DL 53). No matter how much Kate hates the way Gerry invades their space, it is Kate herself that encourages Chris to face him boldly and meet him, but ‘outside.’ She even agrees to offer him a place for the night upon his unexpected visit: “Of course ask him in. And give the creature his tea. And stay the night if he wants to. (firm again) But in the outside loft. And alone” (DL 42). Kate consents to Gerry’s stay in the Mundy cottage on condition that he sleeps in the room outside the house. She does not want to host him inside their private space because she regards him as a threat to the stability of the Mundy family. Gerry, with his too much mobility and fluid nature appears as a source of menace and annoyance for the sisters, especially for Kate. For this reason, she wants to exclude Gerry from their lives keeping him away from the threshold of the Mundy house. By refusing to call him by his Christian name but “creature,” and “animal,” Kate in a way erases his identity (DL 53). She simply cannot bear Gerry’s existence because Gerry has the potential to disrupt the order she has long been trying to keep in the house. He is a drifter, a dancer and a dreamer who is ready to “fight for godless communism” in Spain (DL 80). With his too much mobility, sensuality and no “sense of duty” (DL 55), Gerry stands as an anti-thesis to everything Kate tries to uphold. Accordingly, Kate does not want to allow him cross the threshold of their ‘private space,’ the cottage kitchen. Nonetheless, Gerry slips away like the way he sneaked up on their lives years ago. When he finally sails for Spain to fight for “democracy” (DL 80) in that summer, he would never return as the same Gerry, the dance teacher. As Michael tells, he gets wounded on the leg in Barcelona and ends up with restricted mobility. He never enjoys

his newly gained epithet as the veteran and dies in solitude in his family home in Wales.

Another possible interpretation of the function of this small kitchen window in the play is that it becomes a psychic shelter for the characters, especially for Maggie, where she retreats to either to remember or to forget. The stage directions often describe Maggie at the kitchen window either standing or looking out. For instance, in the scene in which Kate breaks the news that Bernie O'Donnell, their childhood friend, has returned to town married with children, the window serves as a refuge for Maggie from the vexing atmosphere of the room. Upon hearing the exciting story of Bernie O'Donnell, Maggie goes silent and withdraws to the window ledge. It grieves her to know plainly that she has submitted to her already-prescribed life with no prospects of getting married. She has repressed her desire and passion to such a great extent that the thought of marriage comes only through sadness or within a joke she shared with Father Jack, not even as a dream. She then hides her face from the sisters and gazes out in an effort to avoid being gazed upon. Seeing the reflection of her image on the glass, she faces her past and thinks about her present situation and her future. At that moment, her being is confronted with the world making her choose between being here or there. Following this moment of contemplation, Maggie recounts a memory of a Sunday dance she went with Bernie O'Donnell and Brian McGuinness with whom she was then infatuated. Overcome with bittersweet nostalgia for the past days, she "stands motionless, staring out of the window, seeing nothing" (DL 35) because she understands that the past had moved on like the bikes that took them to dance on that summer night. In another occasion, Maggie avoids looking out the window because what she sees outside gives as much pain as what she feels within. When Kate and Maggie are watching Chris's dance with Gerry, Kate draws an analogy between her dance and Bernie O'Donnell's: "She's as beautiful as Bernie O'Donnell any day, isn't she?" (DL 53). Upon hearing this, Maggie becomes upset, she moves away from the window and comes to a standstill not daring to look out. Through the small kitchen window opening to the world outside, Maggie learns to bear the burden of the past and abide with the present. In this threshold space, which bears the pain of both inside and outside, Maggie understands the difficulty of crossing the boundaries and finding her

place in society. Therefore, she always stares out the window because she is afraid to open it, and she is paralyzed by a sense of passivity which she has kept throughout her life.

Unlike Maggie, Rose is more courageous to go beyond the boundaries and step into the outside world. As she crosses the garden with a poppy in her hands on her return from her adventure with Danny Bradley in the back hills, the sisters all scrutinize her anxiously through the window and the back door. Rose is not aware that she is being watched because her mind is preoccupied with thoughts of love, probably with the echoes of the word “Rosebud” (DL 90) in the way Danny Bradley calls her. Rose is “simple,” a girl wearing wellingtons despite the warm weather, as Friel describes her in the stage directions. Nevertheless, she is bold enough to meet Danny Bradley against the sisters’ wishes and defy Kate’s order in the Mundy house. Rose’s resistance to the representation of the dominant ideology at home and outside is so open that even Kate cannot say anything but grumbles upon Rose’s revelation about her venture in the back hills: “What has happened to this house? Mother of God, will we ever be able to lift our heads ever again ...?” (DL 90). On the day Rose meets Danny Bradley, she already knows that she is entering the unknown and that she has to cross the boundaries of the Mundy house and Ballybeg to achieve wholeness. She goes to the other side of Ballybeg, to the hills where she embraces nature and its possibilities. As they wonder around, they see the remnants of the Lughnasa fires some of which are still in flames, and Danny tells him the details of the Lughnasa festival and the story of the Sweeney boy. For Rose the back hills symbolize temptation and sexual fulfilment which she can only experience through crossing the back door of the Mundy house. She goes across this threshold space with hope that something might change, but when she comes back she understands that outside is equally cruel as inside and nothing changes except the person itself. The play does not give any details of what happened to Rose in the back hills, but the stage directions imply that there has been a considerable change: Her “face reveals nothing – but nothing is being deliberately concealed” (DL 87) as she has been seduced in the back hills.

When Ballybeg takes its place in the globalized industry with a new knitting company, Rose is faced with another disappointment. She and Agnes lose their income

they make out of knitting socks for Vera McLaughlin, the knitting agent. They acknowledge the fact that they no longer will have to worry about knitting twenty-four pairs of gloves in a week. Therefore, they depart for London and start anew only to end up in further deprivation. Their passage between the two states, the beginning and the end, is no rosy, as they experience a great deal of hardship from cleaning public toilettes to sleeping in doorways. Leaving Ballybeg brings more misery to them than staying since their circumstances go even worse. In the last scene, Michael tells how Rose and Agnes died as poverty-stricken and how the others who stayed in Ballybeg carried on their lives with no joy. Through these details, Friel draws attention to how the boundaries and thresholds in the Mundys' life form, strengthen, or control their relationships with the world as they attempt to negotiate with place.

Windows and doors have always been laden with a variety of symbolic meanings from sense of liberty, mystery, anxiety to control and restraint. More importantly they are considered as threshold spaces where there is "a dialectics of inside and outside" as described in Bachelard (211). In his *Poetics*, although Bachelard never uses the term threshold to describe this metaphysical contradiction, he refers to a border-line surface present between outside and inside, which can be interpreted as an interface, a meeting and melting point of the two states. As he explains, "outside and inside are both intimate—they are always ready to be reversed, to exchange their hostility. If there exists a border-line surface between such an inside and outside, this surface is painful on both sides" (365). Threshold spaces evoke pain because what is ascribed to outside as a characteristic, such as hostility, hospitality, freedom or constraint can easily be reversed. Through this view, Bachelard also problematizes the way how these concepts, 'inside' and 'outside' are essentially regarded as pure geometrical oppositions by logicians and philosophers. According to him, such a dialectics does not simply imply a scission or a sharp distinction very much like the one between yes and no because they actually go beyond binaries and offer multiple meanings in relation to man's Being in the world.

In the *Poetics*, Bachelard, in fact, focuses more on the doors than windows as threshold spaces to describe the tension between interiors and exteriors of a house to trace the close relationship between man's Being and his space. Drawing a parallelism

between the spatial characteristics of doors and being, he argues that a simple door can reveal a variety of meanings regarding human soul:

How concrete everything becomes in the world of the spirit when an object, a mere door, can give images of hesitation, temptation, desire, security, welcome and respect. If one were to give an account of all the doors one has closed and opened, of all the doors that one would like to re-open one would have to tell the story of one's entire life. (373-74)

What Bachelard suggests sings in unison with *Dancing at Lughnasa* in which the sisters experience spaces and places through such thresholds as doors and windows they open, close or never dare to approach. At the end of the day, what is realized is the transformation the sisters have undergone within time negotiating their space and Being because, in Bachelard's words, the person "who opens a door and ... who closes it" are never the same (374). In this sense, on one hand these architectural spaces appear as barriers symbolizing control and restriction, on the other hand they can be considered as liberatory tools through which "transformation" can be achieved and experienced.

The Mundys achieve a momentary metamorphosis through their dance in the cottage kitchen, which becomes the central metaphor of the play together with the "very posh" (DL 51) wireless set Marconi's music. The modern wireless set stands among the traditional furnishings of the kitchen space and epitomizes the sparkle of change that has reached Ballybeg. Even though it stops frequently, Marconi secures the sisters' ties with the outside world very much like the windows in their cottage kitchen. It brings melodies from all over the world, the classics of the thirties, American tunes by Cole Porter, "The Isle of Capri," and regimental songs "The British Grenadiers," jazz music and the Irish dance music played by céili bands. As the Irish writer and scholar Declan Kiberd asserts, "radio technology encouraged the involvement of the listener: by it youth could learn once again how to live mythically as part of the global village" (After Ireland 5609-10). What's more, transmitting all the European and American influences to Ballybeg, Marconi enables the sisters to escape the mundane aspects of their life and the restraints of their society through which they personally engage with their domestic space and attach meanings to it. As Bachelard states, "a house that has been experienced is not an inert box. Inhabited

space transcends geometrical space” (134). As an inhabited space with objects to which particular meanings are attached, the Mundy house, for a brief moment, goes beyond the boundaries of geometrical space gaining a sense of intimacy. However, with the Mundy sisters even this sense of intimacy becomes questionable because Friel makes a point that there is no proper dwelling for these women. Although they perform their “defiant” dance accompanied by Marconi’s music in their kitchen and experience a momentary relief, their house does not provide a sense of home for them nor does Ballybeg.

It should be noted that Bachelard’s approach to the idea of ‘house’ in his *Poetics* certainly provides a framework to discuss the details regarding the Mundy house and the household; however, his contentions mostly fall short elucidating the actual dynamics of the Mundy cottage. Bachelard regards house as an essential place, an idealized space with all its ‘homely’ qualities. It is also a protective space which “shelters daydreaming, . . . the dreamer, [and] . . . allows one to dream in peace. Without it, man would be a dispersed being. It maintains him through the storms of the heavens and through those of life. It is body and soul” (79-80). Therefore, against the threatening atmosphere outside, Bachelard’s house serves as an abode where human beings reside both physically and spiritually, dreaming and making memories. However, by conceiving house as attached to ‘Being,’ and memories, Bachelard actually fixates the meaning of space and place alongside identity, which poses a problem in terms of relational understanding of space.

Among the many thinkers who challenges Bachelard’s idea of house as the felicitous space is Doreen Massey who problematizes such fixed connotations of place and of home as a source of shelter, security, belonging and identity. Massey suggests a way of re-conceptualizing ‘a place-called-home’ as plural and open, rather than as sites of nostalgia where there is a past constantly looked back in strong and emotional desire (Space 170-72). Each home-place, as Massey maintains, is not without its problems because each is “an equally complex product of the ever-shifting geography of social relations present and past” (Space 172). To Massey’s view, the use of new technologies of communication and the formation of a new global space did not necessarily create feelings of placelessness or disorientation nor did they erase the idea

of a 'place-called-home.' For this reason, the notions of a sense of place should not be conceptualized as "static, self-enclosing and defensive" rather they should be conceptualized anew by taking into account the singularity of each place, its interactions and social relations which stretch beyond.

Massey's critique of the stabilizing notions of place and home strikes a sympathetic chord with Friel's depiction of the Mundy house. The Mundy house is no 'felicitous space' with its already established features, a deep-rooted past or people with rigid identities. It is not "a place not only where they belonged but which belonged to them, and where they could afford to locate their identities" (Space 166). It is rather a place akin to Massey's descriptions of home as "for ever open to contestation" and inhabited by fluid entities who do not reside totally in an "internalized history" but engage in "interactions with the outside" (Space 169). Moreover, it is not a site of nostalgia as the music of the Marconi erases all the memories regarding their childhood home, filling their heads with melodies and their house with technology from overseas. That's why the only childhood memory the Mundys recount is about how their mother used to pick bilberries and make delicious jams during the Lughnasa festival. When the changing world of Ballybeg begins to take a firm grip on the sisters, they try to go with the tide meeting the challenge of new technologies alongside the surviving traditions because this closed space actually bears within itself the potential to open up a new space, a space of their own, and a space of difference and multiplicity as in bell hooks' description of 'home:'

Home is no longer just one place. It is locations. Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and everchanging perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference. One confronts and accepts dispersal and fragmentation as part of the construction of a new world order that reveals more fully where we are, who we can become, an order that does not demand forgetting. (Yearning 227)

Experiencing 'fragmentation' and 'dispersal' within the closed space of the Mundy cottage, the characters also understand that this homespace is a sphere of possibility where they can gradually 'become' by creating themselves anew and reclaiming their subjectivity, which they achieve through music and dance in the very non-verbal realm.

In the end, as Michael informs, a series of events occur in that summer of 1936 which further fragments the Mundy household. Among such memories Michael distinguishes one memory– the day when the Marconi’s music enchanted the sisters stirring them all to dance:

MICHAEL. In that memory, too, the air is nostalgic with the music of the thirties. It drifts in from somewhere far away – a mirage of sound – a dream music that is both heard and imagined; that seems to be both itself and its own echo; a sound so alluring and so mesmeric that the afternoon is bewitched, maybe haunted, by it. And what is so strange about that memory is that everybody seems to be floating on those sweet sounds, moving rhythmically, languorously, in complete isolation; responding more to the mood of the music than to its beat. (DL 107)

Michael’s memory of the dance accompanied by the enticing music of the Marconi completes his fragmentary childhood view of the Mundy house. Through the melodies permeating the entire house the sisters enter into a different plane in which they abandon themselves to the sensuousness of the music. Here music as “a non-verbal signifying set” in Lefebvre’s sense symbolizes a kind of space which cannot be conceived through mental faculties (62). In this scene where there is “a sense of order being consciously subverted” (DL 37), Friel creates an alternative space and allows the characters to enjoy “the chance of space” in Massey’s sense and experience a transcendence from one state to another which is much akin to a Dionysiac ritual.

#### 4.3. “Indepen-dance and Transgression”: Dance as a Tool of Subversion

Éamonn Jordan begins his essay on Dancing at Lughnasa and memory with a very relevant observation that the play “brings together memory and dancing, the sacred and the profane, ritual and transcendence in a brilliantly complicated fashion” (129). In line with Jordan’s claim, it should be contended that it is actually through dancing that such dichotomies intermingle in the play. Dancing, combined with music, as the recurring image of the play takes a multitude of forms from the step-dance of the Mundy sisters, Gerry’s ballroom dance and the dance of the Sweeney boy in Lughnasa hills to Father Jack’s ritualistic shuffling in the garden, which all contribute to the intricate framework of the play. Throughout the play, dancing, for the characters, becomes a way to communicate with other people and places, a means to be “in touch

with some otherness,” which is mystical and beyond words (DL 108). Dance, in this sense, appears as Friel’s metaphorical image which provides various ideas regarding subjectivity which has its spatial resonances in the play. For all these reasons, this section traces the Mundy sisters’ frantic dance and their transformation through which they come to challenge the established norms of Catholic propriety in a space long defined by authority. Along with Massey’s concept “rightnowness” in space and Lefebvre’s understanding of ‘body,’ ideas related to Nietzschean Dionysian space are made use in order to provide insights into the characters’ appropriation of and challenges to the seemingly Apollonian, controlled space of Ballybeg. This is not the place of undertaking the task of analysing the Dionysian and Apollonian elements,<sup>23</sup> but it should be indicated that the play actually proceeds through such Nietzschean oppositions.

Being the focal scene of the play, the sisters’ dance has been widely analysed in Friel scholarship. What is common about these interpretations is that dance provides a temporary retreat for the Mundy sisters from the patriarchal structuring of their society. It becomes a realm where they restore their touch with the deepest emotions and release their repressed feelings such as sexual frustration, anger, and resentment. Since they have suppressed their feelings for long, and they lacked a linguistic space to articulate themselves, it is through the language of the dance they express subtle meanings and articulate themselves “becom[ing] ‘other’ to their usual, controlled selves” (McMullan, “In Touch” 94). Moreover, in the frenzy of the dance, the sisters enjoy their full physical presence in space and achieve a wholeness, creating constantly “heres and nows” in Massey’s terms. (“Making Space” 16)

As the central metaphor of the play, the sisters’ frantic dance comes halfway through the play altering for a while the shadowy atmosphere Michael’s narrative has created. The dance is initiated with Chris’s turning on the Marconi while the others are busy with their daily chores. Gradually, as the céili permeates the atmosphere, the wild beat of the Irish music captures the attention of the sisters one by one. It is Maggie

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<sup>23</sup> F.C. McGrath in his insightful analysis titled “Dionysus in Ballybeg” in Brian Friel’s (Post)colonial Drama traces the origin and significance of Dionysian and Apollonian elements in the play. (234-47)

who first responds to the melody in a state of conflicting emotions which display themselves simultaneously: “defiance, aggression, happiness” (DL 35). For a moment, she observes her sisters with an expression of challenge on her face and abandons herself to the exhilaration of music immediately leaving her cooking task. She then spreads her fingers and adjusts her hair covering her face with “an instant mask” of flour (DL 35). Letting out a sigh of happiness, she dances in a state of ecstasy like “a white-faced, frantic dervish” (DL 36). Slowly but surely, Maggie is joined by others, Rose, Agnes, Chris, except Kate who now feels that her control in the house is totally out of hand. As the dance goes on in its own pace, Kate, the observer at the beginning, also yields to the temptation and joins the dance emitting a loud cry: “Yaaaah!.” Kate’s participation in the sisters’ dance is significant because she makes a distinction with her idiosyncratic steps and movements. She does not get involved in the sisters’ formed circle but prefers to dance privately, and “totally concentrated” on her own “weave of complex steps” (DL 36) She goes “round the kitchen, past her sisters, out to the garden, round the summer seat, back to the kitchen; a pattern of action that is out of character and at the same time ominous of some deep and true emotion” (DL 36). It is as if in a solo ritual Kate whirls around the house and dances silently in awe.

The sisters’ dance has its own pattern with its unconventional moves, and it appears as a subversion of the rhythmic and structured dance forms of the dance halls. As they dance, sing together, and shout in a burst of feelings, they create a “grotesque” dance with their arrhythmic movements (DL 36). The stage directions also reveal that the sisters do not dance in the traditional way of Irish dancing. For instance, they do not hold hands or keep their arms by their side while dancing, but instead they place their arms tightly around one another’s neck and waist forming a circle as in pagan circle dancing in harvest festivals and the communal circle of father Jack’s African dances. In her article “The Dancer or the Dance?,” Cassandra Fusco asserts that the sisters’ uncustomary movements stand for their imprisonment in their domestic space as well as their unfulfilled sexual desires as “movement mediates the conflict between word-bound reality and possible transcendence” (110). It is clear that the Mundys border on that liminal space between freedom and constraint, dance and language, the

real and the imagined producing an alternative space, a course of path yet with deviations, which accords well with the unruly rhythm of their dance.

Although the sisters' dance deviates from the agreed route, from the society's values, it unites the sisters all. Even Kate, the most orthodox of all, gives in to the sensual and spontaneous atmosphere in the kitchen. For a moment, she is not the loyal defender of Catholic faith and morality but a real Bacchic figure in this Dionysiac state. Through the dance, therefore, the sisters are transformed into Maenads, totally acting in strong opposition to the principles of the Catholic Church but performing a frenzied rite for mythic figures. As such, the ecstasy of the dance and the music almost creates a Dionysiac space in the Nietzschean sense, which signifies a plane of multiplicity and change:

Dionysos forges a bond between human beings, they also reconcile human beings and nature. [...] All the caste-like divisions which necessity and arbitrary power have established between men disappear; the slave is a free-man, the aristocrat and the man of lowly birth unite in the same Bacchic choruses. ... As they sing and dance, human beings express their membership of a higher, more ideal community; they have forgotten how to walk and speak. Yet it is more than this: they feel themselves to have been transformed by magic, and they really have become something different. ("The Dionysiac World View" 120).

As Nietzsche's statement indicates, the heightened energy of the Dionysiac space destroys all the conventional obstructions and enables one to transgress the boundaries. Through the alluring effect of music and Bacchic dance, all the power relations regarding rank or property between human beings are erased, thereby eventually turning the participants into spiritual entities. The same Dionysiac space is opened up in the dance scene in the play where the sisters enter into the world of Celtic paganism disregarding the doctrines of the Catholic faith. At that point, all the boundaries are blurred allowing the sisters to enjoy the same temporal and the spatial plane generated through the power of such non-verbal signifiers as music and dance.

In a similar vein, in "Women Dancing Back: Disruption and the Politics of Pleasure," Leslie Gotfrit asserts that it is in the liberatory space of the dance floor that the interplay between pleasure and desire comes to the fore. Once the carnal combination of desire and sexuality is expressed through the body in the dance, the

floor becomes a plane for possibility and resilience. When the body learns to resist the temptation of self-control, it moves along freely, spontaneously disregarding the gaze (129-30). In a sense, the body creates its own language subverting the dominant discourse and speaks for itself, in its own way. For,

[t]he dance floor is one location where desire and pleasure are courted and orchestrated, where the body is central, and where sexuality, implicated in the production, limitation, and control of desire, is permitted expression. In the intersection of desire and sexuality and the body, dancing becomes a probable site for resistance. (129)

Such empowerment of the body, as Gotfrit emphasizes, disrupts the long-established dichotomy between mind and body bringing them together on one single plane and letting them merge into one another (130). To Gotfrit, there are several ways to challenge the dominant ideology through dancing. By dancing women can defy the imperative that it is usually the heterosexual couple crowding the dance floor. Enjoying themselves and their bodies women can assume the control of their own space relegating men to “unnecessary status” in the process. Women can also call into question dominant discourse by violating the rules of certain dance forms, adopting their own style and taking pleasure and power in and from their body, which can be observed in the Mundy sisters’ unconventional form of céili dance. (131)

Nevertheless, the liberatory and revolutionary space opened through the dance does not linger on. As Nietzsche contends, lived experience in the past comes onto surface creating an abyss and opening two different spaces: Dionysian and the everyday life. When the daily reality impinges on the consciousness, “one feels it as something disgusting” (*The Birth of Tragedy* 129). A similar state is observed in the end of the sisters’ dance, when the Marconi stops playing abruptly in the usual style and diverts them back to their daily routine making them resume their domestic chores. As the stage directions reveal, the sisters “look at each other obliquely; avoid looking at each other; half smile in embarrassment; feel and look slightly ashamed and slightly defiant” (DL 37). Thus ends the sisters’ dance with a fusion of contradictory feelings much in the same way as it started.

Gotfrit further argues that it has always been problematical for women to enjoy their sexual desire and body because such pleasures carry with themselves a complex

set of “identities and experiences: loving and violence, pride and humiliation, empowerment and oppression, and pleasure and shame” (134). Given the then-current circumstances of Ireland relating to dancing and morality, mainly the Public Dance Halls Act, it is not surprising that the sisters immediately retreat to their controlled selves as if they had never experienced that moment of frenzy. Raised in a society where there is a rigorous enforcement of rules by the Catholic Church and the Free State, the sisters, even dancing in their ‘private’ space, feel that they have crossed the boundaries drawn across their subjectivity. Therefore, they seem to hesitate to linger in that space of liberation, a realm where freedom from limits on thought and behaviour is offered because as in the words of Lefebvre “the laws of discrimination in space, also govern the living body and the deployment of its energies.” (171)

As stated before, Ballybeg of the 1930s has been marked by a sense of strict social control through nationalistic and paternal discourses and activities the most important of which can be considered as the Public Dance Halls Act of 1935. The social space that the sisters belong has long been contested due to colonial matters as well as political and sectarian divisions each in their effort has transformed the space into place by controlling, appropriating, claiming, and re-claiming it. However, as the sisters dance, their cottage kitchen becomes a space which bridges the outside world and their inner worlds providing a realm of liberation and transgression for them. In a society where the tradition only allows for “strictly ballroom” dance (DL 46) as the dance teacher Gerry reminds us, the sisters’ céili dance in the kitchen speaks well for itself as the epitome of subversion. As opposed to the carefully calculated and controlled steps of the ballroom, the sisters move spontaneously and naturally without thinking about their next step or the parish priest who would possibly be on patrol at that time. In addition to this, when the sisters dance, the kitchen space epitomizing the microcosm of Ballybeg’s troubled social space shifts abruptly as the sisters come to reconstruct and reclaim it through their moves. In “Social Dance and Social Space,” Jonathan Skinner puts forward that the dance floor can be considered as the reflection of society because during dance “the physical space and the cultural space map over each other” (112). Accordingly, it is understood that it is not the physical

characteristics of space, their mean and small kitchen that confine them but the dominant body politics which colonizes their body.

Dance as the main metaphor of Dancing at Lughnasa and as a bodily activity also bears its relation to a variety of concepts including movement, time and space, which can be traced in relation to Lefebvre's understanding of body. Describing body's relation to space Lefebvre follows a relational way and asserts that the body with its energy and potential has the ability to create space: "each living body is space and has its space: it produces itself in space and it also produces that space" (170). In line with this contention it can be asserted that since the sisters have access to neither the dance hall space of the village nor the contested space of the harvest dance in the back hills, they create their own space in their kitchen. They enjoy themselves and each other freeing themselves from the constraints of the dance hall space where they would otherwise be dancing as structured by the dominant ideology. They would have to wait for men to take them to dance to the nearest parish hall or expect them on the dance floor to invite them to dance. Therefore, in the dance, the Mundys experience bodily freedom for a brief moment transgressing the codes of the Christianized soul and experience the possibilities of the space they have created. In that sense, the domestic space of their cottage kitchen, in fact, becomes a plane of possibility, of hope through which they locate themselves in Ballybeg.

Moreover, dancing in the company of one another, the sisters become aware of other subjectivities occupying the same space that they have created anew. Performing a variety of movements holding hands, circling, and hugging, the sisters not only enjoy their own physicality and bodily pleasure but also the others' through such interactive space of the dance. Their rhythmic or arrhythmic movements, their relation to the dance and to each other indicate a social production and generates a space invested with meaning. As they dance, their corporeality creates flows and movements occupying both space and time and attaining a spatiotemporal quality. Such spatiotemporal body which is securely tied to the "here and now" in Lefebvre's sense is "already in revolt" (201). This is "an elemental and worldwide revolt which does not seek a theoretical foundation, but rather seeks by theoretical means to rediscover – and

recognize – its own foundations” (201). In other words, it is a way of one’s awakening to his/her own potentiality pushing the body’s boundaries.

Through the dance, since the sisters experience and express something which they have suppressed and felt ashamed to convey, this burst out of feeling in the form of bodily pleasure reveals certain clues about their personal identity. Dance becomes the plane where they come into contact with their repressed selves, remembering who they are, what they have become or not become, what they want and do not want in life. They dance with all their uncultivated manners, reckless movements, inappropriate garments and in opposing directions. For a moment, the laws of Ballybeg are unable to question and constrain them because the dance is “a time for contradiction, indepen-dance and transgression in a seemingly ordered, regulated and increasingly bureaucratic modern environment” (Skinner 101). In a way, the Irish cottage kitchen constructed out of the dominant discourse and practices now becomes a recalcitrant space rewritten by pleasure and desire. Accordingly, as the Mundy sisters try to emplace themselves within the shifting space of Ireland and against the patriarchal structure of their society, their dance presents the potential power of resistance.

Furthermore, each sister experiences the rhythm of the dance and the beat of the music subjectively yet united in joy. They all bring their own styles to the dance: Maggie dances wildly, Agnes dances with grace and Kate dances alone, expressing their feelings in diverse ways. However, when they come together and form a circle having their arms tightly knot one another’s neck, the sisters convey feelings of close familiarity and attachment. On one hand, they are unique in their bodily expressions and dancing styles; on the other hand, their circle dancing shows that they share a common interest, and there exists a mutual support within their group. As Murray states, “Each has her subjectivity, her consciousness of time passing ..., her yearning for love, but all five vary in the intensity of feelings expressed” (Theatre of Brian Friel 135). Anthony Roche also draws attention to the close bond between the sisters and defines this relationship as “unity-in-difference.” To Roche, dance shows how these women have formed relations with one another and with the world outside in a “most expressive and unified” manner (“Friel’s Drama” 79), embracing their corporeality

freely, and thereby producing social space outside the exclusionary politics of the Catholic Church and the Free State. When the intensity of this bodily freedom is heightened, the sisters lose all sense of time and space concentrating on the ceremony itself. At that moment, dance becomes a way through which “what is beyond time and space is transmitted into the here and now.” (Pine 272)

It may as well be noted at this juncture that the significance of the dance in relation to spatial categories also finds meaning in Massey’s concept “right-nowness” which refers to the contemporaneity of events, “a coming together of trajectories” in space (For Space 141). In the dance, what the sisters experience is not a fixed ‘present’ but a series of “heres and nows” which they create through their relations to space. Such space is the plane of multiplicity; therefore, the emphasis is always on the simultaneous existence of others and other stories (“Making Space” 3-5). During the dance, the kitchen space becomes an intersection of the sisters’ stories, of all the lovers who crossed through their paths; Gerry Evans, Danny Bradley, Brian McGuinness, and Austin Morgan. They do not talk to each other but reside in the power of this non-verbal narration which link them to the pagan rituals of the Festival of Lughnasa and the ceremonies of Ryangan tribes in Uganda. As Massey further explains, “‘Here’ is where spatial narratives meet up or form configurations, conjunctures of trajectories which have their own temporalities ... ‘Here’ is an intertwining of histories in which the spatiality of those histories (their then as well as their here) is inescapably entangled” (For Space 139). Through the dance, the ‘private’ space of their domestic kitchen is transformed into a meeting point where different people and cultures converge, the ‘wild’ and ‘grotesque’ dance of the sisters, the ‘devilish’ dance of the Sweeney boy in the Lughnasa hills and the African shuffle of the Ryangan tribes who have “no distinction between the religious and the secular in their culture” (DL 74). In this sense, it is through their realization of other people, places and cultures that the sisters come to realize themselves and try to reclaim their place in the patriarchal world of Ballybeg. This is “the event of place” in Massey’s sense which is open and multiple rather than a slice through time, and it is such openness that holds diversely different entities or things in close proximity to one another. By presenting the dance along with a mixture of ceremonies, the ancient mythical practices of Lughnasa festivals and the

Ryangan rituals, Friel addresses the change in the twentieth century Irish society, but he also emphasizes the significance of continuum and copiousness; multiplicity of individual experience, of people and places in space in a relational way.

Finally, with its spatio-temporal quality dance constitutes a plane where past impinges on present, which can be observed in Michael's final monologue. It is through this final speech "the opposition between language and its corporeal 'other', dancing" is re-emphasized, each as a means of articulation providing links to the past (McMullan, "In Touch" 90). Going back to the summer of 1936 and recounting that memory of the Lughnasa time, Michael draws attention to the extra-linguistic quality of the dance which enables the sisters to create a space of their own to experience both in isolation and in relation to each other, which brings them into dialogue with the unfamiliar, the inexpressible, the ritual. The closing tableau of the dance, therefore, can be read against Michael's initial interpretation where he complains that the wireless set "Marconi's voodoo derange[d] those kind, sensible women and transform[ed] them into shrieking strangers" (DL 8). However, Michael's last reference to and the description of the dance indicates that both the dance and the dancers actually resist his identification because the moment is simultaneously actual and illusory:

MICHAEL. Dancing as if language had surrendered to movement – as if this ritual, this wordless ceremony, was now the way to speak, to whisper private and sacred things, to be in touch with some otherness. Dancing as if the very heart of life and all its hopes might be found in those assuaging notes and those hushed rhythms and in those silent and hypnotic movements. Dancing as if language no longer existed because words were no longer necessary ... (DL 108).

#### 4.4. Space, Place and Conclusions: The Mutable Geography of Ballybeg

Dancing at Lughnasa with its images of modernisation and references to constant 'change' in social and economic life in Ireland also may lead the audience to think about globalisation and time-space compression as a concept attached to it. The play does not directly deal with globalisation, yet a close observation reveals the ramifications of a world that appears to be shrinking. In the play, Friel tries to show how the geographical constraints have started to be destroyed in the open cultural

space, once the “Industrial Revolution had finally caught up with Ballybeg” (DL 91). Setting the play against the backcloth of wider issues like industrialisation and machinery, Friel draws attention to the small world of Ballybeg which is getting even smaller. Taking this idea as the departure point, this section seeks to lay out the consequences of time-space compression on the characters against the background provided by Doreen Massey’s understanding and interpretation of globalisation and her idea of a more progressive sense of place, ‘a global sense of place.’

In Massey’s view, time-space compression follows a different pace and track in each individual, and it varies in accordance with their emplacement in social life, their relations, connections and interrelations in place. Reconsidering time-space compression and globalisation in line with such dynamics also requires rethinking our notions of place and a sense of place. To Massey, places can now only be understood in a broader context, that is, in their “relations with elsewhere,” “with the world beyond” because “this is place as meeting place: different stories coming together and, . . . becoming entangled. This is the thrown-togetherness of physical proximity, and it is even more marked in an age of globalisation” (“Globalisation” 294). Places, in Massey’s view, are not characterised by their singularity or uniqueness but through their ties to and interactions with other places. The specificity of each place, therefore, is rooted in its being “the focus of a distinct mixture of wider and more local social relations” (Space 156). In this sense, when conceptualised with regard to social interactions places become “processes” with multiple territories each open and on the making, very much like identities. They are “articulations of social relationships” characterized by both local and global features, and with identities always in the becoming (“Places and Their Past” 182-191). Massey identifies such an approach to place as “a global sense of place,” an idea which has a particular resonance in the play where Friel illustrates how the specificity of Ballybeg is reproduced through its ties and linkages with other places, and how the identities are always negotiated through their set of relations and interactions.

Globalisation as a dominant issue in Irish theatre and Friel’s drama has received very little consideration until Patrick Lonergan’s book *Theatre and Globalization*, who in his review of *Dancing at Lughnasa* focuses more on theatrical

techniques, production and reception of the play at the Abbey Theatre and abroad, Broadway in particular. To be able to foreground the issue of globalization in the play, Lonergan draws attention to a variety of issues including Friel's use of "multiple chronological spaces" his "blending of cultures" and "his focus on the necessity of dramatic uncertainty" along with the play's "international reception" and canonization" (32). Amongst these issues Lonergan pays utmost attention to Friel's employing the monologue style to shape his narrative, and conclusively establishes that totalizing narrative structures can be subverted through the representation of a multiplicity of voices and forms, which Friel attempts to do through Michael's 'unauthoritative' narrative (36-43). Lonergan's emphasis on the theatrical form as an example of Friel's exemplification of time-space compression provides insights into the issue of globalisation. The present analysis, however, departing from Massey's views on globalization and the conceptualization of place, focuses more on the ways how the characters experience time-space compression in Friel's imaginary place Ballybeg, and how their spatial experience has political resonances regarding Ireland and its position in the globalised world.

In the play, Ballybeg becomes a microcosm of Ireland with its geographically marginal status. Similarly, the Mundy house represents the characteristics of Ballybeg struck by poverty in a liminal state between tradition and modernity; and governed by authorities, the State and the Catholic Church. Apart from emphasizing the marginal status of Ballybeg, Friel also refers to various places such as Baltinglass, Dublin, London, Stockholm, Australia, Uganda, Africa, and Abyssinia which all colour the sisters' imagination. References to these places indicate how they are present in Irish life as much as Ireland and Ballybeg are present in them because space is a product of relations. Despite such proximity, 'simple' Rose still asks like a curious child: "Is Abyssinia in Africa?" (DL 11). Abyssinia is coded in her imagination as attached to war and, likewise, Africa is associated in her mind as the place where Father Jack served. In another occasion, Rose is eager to learn about Sweden and asks: "Where is Stockholm? (DL 32), trying to imagine how far Stockholm is and how it becomes a home to their friend Bernie O'Donnell from Ballybeg. What the sisters are doing is not out of sheer curiosity but is a way of imagining the world beyond the borders and

grasping the multiplicity of spaces, stories, and times, the “meeting-up of histories,” because “imagination crucially involves an awareness of others,” either humans or non-humans, groups or individuals (For Space 4-5). Presenting such diverse locations in the play Friel shows how each character relates to place and experiences it in diverse ways as well as calling for an understanding of geographical imagination, of borders and boundaries; of thinking about other places, different cultures and new social relationships.

As Friel’s imaginary site, Ballybeg is located in County Donegal; however, Friel draws a more comprehensive map in the play with references to historical events such as wars and political upheavals of the 1990s and technological advancements around the world. On the far side of Ireland, there is Europe on the verge of war; Italy and Germany are tackling with fascism while Mussolini and Franco have already taken military action, the former in Abyssinia and the latter in Spain. Hence, the implication conveyed is that outside the doors of the Mundy house and the borders of Ireland operate myriad external powers whose echoes are only heard through the broadcasting of the wireless Marconi and the sisters’ cheerful tunes:

ROSE. Will you come to Abyssinia, will you come?  
Mussolini will be there with his airplanes in the air,  
Will you come to Abyssinia, will you come? (DL 10)  
...

MAGGIE. Will you vote for De Valera, will you vote?  
If you don’t, we’ll be like Gandhi with his goat.  
Uncle Bill from Baltinglass has a wireless up his –  
Will you vote for De Valera, will you vote? (DL 11)

Through such references to diverse locations, the conflicts between states and technological change, Friel draws attention to how the political and social upheavals of the twentieth century would shrink the world once all the airplanes and wireless technologies were on the way. Twentieth century through wars and upheavals in the political systems developed various warfare technologies of time-space compression such as airplanes, radars, jet engines, computers, wireless sets, and nuclear weapons. In *Time-Space compression: Historical Geographies*, Barney Warf argues that both the Great War and World War II originated from the socio-political problems

experienced by societies on the face of time-space compression, which resulted in further turmoil. The war, therefore, Warf continues, seemed to be “both an outcome and a generator of the ongoing political, economic, and technological reconstruction of space and time” (155). Warf’s observation finds its resonance in *Dancing at Lughnasa* where radio technology represented by the Marconi is introduced as a recurrent motif of modernisation of rural Ireland.

Marconi in the play stands as the Mundys’ glimpse into the modern world, representing the 1930s when people went through a technological explosion. As Kiberd puts it, as early as 1932 there was a rapid increase in the number of wireless sets sold in Ireland. This was namely due to the intention that the State wished to enable the Catholics to listen to the Eucharistic Congress gathering in Dublin. However, the popularity of the radios prevailed long in houses like the Mundys’ even after the religious broadcasting had ended (After Ireland 5600-1). Therefore, it is clear that despite Kate’s constant criticism that the set has “killed all Christian conversation in this country” (DL 100), the dying batteries, and fading radio signals, the “aul cracked thing,” (DL 9) Marconi connects the sisters to the modern world which they embrace willingly yet with a certain distance. As such, in contrast to Michael’s restless situation and his dubious approach to time-space compression in the play, the sisters are more at ease with the changes reaching as far as Ballybeg. Most importantly, they are more open to the possibilities that the place might offer. They muse themselves both with the so-called seductive American jazz music of the thirties and the national notes played by the céili band on the Marconi. As the man in the shop reminds Kate, they “go through these things [batteries] quicker than anyone in Ballybeg” (DL 28). The sisters are well aware of the fact that Ballybeg is not just a small town in County Donegal with its small community now, but it is in the process of becoming a global village with all the technological advancements knocking on their doors such as the radios, motor cars and railroads.

In a similar vein, Gerry’s ‘Minerva Gramophones – The Wise Buy’ (DL 46), suggestive of the Roman goddess of wisdom and handicrafts, symbolize the society’s approach and response to the technological advancements along with the materialistic ventures. As Gerry puts it, “Fabulous. All I have to do is get the orders and pass them

on to Dublin. A big enterprise, Chrissie; oh, one very big enterprise” (DL 46) when he shares his excitement with Chris about his new career in gramophone selling. In an effort to justify his decision, he continues to assert that “people thought gramophones would be a thing of the past when radios came in. But they were wrong” (DL 47). What Gerry adds, indeed, serves as aid in explaining Friel’s motives for presenting details about the technological progress of the 1930s. As his recurrent motif of modernisation, Friel tries to locate radio and gramophone technology in the play amidst the surviving pagan traditions like Maggie’s old songs and the Lughnasa fires in the back hills. Friel, in fact, wants to underline that a place can sustain the local and the global influences together without necessarily erasing its own significance or its cultural markers. Friel’s idea here appears to be related to Massey’s relational approach to space which she conceptualizes in parallel with globalisation. Massey points out that in an age in which globalisation is a recurrent theme, a “force emanating always from elsewhere” (For Space 15) places should be conceived in relation to other places and as their parts, because:

There is an insistence, repeatedly on specificity, and on a world neither composed of atomistic individuals nor closed into an always already completed holism. It is a world being made, through relations, and there lies the politics. . . . There is an urge towards ‘outwardlookingness’, towards a positivity and aliveness to the world beyond one’s own turf, whether that be one’s self, one’s city, or the particular parts of the planet in which one lives and works: a commitment to that radical contemporaneity which is the condition of, and condition for, spatiality. (For Space 15)

Drawing attention to the need to re-think our conceptions of space and place, Massey emphasizes the coexistence of multiple stories, histories, junctures and a multitude of speaking subjects all of which constitute a prerequisite for understanding the significance of space and acknowledging responsibility for it. To Massey, what defines place is a myriad of flows, an articulation of social relations rather than bounded places and fixed identities. Recognizing this relational nature and the spatial aspects of subjectivity would open the path for a different understanding of geographical imagination, and a re-imagination of place, a “politics of place beyond place” (World City 340) in Massey’s terms, that is both “territorially grounded” and still “responsive to a relational space” (World City 288). In other words, rather than regarding places as

victims of globalization one should always conceptualize them in direct links with both local and global influences.

As befitting to Massey's notion of 'place,' Friel's small town Ballybeg is articulated through intersecting social relations. Due to modernisation and globalisation, Ballybeg has been open to a wide range of processes the most significant of which is emigration. Ballybeg is now home to diaspora and other forms of immigrants much in the way London, Australia or Sweden become home to Irish emigrants. As Michael informs the audience, the Mundys have friends in the colonies and neighbours that have "a huge network of relatives all over England and America" (DL 91). Beginning from the establishment of the Free State in 1922 until the 1980s almost one half of the Irish population emigrated for better life prospects not only for themselves but also for those who chose to stay (Kiberd 1696-97). In line with this, there are many references in the play to people who left Ireland with the hope of a new land full of promises. For instance, as Rose informs the sisters, Danny Bradley's wife left him and went to England to start over a new life. Similarly, when Maggie remembers the story of the Sunday dance she went with Bernie O'Donnell she recounts the detail that Brian McGuinness, whom she was in love with then, had left for Australia. Maggie's off-stage friend Bernie O'Donnell, married with two daughters, is another emigrant figure. Unlike the others, O'Donnell who visits Ballybeg after twenty years, portrays a favourable picture of the Irish emigrant settled well in London. The play does not provide any clues about why these people left Ballybeg, but the implication is that they possibly "enjoyed better wages abroad, especially in a globalizing world which allowed ever more frequent returns for a holiday at home." (Kiberd 1733-35)

The issue of emigration also becomes a significant part of the Mundys' life when the encroaching modernisation makes its way through their path. However, emigration for the Mundy household signifies a total failure which leads the family to a shattering end. Father Jack returns from Africa in a desperate state, lost his language and memories, after twenty-five years of service as a missionary priest. Similarly, as an emigrated Irish, Michael attempts a homecoming by remembering his childhood home and his aunts two of whom ended up as immigrants like himself. Michael does

not express any disappointment regarding his emigration in the play. He, in fact, feels content that he was able to leave Ireland like all the other young Irish did. However, his aunts were not as fortunate as Michael who tried to trace them twenty-five years later on the streets of London. One day, when the news of a new factory making machine gloves spreads, the sisters decide to leave the town. They think that their handwork will no longer be needed in the new factory. However, London, too, was not in need of their hand-knitted gloves; they worked in cleaning jobs in public toilets, in the Underground, in factories. In the end, they die in hospice in destitute, homeless and hopeless. The play provides no textual clues about whether they considered returning to Ballybeg or not, but the suggestion is that they would never do. Even if they had returned, it is clear that they would not have found the Ballybeg they had left. As in the words of Stuart Hall, “[m]igration is a one-way trip. There is no ‘home’ to go back to. There never was” (44). Ballybeg has changed owing to modernisation and globalisation, and the play conveys this sense of transformation through people’s experience of the place. London, too, has changed since the sisters set foot on the place; there are now more factories opened, more emigrants received, promises made and broken, hopes cherished and deferred.

Imagining Ballybeg and London with their transformation over the years through relations and interrelations; connections or disconnections; people and problems are all indications of a globalized place, a place that has moved on and is on the move. In such an atmosphere of flux, Friel’s characters try to negotiate with place, which reveals certain clues about how they conceive its identity. In *Dancing at Lughnasa*, One significant way of experiencing place and negotiating with it is emphasized in the idea of mobility and movement in space. As spatial concepts, these terms not only produce time and space but are also constitutive of them. As the geography professor Tim Cresswell indicates, the basic act of getting from A to B has diverse meanings such as freedom, transgression, creativity, and life itself (3). Mundy sisters achieve transcendence through their dance which signifies a form of individual mobility. However, human mobility and meanings attached to it are most significantly exemplified in Gerry Evans who with his Ballybeg visits brings the issue to the fore. In line with Cresswell’s view that “mobile people are never simply people” (4), Gerry

Evans appears as a strange man with his “unbelievable” (DL 49) status as a dance teacher, a businessman, a gramophone-seller and a soldier. He is caught well in time-space compression, and he seems to have lost all sense of time when he turns up one day in Ballybeg: “Wow-wow-wow-wow. Where does the time go? Thirteen Months? Phew! A dozen times – two dozen times” (DL 43). He tells Chris that it was thanks to a man in a bar in Sligo and his Morris Cowley car that he found himself in Ballybeg with such a spontaneous decision. As part of his recent career as a Gramophone salesman, he is to travel around the whole country to sell Minerva Gramophones, but Ballybeg is his favourite town which he describes as “a named destination–democracy, ... heaven” (DL 78). In contrast to the confined space of the Mundy sisters, Gerry is granted with a broader space stretching from Ballybeg and the entire Ireland to the battlefields of Spain where he goes to fight with the International Brigade.

Gerry’s physical mobility in space exemplifies how he experiences time-space compression, while, ironically enough, “the road from the town gets longer every day” (DL 20) for the Mundy sisters. In the play, there are many references to bicycles and motorbikes as latest trends in Ireland, but women are surely not the trend followers. When Gerry tells Chris how he was selected for the International Brigade and reports the questions addressed, he underlines the fact that it was due to his ability to ride: ‘I take it you are a Syndicalist?’ ‘No.’ ‘An Anarchist?’ ‘No.’ ‘A Marxist?’ ‘No.’ ‘A Republican, a Socialist, a Communist?’ ‘No.’ ‘Do you speak Spanish?’ ‘No.’ ‘Can you make explosives?’ ‘No.’ ‘Can you ride a motor-bike?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘You’re in. Sign here’ (DL 78). However, the sisters are not endowed with the same skill; thus, they have a very limited sense of space. One day, when Kate explains her decision to start learning how to ride, she fears a possible ridicule: “The road from the town gets longer every day. You can laugh if you want but I am going to get that old bike fixed up and I am going to learn to ride this winter” (DL 20). Kate’s distance does not shrink but extends; even so, she decides to learn cycling, which signifies her desire to dominate the public space, the realm which is coded and denied access to her. Through this resolution, like their dance in the kitchen, Kate comes closer to problematizing her place in society as the Irish woman figure with her fixed identity attached to her domestic space and the Catholic ideal. She in a way unsettles the mechanism which

has long sought to stabilize the roles of women by limiting their mobility in space, which can be considered her challenge to the structured space of Ballybeg.

By way of conclusion, it can be said that traditional and global concerns converge in Friel's imaginary place Ballybeg, a mutable town where both the pagan and the modern are cherished as much as they are feared. Therefore, the thought of radios, American jazz songs, gramophones and motor-bikes appear along with that of the pagan festivals, rituals, Irish céili dances and Christian traditions. This is an inclusive place where "one new form does not necessarily kill off another" (Kiberd 5737). As it is foregrounded, even though technological advancements have rendered the boundaries between Ballybeg and the wider world more porous, the town still has a tendency to carry out its pagan rituals and pre-Christian traditions, which Friel proposes as an alternative space to the restrictive social space of Ballybeg. Emphasizing the existence of these diverse forms, Friel does not essentialize either of them nor does he evoke nostalgia for the past which appears as a faint memory; instead, he brings together these influences in the inclusive space of Ballybeg. Friel, in this sense, underlines the significance of conceptualizing Ballybeg not as a static site but a plane where possibilities might be welcome and relations are formed both locally and globally in a progressive way as in Massey's global sense of place. As I have tried to shed light on, such an emphasis on the idea of close contact with other forms, in fact, explains how Friel envisages a place which disregards the territorial alphabet of categories, borders or boundaries and embraces difference by adopting a way of looking both inward and outward as in his notion of the fifth province.

This progressive sense of place is also foregrounded in Friel's approach to the notion of 'home' in the play which he treats on a fluid ground, challenging social constructions of nationalism and totalizing narratives. Friel's representation of the Mundy house and the household, through the illusory narrative of the narrator-character Michael, breaks away with romantic descriptions of the cosy Irish cottage kitchen where the hearth brings together all the members in unity and joy, a model befitting to the nationalistic ideal. For this reason, offering a juxtapositional reading of Bachelard and Massey, this chapter has shown that with its threshold spaces evoking threat and menace, the Mundy house is no felicitous space in the Bachelardean sense

but it is a subversion of this idea of ‘a place called home’ in Massey’s terms. In line with this, the Mundy sisters conceive Ballybeg within the changing prospects of Ireland rather than glorifying romanticized notions of homeland. From time to time, they try to hold on to the tradition in certain ways as emphasized in their céili dance and their yearning for the Lughnasa celebrations, however, they are actually more inclined to embrace the charms of the globalized world and ready to interact with it. The Mundys acknowledge the fact that Ballybeg does not have many cultural markers to grant the town an eternal, solid identity because it is the technological appliances such as radios and gramophones that leave a mark on any place by bridging the distances. Accordingly, they do not long for a glorious past or an unproblematical identity which they can trace in Ballybeg, but they are more concerned with creating “heres and nows” in their own ways as exemplified in their ecstatic céili dance, the moment when they could grip the chance of space and subvert the dominant ideology transgressing the borders and boundaries which set a wall on their space and subjectivity.

## CHAPTER 5

### 5. 'STORIES-SO-FAR': IMAGINARY GEOGRAPHIES IN WONDERFUL TENNESSEE

Landscapes refuse to be disciplined. They make a mockery of the oppositions that we create between time (history) and space (geography), or between nature (science) and culture (anthropology).

— Barbara Bender “Time and Landscape”

On the road map you won’t drive off the edge of your known world. In space, as I want to imagine, you just might.

— Doreen Massey, *For Space*

Brian Friel’s *Wonderful Tennessee* appeared three years after *Dancing at Lughnasa* in 1993 with its premiere at the Abbey Theatre. Like *Dancing at Lughnasa* *Wonderful Tennessee* was also staged on Broadway; however, it was overshadowed by *Dancing at Lughnasa*’s acclaimed fame and commercial success both at the Abbey Theatre and on Broadway. Many critics<sup>24</sup> regarded the play as a failed attempt, and it was also poorly received by the audience.<sup>25</sup> At that time, there was much concern about

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<sup>24</sup> See for example Fintan Helen Lojek, O’Toole and F.C McGrath. (O’Toole 113; Lojek 45; McGrath 248). In “Beyond Lough Derg: *Wonderful Tennessee*’s Elusive Allusions,” Helen Lojek claims that the reason why there were varying reviews of the Abbey productions of the play was that it had a “philosophical and symbol-based literary nature”. On the other hand, in *Critical Moments*, Fintan O’Toole asserts that the play offered a series of allusions, mythical references and intertextual material, yet its dramatic quality was insufficient to cover all those issues effectively. In the same vein, F. C. McGrath, spares only a few sentences to the play in his in-depth analysis of Brian Friel’s drama in *Brian Friel’s (Post)colonial Drama* stating that the play was far more behind the artistry and the triumph of the preceding play, *Dancing at Lughnasa*.

<sup>25</sup> In “In Frank Talk from Friel (1968)” Alan N. Bunce states that the arrival of *Wonderful Tennessee* on Broadway was a great success, yet “its closing was announced just two days after its opening” and the harsh criticism Friel had received did actually hurt him. (72)

Friel's resignation from Field Day and his refusal to premiere these two plays at the Derry-based theatre company. Despite all the arguments<sup>26</sup> raised against the play, as a successor of *Dancing at Lughnasa* and its kindred play, *Wonderful Tennessee* produced a vast array of criticism pertaining to the recurring themes of Friel's drama regarding a protean sense of place imbued with myth and ritual, and embedded in the contested geographies of Ireland in the wake of the Celtic Tiger Period.

The play features a group of three middle-aged, married couples: Terry and Berna; George and Trish; Frank and Angela. Apart from being close friends, the party is also related by family: Terry is Trish's brother, while Angela and Berna are sisters. The plot revolves around the party's decision to visit the island *Oileán Draíochta*, Island of Mystery on the coast of County Donegal in Ballybeg to celebrate Terry's birthday. The journey begins with Charlie, the minibus driver who takes the travelling party from Dublin to Ballybeg pier and is supposed to continue with Carlin, the ferryman, who assures the group that he will take them to their destination island *Oileán Draíochta* after he has finished some daily chores. Nonetheless, Carlin never keeps his promise and the group cannot make it to the island. Accordingly, Carlin becomes the intermediary figure between the pier and the island, the real and the ideal. Similarly, the island *Oileán Draíochta* remains a mystery, an object of desire as in their song 'Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring,' ever desired but never fulfilled. Therefore, the couples spend the night on Ballybeg pier and pass time telling stories, singing and dancing the way Beckettian characters do in *Waiting for Godot*. As Frank grumbles: "Waiting – just waiting – waiting for anything makes you a bit edgy, doesn't it?" (WT 394). Interestingly, Friel himself points at this connection referring to the setting in a diary entry dating August 1990: "uneasy thought: the relationship between the Island and Godot" ("*Brian Friel Papers*" MS37 123/2). In the end, the absurdity and futility of waiting on the pier and gazing out to sea enables the characters to contextualize place as 'event' filled with possibilities and the imaginative island landscape as the 'simultaneity of stories-so-far' in Doreen Massey's sense.

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<sup>26</sup> In Brian Friel, *Ireland and The North* Scott Boltwood explains the controversy that *Wonderful Tennessee* created as follows: "[N]o recent work by the author has so vigorously engaged, and divided, the critical community." (176)

Landscape as an essential concept proves significant to the narrative rendering of the play and its spatial reading. At first, remaining distant, landscape in Ballybeg pier in Donegal eludes the characters, and the place does not promise any idyllic retreat as the characters anticipated. Appearing strange and mysterious in an unsettling way, it makes the characters feel restless and out of place. Still, they have a strong desire to understand the historical specificities of the site and reach their destination island, Oileán Draíochta. Similarly, the island, as part of the landscape, appears dreamy creating a play between reality and imagination, here and there. More importantly, as a site between the land and the sea, it occupies a threshold space evoking liminality, the state of being attuned to the presence of multiplicity of possibilities and alternative spaces suggestive of infinite potentials. The details relating to the characteristics of Oileán Draíochta, its being once a site of pilgrimage now a touristic resort embracing modernisation, yet depopulated and in ruins, pervaded by mythical stories and rites also contribute to its uncanny space. Consequently, trapped in the closed space of the pier, the characters turn to storytelling, myth, ritual and dance while also experiencing the imaginative island space. As Lefebvre contends, “space does not arise from the visible-readable realm, but that it is first of all heard (listened to) and enacted (through physical gestures and movements)” (200). By forming relations with the Ballybeg pier, the characters re-constitute the Donegal landscape on which Celtic myths and stories, memories of the famine, emigration and years of unending wars as well as the myth of modernisation are embedded. Through this, Friel conveys how the Irish landscape preserves and fosters myths and rituals, which along with the ruins of the past, bear within themselves possible keys to future landscapes and other spaces formed in space-time through a series of spatial and temporal elements.

For all these reasons, this chapter seeks to explore how one should understand landscape in relation to space and place in *Wonderful Tennessee* within the context of the Celtic Tiger Period in Ireland. A thorough understanding of the relationship between landscape, space and place in the play can be illuminating in approaching what Irish society has often been associated with in the twentieth century, the flux. Therefore, the first section of this study provides a background on Friel’s structuring and writing *Wonderful Tennessee* with certain references to the Celtic Tiger period in

Ireland. It is followed by two parts focusing respectively on the pier and the island as Friel's spatial tropes along with a subsection on his engagement with myth and ritual in the play. To be able to offer an exploration of the significance of myth and ritual in terms of the Irish landscape in the play, this section also employs some conceptual tools by David Lloyd concerning his understanding of myth and ruins which he evaluates in *Irish Times: Temporalities of Modernity* (2008). In addressing landscape, the last section finally incorporates the themes explored in the previous sections and shows how Friel in *Wonderful Tennessee* responds to Massey's ideas about the possibilities in/of space, place and landscape in the contested geographies of Ireland.

### 5.1. In the Shadow of the Celtic Tiger: Writing *Wonderful Tennessee*

Before the Broadway opening of *Dancing at Lughnasa* in 1991, in an interview with Mel Gussow, while discussing the sources of his plays, Brian Friel discloses the working title of his next play as *The Imagined Place*: "If *Dancing at Lughnasa* is about the necessity for paganism," his following play [*Wonderful Tennessee*] would take its cue from "the necessity for mystery." He continues to note: "It is a mystery, not religion, but mystery finds its expression in this society" ("From Ballybeg to Broadway" 211). Similarly, in another interview, Friel emphasizes his point regarding one's need for beliefs and practices outside the main world religions: "I think there is a need for pagan life. . . . I don't think of it as disrupting Christianity. I think of it as disrupting civility. If too much obeisance is offered to manners, then in some way we lose or suppress the grumbling and dangerous beast that's underneath the ground" ("In *Dancing at Lughnasa*" 214). As his comments indicate, Friel defies essentialist approaches regarding morals and manners in society and contends that in life there should always be a room for both/and structures and other possibilities to be able to realize the irrational, the innate instinctive impulses hidden in our nature. Friel's opinion here, in fact, highlights the main concerns emphasized in *Wonderful Tennessee* in which he employs magical and mythical elements engaging with ritual: Greek myths, the Eleusinian Mysteries, the cult of Dionysius, paganism and Christianity. Featuring a society of constant flux as Ireland of the 1990s where loss of faith reigns, Friel presents modern, secular characters who articulate themselves through ritual and

myth, music and dance, sayings and stories trying to reconcile with the ‘dangerous beast’ struggling to surface from the depths of the unconscious. Through this, he subverts the dominant ideology, Logos, and transcends the limits of the rational thinking and realist form. He also establishes the idea that myth and ritual as liminal forms embodying both the sacred and the profane disrupt the binaries, the dogmatic faith set by dominant culture and create alternative truths, meanings, and spaces.

Friel’s approach to faith, his aim to go beyond the lines drawn by reason and his call for a blend of pagan rituals and Christian faith is also revealed in his commentaries. In his introduction to the edited collection of Charles McGlinchey’s memoir, *The Last of the Name* (1986), Friel explains what he has found to be permeating through McGlinchey’s book: “the behaviour of Catholic priests and Protestant ministers, and the mixed marriage of the old pagan practices with the new Christian dogmas, and the power of the shaman’s curse” (3). In this commentary, Friel emphasizes how McGlinchey focuses on the local practices to present the effects of grand, global issues on a constantly changing rural community. One might argue that in *Wonderful Tennessee* Friel shares these concerns with the author whose work he has evaluated by drawing attention to the changes in society caught in a triangle of a Gaelic past – old Christianity coexistent with ancient paganism, and the modern world. Friel, as Christopher Murray notes in *The Theatre of Brian Friel*, might have benefited from this book in *Wonderful Tennessee* just as he made use of Máire Mac Neill’s book *The Festival of Lughnasa* (1962) for composing *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1957). Moreover, the play also has its resonances with Seamus Heaney’s poetry collection *Station Island* (1984) which Heaney dedicated to Friel. Anthony Roche in his commentary on the play explains that Friel, as early as 1983, had actually sketches on a play, in the form of a travel narrative, called *Lough Derg*.<sup>27</sup> Following that year, Seamus Heaney published his poem sequence which describes a contemporary pilgrimage to Lough Derg, a place characterized by its association with Catholic religion and its rituals of penance and reconciliation (*Theatre and Politics* 187). In

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<sup>27</sup> Lough Derg, also known as St Patrick’s Purgatory, is a medieval Christian penitential site in County Donegal.

1990, when Friel resumes writing the play, he quits the idea of using the religiously loaded site Lough Derg as his setting. Instead he chooses Oileán Draíochta, a fictional island inspired by a small island, off the coast of County Donegal, called Inishkeel, an important early Christian monastic site and a townland tracing back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Roche further notes that Friel's decision not to use the place as a backcloth for its narrative was both an act of avoiding "deliberate literary influence" and an intentional escape from "traditional Catholic belief." (Theatre and Politics 187)

On the other hand, Shane Murphy provides a different viewpoint on the issue by focusing on how each writer treats spatial notions and deconstructs the established modes of thinking along with myths and rituals attached to the places and landscapes of Ireland. In the article "Setting the Island Story Straight," Murphy foregrounds how Seamus Heaney and Brian Friel dwell on a certain "cartographic discourse" with the aim of de-mythologising and/or re-mythologising the sense of authenticity inherent in Irish nationalism by presenting various locations, employing place-names, referring to and emphasizing the close links between language and place (22). Murphy links this tendency to both writers' being affiliated with the Field Day Theatre Company and its advocacy of the fifth province. It should be noted that what Murphy asserts resonates in the play because in the end desert island becomes a metaphor of the fifth province, a plane unbounded by time or physical locatedness but an alternative space towards a re-imagination of Ireland and Irishness. The title of *Wonderful Tennessee* as well as *Dancing at Lughnasa* or *Philadelphia Here I Come!* also validates Murphy's conclusions and illustrates how Friel makes use of geographical sites to address some grand issues of the nation like myth, history, identity and language.

As opposed to the previous play *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Wonderful Tennessee* is set in "the present day" Ireland, in 1993 when the country was about to enjoy a time of prosperity through the economic ventures in Celtic Tiger Period. The play, in this sense, is "an evocation of the Celtic Tiger present" (Roche, Theatre and Politics 183) and the characters' motives and actions can be said to be representative of the then-current society and situation in Ireland. Unlike the characters in *Dancing at Lughnasa* who were yet to be introduced into the charms of the globalized place through technological advancements and industrialization, the characters in *Wonderful*

Tennessee belong to this modern, industrialized community, and they are identified with the material possessions and the physical comfort they have rather than the spiritual values. Their situation however bears its own irony in the sense that they have not internalized the changes brought to their culture and lifestyle yet nor have they completely liberated themselves from the boundaries of the past. For instance, they do not even know how to open a sealed tin of a honey cake nor do they know the exact name of the exotic food they have brought with them: “Marrons glacés – whatever they are. George?” (WT 384). Even so, such extravagant food or the idea of taking an option on an island have been their companion all the way from the city to the countryside and helped them to ‘dwell,’ to ‘belong,’ and to ‘define’ themselves capturing the zeitgeist of the 1990s. As Gerry Smyth asks wonderingly: “what does it mean – what can it mean – to be Irish in the wake of the Celtic Tiger?” (“Irish National Identity after the Celtic Tiger” 136). Friel’s *Wonderful Tennessee* might be considered as one answer to trace this issue because here the characters try to define themselves with such values as materialism and bourgeois consumerism<sup>28</sup> and achieve a transient sense of belonging like the temporary prosperity of the Celtic Tiger boom.

Setting the play against these contemporary concerns of Ireland, Friel actually marks a difference in his dramatic style. As opposed to the history plays of the 1980s, including *Translations* (1980) and *Making History* (1988), Friel introduces contemporary characters in *Wonderful Tennessee*. In a way, he takes a respite from the crisis and concerns of Irish history which he used to touch upon in the previous plays. Still, the characters in the play cannot be said to have been entirely exempted from Friel’s earlier preoccupations concerning historicity. Throughout the play, they engage in a different version of Irish history by telling stories and memories and revisiting an Irish past. In a way, as in the words of Helen Lojek, Friel offers “an historical world” within “a perspective beyond history” (“Beyond Lough Derg” 49). I think, what makes Friel’s presentation go beyond pure historical criticism is that he handles ‘time’

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<sup>28</sup> F. C. McGrath asserts that *Wonderful Tennessee* is a critique of the “modern, materialistic, and rationalistic Irish society,” which equally completes the picture of Friel’s own contempt for the “bourgeois consumerism and materialism of the Irish Republic that have emerged as the dominant values of contemporary, postliberation Ireland” (248).

delicately by employing several temporal concepts like story, legends, and to reflect upon the present and draw attention to the spaces of Ireland where time impinges on and presents future possibilities for human beings.

## 5.2. 'Another World Altogether:' Ballybeg Pier

Wonderful Tennessee takes place on the remote Ballybeg pier in north-west Donegal, "a place and an environment of deep tranquillity and peace" (WT 347). Situated in the midst of a vast landscape with the surrounding countryside and the sea, the pier immediately draws attention to its own spatial singularity as a central space endowed with natural elements like "the gentle heave of the sea; a passing seagull, the slap and sigh of water against the stone steps" (WT 347). Since the place is pervaded by "silence and complete stillness," the initial idea it gives is that of a rural, romantic idyll evoking serenity and simplicity; the impression which Friel tries to weaken throughout to avoid oversimplified descriptions of the iconic beauties of rural Ireland. It will soon be revealed that the atmosphere is full of menace, and the pier is overshadowed by dark stories of violence and sacrifice as well as the hidden secrets of the visiting couples who are burdened with financial problems and drifted into unhappy marriages.

Before presenting his characters in person and their private lives, Friel introduces the audience into an Arcadian landscape which gradually loses its idealized attributes upon the travelling group's entrance. When the trippers' minibus approaches the Ballybeg pier after a journey of four hours, the character of the place is immediately changed: "Now we hear another sound from a long distance away – an approaching minibus, and almost as soon as we identify the sound, discrepant and abusive in this idyllic setting, fade in the sound of people singing 'Happy Days are Here Again'" (WT 347). The couples, coming with their laughter and joy, fill the space of the pier with their subjectivities along with the sounds of chatter, cheers; singing and shouting, and they, suppressing the sounds of nature, alter the initial landscape. When such pandemonium spoils the deep serene, "the idyllic atmosphere is completely shattered" (WT 347), and the spatial quality of the site is transformed.

The preliminary picture Friel draws signifies the qualities of a pastoral, a heavenly place of peace and plenitude which is yet subject to alteration and destruction. Within this depiction, Friel introduces the conventional nature-culture dichotomy hinting at the idea that any human intervention in nature would spoil its original quality. Also, the impression of the ruined ambience in the play seems to be reaffirming the idea that human beings pose a threat to nature's integrity. Nevertheless, reading *Wonderful Tennessee* against such an approach would conceal the many layers Friel has offered in the play. As this section aims to show, Friel actually undermines the nature-culture dichotomy in the play and moves beyond the binary logic by presenting characters who contribute to the specificity of place in their own ways and highlight the coevalness of culture and environment, human and non-human outside the dualistic forms as in Massey.

In "Landscape as a provocation: reflections on moving mountains," Massey criticizes narratives around nature/culture divide in order to address the notion of nature, landscape and place. Borrowing from Hecht and Cockburn's study on the rainforests as well as Rebecca Solnit's critique of the recent literature on environment, Massey observes that such a narrative is a block to imagining any positive human/nonhuman relations, "it is a narrative that inevitably entails a nostalgia, and a backward-looking rather than forward-looking outlook. It is an imagination of the Fall, built around a pre/post lapsarian dichotomy" (39). Massey's idea here relates to her aim of conceptualising place beyond the "realm of human social relations," and thereby forging a bond between physical world and non-human nature. As previously stated, in Massey's theorizing, place is characterized by openness and multiplicity, and it is regarded as a product of interrelations encompassing both human and non-human, physical and bio-physical elements and unfolding through time and space. In this sense, even though the opening scene of Friel's *Wonderful Tennessee* evokes a kind of narrative which Massey has problematized; in fact, nature and culture are co-constitutive in the play, and they are the parts of a more sophisticated system that signifies the landscape.

Moreover, by drawing attention to the changing atmosphere in the setting, Friel also refers to the changing conceptions of land and landscape in Ireland especially

during the Celtic Tiger Period. The serenity of the place in the play immediately brings to mind the long history of Irish nationalism which turned into a contradictory myth over time. The tendency to identify Ireland with unspoiled nature and timeless beauty has always prevailed in Irish history and manifested itself within various realms from the colonial period to recent tourism industry.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, it has always been a commonplace, especially in the nineteenth century, to associate land with Irish nationality in a romanticized fashion.<sup>30</sup> However, with the Celtic Tiger period, a time of rapid change and incessant conflict, the significance of land took a different shape. The flora and fauna of Ireland doubled in value attracting attention from prestigious companies especially in pharmaceuticals, medical technologies, electronics and engineering (Kirby & Padraig 2). Such business ventures of the period foreshadowed the common claim that Ireland could play a major role in technology in the twenty-first century, at the expense of the environment. Accordingly, the post Celtic Tiger phase was characterized by a different version of landscape – abandoned estates, derelict churches, untended gardens and neglected lands inhabited by people tackling with problems of poverty and immigration. Such shifting emphasis in the concept of landscape in Ireland preceding the Celtic Tiger period and in its aftermath in fact reveals that landscape can be shaped and reshaped through ideological concerns and social practice. This idea can be traced in *Wonderful Tennessee* where Friel shows how the landscapes in Ireland have been subject to transformation and how one particular landscape becomes influential in shaping and reshaping the thoughts and actions of a group of young people. It is to this changing topography that Friel introduces two of the play's central locations – the Ballybeg pier and the desert island, Oileán Draíochta.

The action in *Wonderful Tennessee* starts with the characters' leaving the enclosed space of their minibus and setting foot on the Ballybeg pier. There are not

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<sup>29</sup> See Gerry Smyth's *Space and the Irish Cultural Imagination* for a detailed discussion of travel and tourism in Ireland within the context of space and place. pp. (24-40).

<sup>30</sup> See Julia M. Wright's *Representing the National Landscape in Irish Romanticism*, Introduction (ix- xxxii).

many details provided about their departure point; however, it is implied that coming from the city and from different professions, the characters belong to the urban space, a space of movement and action situated within a built environment which consists of educational, religious, judicial and social institutions. These are all constructed places set in stark contrast to the space of the Ballybeg pier. Friel does not give any clues about the minibus trip except its being a long journey accompanied by the bus driver Charlie's jokes. Therefore, the audience would have to wait for a while to gain an insight into the characters' journey along with the features of the surrounding landscape.

Contrary to many journey narratives which start on the road and unfold as the characters proceed towards their destination, Friel's play starts where the motorway ends. As the generic, transitory space of travel, the motorway in the play materializes a certain 'non-place' as defined by Marc Augé in *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (1992). Augé's definition of non-place is the very opposite of the idea of anthropological place as "relational, historical and concerned with identity" (77-8). Referring to the digitalization and technological developments as the triggering elements of the beginning of a new era called super-modernity, Augé stresses that in such an age particular spaces like airports, railway stations, motorway routes and vehicles, hotels or shopping malls evoke a sense of displacement, thereby generating non-places. Non-places are different from places in the sense that they are always on the making, and "they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten" (79). As a result, the identity created in non-places is temporary, and it is a collective one shared by the users that form mandatory relations with place. Therefore, to Augé, the space of non-places is problematical because it "creates neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude, and similitude" (103), and it "puts the individual in contact only with another image of himself" (79). The characters in *Wonderful Tennessee*, coming from Dublin and belonging to different segments of society are used to such non-places. Additionally, as the narrative reveals, they seem to have stood at many crossroads and taken many critical decisions, which eventually affected their identity. However, Friel, by shifting the focus from the motorway to the pier, from the city to the countryside and from the

characters' journey to their encounter with the landscape, in fact, draws attention to the chance of space, space as the plane of possibility and multiplicity in Massey's sense.

That *Wonderful Tennessee* reveals no specific details about the characters' journey to the Ballybeg pier in a way complicates our reading of the play because paths provide certain insights into the characters' engagement with time and space. Describing a train journey from London to Milton Keynes and watching the landscape out of the window, Massey once explains that this is not just a single journey from one place to another but it is movement in both time and space. It is a "constant process of the making and breaking of links" of relations through which space and place as well as the self are continuously made and remade (For Space 117-18). In this respect, one should consider the path the six excursionists of Friel followed before emplacing themselves at the Ballybeg pier, facing and resolving their dilemmas and re-constituting their selves.

The couples depart from Dublin city to arrive in Donegal, a frontier county with a border of 6 miles situated in the northwest side of the island, which eventually plays a part in the formation of their psyche and relationships. The Irish border which has been subject to certain variations over the years, runs for 310 miles from Lough Foyle to Lough Carlingford in the north of Ireland, dividing the twenty-six counties of the Republic of Ireland from the six counties of Northern Ireland. Almost one-third of the total counties touch the border which cuts across the Irish landscape in a serpentine form. Over the years the form of the Irish border changed a great deal so did the lands it crossed out and the lives it intersected because boundaries, as Massey states, "inevitably cut across some of the other social relations which construct social space" ("The Conceptualization of Place" 68). Beginning first with the Government of Ireland Act (1920), the border made its presence more visible within time following the Civil War in 1922, the Second World War and the Troubles in the mid-twentieth century becoming practically a trade barrier, a site of military checkpoint as well as the latent symbol of political division. There were strict controls on both sides of the border and measures taken by both governments to provide better border management and avoid certain problems like illegal import or export. For instance, with the 1937 Constitution,

as the Irish historian Mary E. Daly observes, for fear of security violation, cross-border travel was restricted by law to 16 crossing points out of 180 cross-border roads. Daly further contends that such restriction meant the border not only divided the lines on a map between the counties but it also segregated neighbourhoods, communities, communications and commercial networks. Therefore, the consequences were yet to be paid in several places in the form of economic deprivation (3). Finally, when the last British troops ended their operation and left Northern Ireland in 2007, which was thought to be an outcome of the peace process that had been initiated by the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, there were only four military watchtowers stretching out the landscape and awaiting to be dismantled within a couple of months. Today, there are not many details to distinguish between the two sides of the border, upon crossing, except the change in signboards, numberplates, markings and speed limits along the road. Nonetheless, the border, remaining as an extension of the power mechanisms prevalent in societies, still occupies the Irish mind creating boundaries across social relations and in the construction of spaces and places.

The characters make no references to the border or the boundaries nor to the routes they have taken by travelling from Dublin to County Donegal; still, they are probably aware of where the Northern Ireland ends and where the Republic of Ireland begins. They must have grown up listening to the stories of British colonial history and the contests over the land. Therefore, their understanding of the border is more nuanced. To them, remaining a legacy of the British Imperialism, the border is not only a geographical precision but also a sharp division between two ideological spaces, British/Protestant/Unionist and Irish/Catholic/Nationalist. In this sense, the border is a transecting space, a space of divisions, oppositions as well as unity and multiplicity, which renders it a complex phenomenon for the characters. Informed by these boundaries, it must be the case that the couples not only travel across the country and traverse the spaces of Ireland but they are also “travelling across trajectories” because “arriving in a new place means joining up with, somehow linking into, the interwoven stories of which that place is made” (For Space 119). These stories, as Massey contends, might be either related with environmental changes or societal changes

which equally play a significant role upon a person's perceiving that place and emplacing himself/herself there.

Along similar lines, in *Place and Space in Modern Fiction*, Wesley A. Kort asserts that in a narrative when the author takes the characters and the reader to an unfamiliar place or when there is a rapid and profound change observed in a locale "the language of place becomes prominent" (16). Kort's contention in relation to novel also sings in unison with *Wonderful Tennessee* in which the six excursionists journey from Dublin to an unfamiliar territory only to find the place speaking to the characters and evoking mystery. Even though they gaze at it with a feeling of wonder and refer to it as 'wonderful,' the place creates a feeling of antagonism because it bears the political baggage of a long colonial history, the stories of emigration and modernisation, a path the characters have followed from Dublin to Donegal.

Following this journey along the border, when the minibus stops at the end of the Ballybeg pier in Donegal and drops the group off, the characters stand looking completely bewildered and having no clear idea about the identity of this place. What characterizes their first encounter with the place is, therefore, a shared sense of displacement first articulated by Trish: "Help! We're lost!" / "Lost, I'm telling you. This is the back of nowhere" (WT 347- 48). Feeling out of place, the couples cannot identify their location nor can they discern their destination visually. Angela asks ironically: "Where's this wonderful island? I see no island" (WT 348), and she blames Terry for bringing them to such a place which is everything but 'wonderful:' "Admit it, Terry: you're lost" (WT 348). This remote and nondescript pier with no settlements in sight does not immediately welcome them. In fact, they feel that they are "the first people ever to set foot here" (WT 349). Hence, from the moment the couples step into the unfamiliar space of the pier, a feeling of powerlessness and estrangement grips them since the place bears neither a trace of Terry's promised 'wonderful island' nor anything desirable and pleasing to the eye. Accordingly, the real purpose of their journey becomes a real question mark signified by Angela's rhetorical remark: "What in God's name are we doing here?" (WT 349). Alongside confusion and disillusionment comes a certain sense of displacement. Trish thinks of going "straight back" with Charlie to Dublin (WT 349), and Berna wishes to "go home" (WT 352) as

well as encouraging the others to do the same: “Let’s all go back with Charlie.” (WT 349)

All the characters, except Terry, express some sort of reaction upon their first encounter with the place. Among the party, Berna, Terry’s wife, is the most bothered. Seeing the place, she almost experiences a break-down and whines in desperation:

BERNA. Take me home, Terry – please

TERRY. Wonderful, isn’t it?

BERNA. Please, Terry.

TERRY. Just for tonight, Berna – just one night. Believe me – you’ll love it.

BERNA. Have you any idea how desperately unhappy I am?

BERNA. I don’t think I can carry on, Terry.

TERRY. Of course you can carry on. The doctor says you’re a lot better. (He reaches out to touch her.) Did you remember to take your pills this morning?

The music stops. Berna: (quietly, almost with pity) For God’s sake ... (WT 352).

Berna is a solicitor who is currently out of practice because she is suffering from a psychological disorder, and she has been under medical treatment for some time. Terry’s attempt at persuasion proves insufficient in encouraging her to stay since she makes it clear saying, “I don’t think I can carry on” (WT 352). Although she joins George on the song ‘I Want to be Happy’ and sings enthusiastically repeating the word “happy, happy, happy, happy” (WT 349), deep down she feels heavily distressed. On the other hand, Terry, being the leader of the group, the ‘sherpa’ who invited his wife and friends to this trip to celebrate his birthday does not appear to be much worried about the distressful situation. He describes the place and their forthcoming adventure as ‘wonderful,’ and he comforts them saying, “Believe me – it’s everything you ever dreamed of.” (WT 350)

Judging by Berna’s plea, the place does not immediately give her a ‘sense of home,’ but alienates her in a hostile way. Once she cannot attain the feeling of shelter and safety in place and fails in coordinating herself there, she experiences a breakdown which culminates in her jumping into the sea by the end of act one. Berna’s reaction to this unfamiliar terrain is not only a psychological collapse but also a form of self-expression, a kind of transgression through which she aims to feel at home, which reveals the way how she apprehends dwelling and Being in the world in Heideggerian sense. Berna’s understanding of place which signifies fixity and rootedness in space is

in fact in line with the conventional idea of home as the essence of human existence as put forward by Heidegger. Nonetheless, Ballybeg pier with its uncanny landscape offers no centre or sense of belonging and promises no home to Berna as well as the other characters making them all dissociated from the place.

When the engine starts up, and the bus driver Charlie is prepared to head for Dublin where the couples call ‘home,’ the excursionists feel utterly deserted and in need of help. They all yell in desperation and try to persuade Charlie not to leave them in this derelict place: “Don’t go, Charlie! Don’t abandon us!” (WT 353). After Charlie heads home leaving them in this forsaken pier with the promise of coming back tomorrow, the characters think their only link with ‘civilization’ is cut off:

ANGELA. ‘Bye, lovely world.  
TRISH. ‘Bye, civilization.  
ANGELA. ‘Bye, Charlie.  
TRISH. Don’t forget us, Charlie.  
ALL. ‘Bye ... ‘bye ... ‘bye... (WT 353).

The bus driver Charlie provides the link between Dublin and Donegal representing the tension between the city and the country, culture and nature. Ballybeg pier, for these characters, with its ruined space evoking disintegration and decay stands for a site which is on the edge of civilization, whereas the city symbolizes the most advanced stage of human social development as well as the comfort and convenience of modern life. As a result, the characters consider themselves to have embarked on an adventure of misfortunes because the place bears no resemblance to the sites they have got used to seeing in the city. Along with Charlie, it is, therefore, the extravagant life-style and luxury of the Celtic Tiger, that ‘lovely world’ in their terms that Angela is waving to. Moreover, Charlie as the driver of the minibus operating between different places symbolizes movement and interaction in space. His unfixity in space stands in contrast to the party entrapped within the bounded space of the pier, the seascape, and the ominous view of the island, Oileán Draíochta. For this reason, Charlie’s departure creates disappointment and distress, which all adds up to their deepening sense of displacement.

This feeling of displacement is heightened more when the group is observed having difficulty in identifying their location and determining their action plan because

everything about this visit seems amiss and sounds unfamiliar. Seeming to have lost their sense of place, they ask Terry some questions, which might help them determine their geographical location:

TRISH. Where are we, Terry?

FRANK. Arcadia.

TERRY. Ballybeg pier – where the boat picks up.

TRISH. County what?

TERRY. County Donegal.

TRISH. God. Bloody Indian territory.

FRANK. Where does the boatman live?

TERRY. Back there. At the end of the sand dunes.

TRISH. (to George) Ballybeg, George. In County Donegal.

George nods and smiles. (WT 356)

In an effort to orient themselves in space, the characters try to identify the place and its geographical features. Departing from Dublin, these couples travel between different time-spaces and construct new spatial realities. When they arrive in Donegal, they attempt to understand the speciality of this rustic setting which they cannot name ‘home’ but ‘outside’ – “Bloody Indian territory” (WT 356). It is understood that their interpretation of ‘home’ is bound with the city; therefore, this rural space evokes a bizarre feeling as they immediately identify it with the Indian territory, a region set as homeland for displaced people.

It would seem that the characters’ understanding of place is based on a lexicon of exclusion and bound with binaries because they immediately draw an opposition between home and away, wilderness and civilization, nature and culture. Still, such an approach might be justified considering the characters’ background characterized by political and religious conflicts. A very similar situation can be observed in Seamus Deane’s *Reading in the Dark* where the main characters’ spatial experience within Derry city and with its borders and bridges is respective and of significance. In her analysis of the novel within a spatial perspective, Gerry Smyth offers the following interpretation:

[A]ll communities develop detailed maps of ‘home’ and ‘away’, and it is with reference to these maps that both imagined (such as the border) and real (such as the bridge and stream) places are negotiated. But the discursive figures (healing and enmity, for example) through which these spaces and places are

invoked are themselves ambivalent and contested, nowhere more so than in a community divided along sectarian lines. (Space and the Irish 150-51)

Smyth's observation underlines the fact that in geographies where there is a precise schism between religious orders and ideologies, nature or the architectural metaphors like bridges and borders evoke animosity between communities rather than stimulating peace and harmony. Accordingly, the notions of 'belonging' and 'dwelling' also become problematical making it difficult for the subject to negotiate with any place.

The characters' negotiation with Ballybeg pier takes different forms as the play proceeds, accentuating the disparity between home and away, the real and the ideal. One metaphor exemplifying this in the play is the recurrent figure of 'America' which plays a significant role in the play underscoring the tension between Ireland and America. In the first scene, when Terry comforts the group that they have completed the first step of their mission upon arriving Ballybeg pier, Frank, referring to the island in sight, cries out in surprise: "Next parish Boston, folks!" (WT 356). After a while when the exasperation of waiting for Carlin's boat tires them all, Frank once again grumbles: "No house. No boat. Nothing from here to Boston except a derelict church – without a roof" (WT 374). Frank's references to America and his associating Oileán Draíochta with Boston actually illustrate how America served as a realm of hope and promise for many Irish people during the famine years. As a place fulfilling the image of freedom, a hope to live outside the time and troubles of Ireland, it meant for them an uncaging of their potentialities. Therefore, with the Boston imagery, Friel in a way grants his characters the possibility to ponder upon the chance of crossing the Atlantic, crossing the borders and transcending the limits of the self through reinscribing themselves in another place and culture. As Angela's song also epitomizes: "That is the place / That shapes our destiny" (WT 377). However, Frank realizes that there is no possibility of reaching the island because Ballybeg pier does not bear any trace of living, and it is very unlikely that Carlin's boat will show up: "Nothing but bogland from here to the mountains. And not a boat from here to the horizon" (WT 376). In the present instance, Frank describes the place as forgotten and forsaken, which he immediately associates with Ireland and its wetlands. Through Frank's contradictory

remarks, Friel introduces the audience into the play between hope and despair in the Irish psyche.

In most plays of Friel the trope of America functions in addressing the dynamics of globalization and its effects on Irish identity and culture in the shadow of the political relations between Ireland and America. For instance, in *Philadelphia Here I Come*, Friel presents Gar as a character who is torn between memory and hope as he prepares himself to set up a new life in America. In other plays, such as *Aristocrats* (1979) and *Give Me Your Answers, Do!* (1997), America is represented as a plane where knowledge and power reign and work specially to instruct the Irish in the ways of becoming a self-sufficient, modernized nation. During this process, the Americans themselves however realize the insufficiency they bear within themselves and their culture, which results in split selves, each position desiring the Other. These plays, in this sense, as Maria Germanou states, create “a diversified ideological and cultural field against claims for global homogeneity” (274). Hence, Friel, introducing the image of America in these plays, addresses the impossibility of a fixed, essential identity along with an intact, unspoiled national space.

In *Wonderful Tennessee*, this idea is more nuanced as the image of America is embedded in another image, the imaginary island symbolizing an ideal space, the possibility of another world, a ‘utopia,’ which brings to fore the question of place and identity. In *Staging Place: The Geography of Irish Drama*, referring to the reinscription of place in the late twenties and the modern era of computerized technologies and mass media, Una Chaudhuri states that the human beings’ experience of time and space is no longer rooted but broken up and scattered. Accordingly, the conventional questions which foreground place and personal identity as ‘who am I’ and ‘where am I’ are rendered irrelevant. In a sense, spatial identity is problematized in such an age when the self is a meandering social subject across space. Therefore, the America figure in modern drama symbolizes such an “erasure of spatial particularity” and signifies placelessness, a kind of utopia, which in the late twentieth century turned into a heterotopia in the Foucauldian sense. It serves a plane for “a critique, an engagement with and finally a revisioning of place” in modern drama. For this reason, it is significantly instrumental in challenging and disrupting the traditional

conceptions of place and identity along with the discourses of home (3-5). A link can be made between Chaudhuri's views and Friel's references to America and his depiction of place. The characters in the play, instead of seeking the comfort and ease of grounding themselves in a place which they could define as home, they desire and imagine new places 'outside' as exemplified in their vision of Boston or the Oileán Draíochta. At this point, Friel and his characters come closer to Massey's idea of the re-imagination of place and the discourses of home, which strips the concepts in question off their conventional definitions as fixed and romanticized.

Later, in the play, Friel blurs and disrupts the binary opposition set between home and outside when the news is disclosed that Terry has actually bought the island that the group is hoping to visit. Then, the place becomes the city's Other, symbolizing everything that the city is not. At that moment, the spaces of Dublin mingle with the spaces of Donegal, as the history of nation leaks into this remote county cut off from the Republic of Ireland sharing only one third of its long land border with it. 'Home' becomes what they desire for, as Frank exclaims: "he's taking us home! Wonderful, Terry!" (WT 378)

The significance of both Ballybeg pier and Oileán Draíochta changes for the couples throughout the play as the characters associate each place with various other places to which they either bear resemblance or no correspondence. In that sense, the identity of each place becomes even more elusive much in the same way their appearances do. There is also the indication that these places become constructions of the characters in a metatheatrical way. Just as Friel fictionalizes Ballybeg in *Wonderful Tennessee*, similarly his characters create, design and re-design the island as well as the pier in their minds. As Massey asserts, people constantly "make places," not only "in imagination" but also in "material practice," that is, they create places of the mind, "a blessed haven of retreat from an uncontrollable world" and they exclude certain people whom they regard to be outsiders from their world ("The Conceptualization of Place" 48). This approach has its links with Henri Lefebvre's lived space and Edward Soja's Thirdspace in the sense that people's engagement with place is not only tied to social practice in space but also to the process of producing images and ideas in the mind.

Massey's claim along with Lefebvre and Soja pinpoint the way the characters understand and construct place in *Wonderful Tennessee*. For these modern couples, the sense of place seems to be strongly linked with the idea of "home" and with a certain feeling of "settled localness" (60) in Massey's terms, which Friel tries to undermine throughout the play. As they bear this place-bound identity within themselves the couples cannot immediately and easily accommodate themselves in the unfamiliar space of the Ballybeg pier. First, they identify the place with the Indian region, "drawing a hard boundary between 'us' and 'them,'" which Massey calls the "geography of rejection" (67). Then, they cheer themselves up with the possibility of reaching the mystery island which gradually becomes 'homely,' once Terry reveals himself as the owner of the place. However, since the characters never fulfil their wish of visiting the island, the place becomes an object of desire, appearing dreamy, lacking any sense of 'place' and intensifying the party's sense of displacement.

Throughout the play, the island as a liminal site between the land and the sea, both visible and invisible, eludes the travelling party no matter how much they try to figure out its name, size, shape and location. In an effort to locate themselves in this place which they cannot identify properly, the characters start asking questions pertaining to the nature of the site. For instance, Trish thinks that the island is in the form of "a ukulele," and wants to learn the others' opinion. Frank perceives the island as "a perfect circle", while to Berna, it is shaped like "a rectangle" (WT 368). As they all gaze out to sea, they discuss whether there are "bushes" on the island or "whins," and "a small hill" (WT 370), which Frank considers to be improbable because the sight "looks more like clouds" to him (WT 371). Moreover, they try to understand whether the island is big or huge or neither; in County Sligo or in Donegal. Whenever they gaze at the sea and look at the horizon in an effort to locate the island, Trish loses it and Terry tries to make sure everyone sees it. Trish even asks Terry whether the island exists or not: "You're sure it's not a mirage?" (WT 369). Also, she keeps confusing the name of the county. Even when they are about to leave the place, she says: "I know it's County Sligo, Frank" (WT 441). Neither Terry the 'expert' nor the other characters can reveal the mystery of the island because "it keeps shimmering" (WT 368). What is more, the characters do not even know the name of the island nor have they any clear

idea about its lexical meaning and English translation. Their dialogue regarding the name of the island indicates how the myths of loss surrounding places and landscapes in Ireland also find relevance in language:

ANGELA. Has it a name, our destination?

TERRY. Oileán Draíochta. What does that mean, all you educated people?

BERNA. Island of Otherness; Island of Mystery.

TRISH. God, it's not spooky, Terry, is it?

BERNA. Not that kind of mystery. The wonderful – the sacred – the mysterious – that kind of mystery. (WT 369)

Among the six characters only Berna could translate the Gaelic name of the island to English, which she does by offering various meanings as the wonderful, the sacred, the mysterious. These characters seem to have detached from the Irish past marked by the issue of the anglicisation of the place-names by the English authorities during the Ordnance Survey. Theirs, however, is a more contemporary case which can be defined as the alienation of one from his/her own culture and identity, a distancing from home in both literal and metaphorical sense, a state which Friel actually celebrates throughout the play. Therefore, their only hope of spiritual homecoming lies in their reaching the island where they will “attest to the mystery,” affirm and acknowledge it while at the same time reassessing their self-identities and lives.

The desire of homecoming heightens as the island keeps eluding the characters like a sign on constant deferral. No matter how fleeting the site appears and how displaced the characters feel, they strive to see the island and experience its wonder. In this emphasis, the desire to visit the mysterious island illustrates how these characters bear the Other within themselves and aspire to feel at home through the unhomely. As George O'Brien also states referring to the late plays of Friel, even though the characters are gripped with a feeling of “homelessness,” they attempt to find “brave new worlds” (“The Late Plays” 92). The island with its eerie scenery evokes menace, yet the characters yearn for it because it constitutes a ‘brave new world’ full of possibilities. In his notes, Friel himself refers to this idea of the Other and explains that the play is “about a group of people who are drawn to this place because of its Otherness, because they feel they can touch the Other there. What the Other is they do not know” (Brian Friel Papers MS 37, 123/3). In a way, the characters

create an island of the mind and envisage the possibilities this imaginary place might offer.

This abstracted setting, the view of the imaginary island, is later set as an equivalent to the psychological depth of the characters playing a role upon their relation to space. The initial impression given in the play is that these urban couples escaped from the strains of the city to take the countryside as a place of shelter and seek refuge in its landscape. In other words, they try to find a “grounding” in nature in Massey’s terms (For Space 131). Nonetheless, they actually find themselves in another uncanny place, a place posing problems and conflict behind the veil. Nature does not necessarily provide a pre-lapsarian wholeness nor does it guarantee the picture of a heavenly world evoking solace and solitude. As Haraway states, “[N]ature is not a physical place to which one can go, nor a treasure to fence in or bank, nor as essence to be saved or violated. . . . It is not the ‘other’ who offers origin, replenishment, and service” (296). In line with Haraway’s view, it is clear that nature in Ballybeg pier does not offer any replenishment nor does it bear any relationship to authenticity. Still, the characters try to experience a metamorphosis, a transformation through the so called “heavenly” landscape.

The characters’ conflict with the place is finally soothed when they are convinced that Carlin will not keep his promise to take them to the island and that they will have to spend the night on the pier. After they unpack their belongings and create their own territory, the private space, along the pier, they start assessing the place and the landscape. Amazed by the view, Frank draws the group’s attention to the serenity of the site: “Listen! Not a sound” (WT 358).

TRISH. And that view! Look!

FRANK. What were these stones for?

TERRY. Weights for lobster pots.

FRANK. Amazing. Another world altogether.

TRISH. Heavenly.

TERRY. Yes.

TRISH: You’d think you could see beyond the horizon. It really is wonderful. Oh, my goodness ... (to George) Ballybeg pier. (WT 358)

As the couples have this anticipation to indulge in a Wordsworthian experience of nature, they are enchanted by tranquillity, seclusion and the picturesque view.

Meanwhile, Terry constantly promotes the sight to have his friends' approval about the place. Therefore, he keeps asking for their opinion of the place, and he also tries to give some information about the place referring to the furnishings, bollards, and the stones scattered around the pier.

The remote Ballybeg pier in north-west Donegal with its natural and built environment represents a site laden with a network of place-relations. As the stage directions and Terry's account reveal, the pier was built in 1905 but it "has not been used since the hinterland became depopulated many decades ago." On the floor, there are fragments of fishing nets, lobster pots, smashed fish-boxes, rusty bollards and rings, which indicates the fact that the site used to be a fishing town, Friel's image of a post-industrial site. There are also the remains of a rotten cruciform formed wooden stand with a life-belt survived on the pier. The pieces scattered around the pier floor bring to mind a distant past keeping a vague connection with the present like the damaged pier itself which stands as the only linking point between the open sea and the land.

Ballybeg pier in its present ruined state, in this sense, does not have much significance for these modern couples who belong to a consumerist culture characterized by abundance and luxury. However, as they come to experience the site, it is understood that the place is woven out of a variety of stories which make it an articulation within the wider, more complex topography of space. Inhabiting the pier, the couples realize that Ballybeg pier overlooking the island Oileán Draíochta is actually a gate opening into new futures because within the enclosed space of the pier they could envisage new beginnings. As in the words of Lojek, "the world of this play is narrow, desolate, crumbling, futureless — but from it are visible the wonders of nature and the faint, ambiguous promise of the Isle of Otherness" ("Beyond Lough Derg" 48). Therefore, only by submerging themselves in the time and space of the pier and trying to perceive its historical significance do the couples understand the characteristics of the place and settle their sense of displacement. As Jeff Malpas also avers in *Place and Experience*, people comprehend the dynamics of spaces, places and landscapes through personal and historical accounts attached to a place, which

provides significant clues about the nature of that specific place and the possibilities it might offer. (186)

Malpas' contention is undoubtedly true, but there are also the impossibilities, the roads not taken, which specify a place and assign certain values to it. In *Wonderful Tennessee*, because the characters never reach the island appearing "straight out there" but keeps eluding them (WT 367), the place remains a desire long awaited but never fulfilled. This experience in fact plays a part in both the character of the place and the characters' experience of the place. As Massey notes:

If space is rather a simultaneity of stories-so-far, then places are collection of those stories, articulations within the wider power-geometries of space. Their character will be a product of these intersections within that wider setting, and of what is made of them. And, too, of the non-meetings-up, the disconnections and the relations not established, the exclusions. All this contributes to the specificity of place. (For Space 130)

Massey regards space as the sphere of openness and multiplicity, which she defines as the convergence of spatial and political practices. The openness of space and its being a multiple entity is, in this sense, closely related with its relational nature along with its specificity. In the same vein, places are locally distinct due to their relations with global places on both the social and spatial level. Therefore, what makes a place locally and globally specific at the same time is actually related to the social practices in space, stories and histories, journeys and connections, cultural exchanges, economic and political relations as well as the way how people respond to such processes.

Friel's Ballybeg in *Wonderful Tennessee* is not on the map but it is conjured up from the imagination of spaces, places, and landscapes transcending the binary logic of here and there. As the following section aims to demonstrate, Ballybeg reveals its specificity when the characters accept to experience the time and space of the pier and understand the relational nature of social and spatial practice carried out there. Its local prominence stands out when the characters start narrating various stories and enacting the rituals related with the site. Similarly, its global ties are exposed by the characters' constant references to Boston, Greece, and Italy or George's repertoire of British and American songs. It is through such trajectories that made the site what it is the characters start to grasp the significance and specificity of the place.

### 5.3. The Ritual Landscape in County Donegal

Friel in *Wonderful Tennessee* presents a variety of spaces, including that of the pier and the island, either paralleling or juxtaposing one another in the composition of the Donegal landscape. On the Ballybeg pier, through the characters' stories about the island, the contemporary Ireland's social space and the spaces of Greek rituals, pagan mysteries and Christian rites converge having an effect on the characters' understanding of the specificity of place. By relating to space in Donegal, turning to ritual and enacting the imitated form of the rites of the place, the characters eventually emplace themselves on the island and start to experience its time and space. Once the travelling party understands that there is no way but to accept what this place offers, they start to accommodate it and make it a temporary 'home' by gazing and moving around, touching the objects on the pier and sitting on the bollards. Gradually, their contact with the place brings a sense of comfort, and the couples experience the site immersing themselves into the stories of the place, into its spatio-temporal dimension. Once they start singing songs and dance; spin stories, narrate mythical accounts relating to the place, their experience of the past and present becomes different. Their stories bring various temporalities, and the static perception of time gives way to subjective time making the party feel lost through an altered sense of time. As Trish asks wonderingly: "A bit mad this, isn't it? What time of day is it? (to Berna) Maybe we're all mad, are we?" (WT 363). As this section aims to foreground, by turning to stories and myths, the characters reconfigure what Massey has identified as the spatio-temporal quality of the places because "travell[ing] between places is to move between collections of trajectories and to reinsert yourself in the ones to which you relate" (For Space 130). Connecting themselves to the time and space of the pier, they all start to perceive and understand the significance of the site which stands amidst ruins and myths against the shifting spaces of Ireland.

In the present section, the terms 'ruins' and 'myth' are treated within a frame which the Irish critic David Lloyd has drawn in the *Irish Times*: *Temporalities of Modernity*, basing his thoughts on the misconceptions regarding Ireland and its

modernisation history.<sup>31</sup> In his introduction to the book, departing from the widely quoted phrase “the past is another country,” Lloyd claims that throughout the modernisation period Ireland has been regarded as the epitome of backwardness and incivility due to its liminal status between tradition and modernity. However, as Lloyd believes, Ireland as a nation has changed a lot by overcoming the trauma of the Famine, the Troubles, the sectarian struggles and political upheavals, along with the social, economic and psychological dependence on Britain. In saying this, Lloyd also underlines that modernisation has been successful in many respects in Ireland, yet the very same process has in fact its contradictions being not much different from ‘capitalist rationalisation.’ Lloyd’s problematisation of the term modernisation is based on what Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer defined as ‘the dialectic of enlightenment,’ the idea that modernisation is Janus-faced because it can strengthen the power and position of certain institutions and mechanisms, abuse nature and society under the pretence of development and growth. Further, Lloyd extends his critique to literature, the historicist narrative which associates modernisation with “the progress from the backward to the advanced, from the pre-modern to the modern” while regarding any element resistant to this progressive mode as old and primitive (6-13). Calling into question the nature of historicism, Lloyd actually aims to emphasize that the remains of the past are not the indications of a time characterized by backwardness because these fragments survive into the present with some “differential significance” (13), which accordingly represents the new possibilities and potential futures secreted in the past.

Lloyd’s ideas regarding linear narratives and his call for an alternative conceptualization of historical time and contemporary landscape are linked to his opinions regarding ruins and myth which he borrows from Ashis Nandy’s<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> See also *Irish Contemporary Landscapes in Literature and the Arts* edited by Marie Mianowski, which proposes new insights through five different chapters on the contemporary landscapes of both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland building on the idea of ‘myth’ in Lloyd’s sense.

<sup>32</sup> Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*, Oxford, 1983, pp. 57–59.

understanding of myth. Lloyd believes that the ‘ruins’ of the past are not the representations of an unsophisticated country which survived modernisation nor are they the ornaments of the Irish landscape evoking nostalgic associations. Rather, they are the signs of alternative histories and trajectories, of other spaces because one can only encounter instances of authenticity and intactness among disintegration and decay (23-24). Moreover, regardless of the fact that they indicate degeneration, ruins, like myths, are atemporal, independent of and unaffected by time:

Ruins, indeed, have the structure of myth, . . . and they are subject to the paradox of myth. Detached from a given moment of the past, they float free into relation with the present, fragments of an archaic past that continue to work in and on the present. The meaning of a ruin is thus not exhausted by whichever archaeology assigns to it — a cause, a function, a date in the recorded time of historicism. (42)

As Lloyd’s ideas suggest, both myth and ruins have the power to shape the present while informing the past because they bear within themselves the traces of the past which can be transmitted to the present where they find meaning. In this sense, set free from the limitations of historical time, myth and ruins surrounding Ireland contribute to people’s experience with place and landscape, with the Irish space. Also, they form and transform the landscape through the gradual accumulation of additional layers, a process called by Lloyd “accretion.”

Naturally, the Irish landscape is a space where the remains of the past are ever present and traceable either in the form of fortresses, castles, abandoned estates or in the form of dance, music, storytelling and rites, all of which can be considered as resistant structures and modes to colonial order. In this respect, myths and ruins should not be regarded as ‘pre-modern’ because they are actually in Lloyd’s words, “moments of modernity whose counter-cultural force lives on even in the damage that they register” (Carvalho da Annuniação 271).<sup>33</sup> Myth is not the archaic or a cultural superstition but it is a notion bearing references to both the past and the present in a relational, here-and-now form. Likewise, ruins are the structures that ensure a sort of continuity and harmony between human beings and nature. Together, these archaic

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<sup>33</sup> In his reply to the review of *Irish Times: Temporalities of Modernity* by Viviane Carvalho da Annuniação Lloyd clarifies his point about the way he has contextualized myth and ruins.

entities are the memories of places and people, the cultural practices, and traditions that persist in Ireland's landscapes which in Massey's sense can be conceptualised as a "simultaneity of stories-so-far." In this respect, when complemented with Lloyd's and Massey's ideas, in *Wonderful Tennessee*, the landscape on Ballybeg pier, the view of the mysterious island Oileán Draíochta, a patchwork of ruins from various civilisations actually becomes the promise for other spaces and new possibilities, a story that speaks today.

As Terry's account reveals, Oileán Draíochta used to be a "spectral floating island," a country of great natural beauty with hills and valleys, which appeared once every seven years from the fog. However, when some fishermen arrived on the island and made a fire, they broke the spell on it. As a result, the island was no longer spectral, and all became invisible except the whirling foam and the dolphins popping on to the waves (WT 369). Terry's description of the island is based on his own memory of a pilgrimage he made with his father many years ago, at the age of seven. His account informs the group that the island used to be a sacred place which hosted the ruins of a monastery established by St. Conall from the Middle Ages. Even though Terry claims that he does not remember the surroundings properly, he gives various specific details about the rituals of the place and the symbolic objects surrounding the site. In particular, he remembers fasting the night before their arrival and having only bread and water for their first day on the island. He also recalls the holy well and the bush with votive offerings, all expressions of the pilgrims' desire to be cured, which completes Terry's picture of the sacrality of the place. As he recounts how they circled three heap of stones saying prayers repetitively and enacting rituals, his depiction of the island becomes more vivid:

TERRY. There were three beds – you know, mounds of stone – and every time you went round a bed you said certain prayers and then picked up a stone from the bottom of the mound and placed it on the top. . . . And I remember a holy well, and my father filling a bottle with holy water and stuffing the neck with grass – you know, to cork it. And I remember a whin bush beside the well – . . . And there were crutches and walking sticks hanging on the bush; and bits of cloth – bratóga, my father called them – a handkerchief, a piece of shawl – breached and turning green from exposure. (WT 371-2).

Terry's detailed account of the ritual enacted on the island illustrates how Friel combines the Greek rituals, pre-Christian and Christian Irish rituals in the comprehensive space of Oileán Draíochta and Donegal. As Bertha notes, bringing various types of religious ceremonies and social customs together Friel, in fact, draws a picture of the Irish landscape which bears the features of a pagan, pre-Christian and Christian past with religious and social markers like prehistoric tombs, forts of the leprechauns, cells, towers, and monasteries or churches from the feudal times. These details all contribute to the idea of the "proximity of the mythic and the mundane, the palimpsest of different cultural layers," which finds a parallel in Irish drama ("Island of Otherness" 129). Bertha's statement here is in concert with Lloyd's idea of "accretion" which he defines as the incorporation of multiple temporalities into the Irish landscape through the relational form of myth and ruins (Irish Times 38-39). In a sense, Terry's account of the rituals of the place based on his childhood memory focusing on mythical narratives and ritual practice brings together space and history; multiple temporalities, the past and the present and intertwines them on the Ballybeg pier.

The details relating to rituals and religious practice in Oileán Draíochta are actually significant in the sense that they also give clues about the social space of the island. As the most evident spiritual symbol of the place, the traces of St. Conall's church on the island draws attention to the existence of human intervention and sacral practice in the site in the past. However, there is no monumental space or an organizing power now on the island which structures social space by imposing laws and principles in Lefebvre's sense. As Terry suggests, people visited such places for religious purposes and healing, and they offered some objects to saints and gods with the expectation of a cure in return. In addition to this, the recent history records that the place also hosted wild parties with excessive drinking and sexual activity. Local people here produced a sort of homemade whiskey, called poitin, illegally, and "[t]here were even stories of drunken orgies" (WT 372), reminiscent of Dionysiac festivals.

Moreover, the details Terry provides about such frantic celebrations and the legend regarding the island's past and its sacred nature can also be linked to Frank's brief adventure, 'Ballybeg epiphany.' While trying to capture the scenery at dawn, a

way of controlling space and time, Frank sees a dolphin come upwards out of the sea and dance for him for about a minute. He almost gets possessed by what he had seen behind the pier and the way he contextualizes the dolphin story is along similar lines to Terry's account of the spectral island: "Just before daybreak there was a white mist suspended above the island; like a white silk canopy. And as the sun got up you could see the mist dissolve and vanish. So of course, I thought: Oileán Draíochta emerging from behind its veil –capture this for posterity!" (WT 420). In his encounter with the dolphin, Frank almost trembles with elation since nature in this remote part of the country evokes a sense of 'deepness' in him, which Friel tries to undermine though. Even if Frank hesitates to share what he has already seen with the group, his sudden excitement and perplexity communicates itself:

FRANK. Just as the last wisp of the veil was melting away, suddenly – as if it had been waiting for a sign – suddenly a dolphin rose up out of the sea. Like a faun, a satyr; with its manic, leering face. Danced with a deliberate, controlled, exquisite abandon. Leaping, twisting, tumbling, gyrating in wild and intricate contortions. And for that thirty seconds, maybe a minute, I could swear it never once touched the water – was free of it – had nothing to do with water. A performance – that's what it was. A performance so considered, so aware, that you knew it knew it was being witnessed; wanted to be witnessed. Thrilling; and wonderful; and at the same time – I don't know why – at the same time ... with that manic, leering face ... somehow very disturbing. (WT 420-421)

As the above quotation illustrates, Frank's experience on the pier has contrasting effects, fantastic and unsettling at the same time. The description of the dolphin and her dance is laden with both mythical and mystical images. The dolphin's movements, as Frank describes, are so delicate and intense that it is like a stage performance, a ceremony held before the audience. The dance is performed with "exquisite abandon" like the Mundy sisters' Bacchic dance in *Dancing at Lughnasa* or Molly's hornpipe in *Molly Sweeney*.

What makes Frank enchanted with the dance is the way the dolphin experiences space and achieves a kind of transgression setting herself free from the water, its containment and barriers. She dances never knowing that she is inside the water and feels the totality and beyond. This "wonderful," "unbelievable" and "thrilling" atmosphere disturbs Frank creating a sense of dismay and worry "for some reason" (WT 421). He feels so thrilled by this experience that he becomes ashamed of his

passion and the power of the affair. Like the Mundy sisters who experience a brief transgressive moment through their dance in the kitchen and who immediately resume their daily chores when the Marconi stops in Dancing at Lughnasa, or Molly Sweeney's bursting into tears suddenly and feeling powerless while dancing, Frank also feels uncomfortable. In the end, his awkward reactions betray his embarrassment at his passion about the influence of what he has seen, a real "ceremonial dance" (WT 422) which subverts the hierarchical structure of time and space, and blurs the distinction between these categories, creating a flux, a flow.

Throughout the play, Oileán Draíochta remains inaccessible and inviolable covered under "a white silk canopy" as described in Frank's epiphany, and inhabited by the strange man Carlin. Similar to many places connected with God or dedicated to a religious purpose, Oileán Draíochta is not within easy reach of the Ballybeg pier, which poses a problem for the characters' journey. Additionally, this Carlin who could be regarded as the bridge between the pier and the island does not facilitate the party's passage. There seems to be something amiss about Carlin much in the same way as it is with Oileán Draíochta itself. In the course of the play, Carlin, with his strange habits, complicates the couples' minds and impels them to draw various conclusions about the ferrying man. For example, he makes fire at midnight and lights it up again after three hours as if he is playing a game with the characters. The house where he lives also evokes eccentricity; it is dark, cold, inhabited by the 'timeless' ferrying people, and enclosed by walls as opposed to the open space of the pier. Tormented by the bizarre situation and in an effort to understand Carlin's motives, Frank questions his habit of lighting fire late at night and asks Terry for more explanation. Attributing the man's behaviour to having some mystical values, Terry states: "Time has no meaning for a man like that" (WT 383). Contrary to what other characters think, Terry has faith in Carlin, and he believes that he will take them to the island once he is done with his daily tasks. However, Frank has no respect for Carlin whom he humiliates for being a peasant and describes him with all the negative connotations like ancient, filthy, and toothless, "bloody smiling all the time" (WT 385). Frank seems to have given up hope on reaching the island because he thinks Carlin "has no human feelings" and that he in fact does not have any intention of ferrying them across. (WT 384)

Through this figure of the almost a-temporal universal ferrying man Carlin whose name is a derivative of the Greek god Charon, the ferryman of Hades, Friel draws an analogy between the past and the present state of the site. Ballybeg pier as the couples' accommodation represents the space of the modern Irish Catholicism with which the characters are not quite at home. Across the pier, Oileán Draíochta, on the other hand, stands for the pagan, pre-Christian, Celtic past while at the same time having ties with the golden ages of Antiquity. In this sense, the Carlin figure might be regarded as a key element in the play symbolizing the bridge to facilitate the characters' intended passage from one state to another, from the realm of the rational to the spiritual and bodily. However, in the end, Carlin who has been there "for generations" and ferrying people for "thousands of years" (WT 366, 377) never comes.

Convinced that Carlin will not keep his promise, the characters stay the night on the pier gazing out to sea and moved by the sense of mystery the island and its inhabitants have generated. Accordingly, the open space of the pier becomes a temporary site for their confusion, tension or rejoice and release of energy, where they spin stories, narrate memories, eat and drink; make revelations, share secrets, confide in one another, make confessions, jokes and promises; exchange secret looks and flirt; sing and dance to George's accordion. Once again, in *Wonderful Tennessee*, Friel introduces music and dance as a means for the characters to create alternative spaces and experience myriad of possibilities in space. During the night at the Ballybeg pier, the couples get drunk on the various drinks Terry has brought for their weekend getaway and accompany George's accordion in a state of Dionysian intoxication and ecstasy. Even when they stop singing and start talking, George's piano accordion like a background music keeps playing and generates an alternative space for the characters introducing a variety of songs including Hellenistic hymns to popular American songs and English mistral show songs. As Tracy states in his article "Brian Friel's Rituals of Memory," this repertoire of popular songs and hymns creates a parodic atmosphere providing the play with the ritualistic and Bacchic (409), an ecstasy reminiscent of Dionysiac festivals. Along with music, Friel also employs storytelling as a dramatic device, which forms a relation between the characters and the place, and contributes to their spatial experience. Moreover, storytelling also signifies the characters'

ongoing struggle to express themselves outside the rational and religious convictions. Among the various stories that the couples tell, Terry's story establishes the theme of violence, sacrifice and the ritual foreshadowing the finale of the play.

According to the account, many years ago, Oileán Draíochta witnessed a ritual killing perpetrated by a group of fourteen young people who had just returned from the Eucharistic Congress held in Dublin in June, 1932. Because the parishioners had not experienced such a remarkable religious ceremony before, the ethereal beauty of the scene stroke them: "they [peasants] were still in a state of intoxication after the Congress – it was the most spectacular, the most incredible thing they had ever witnessed. And that ferment and the wine and the music and the dancing ..." (WT 426). The people in the group were all close friends with no enmity between them. However, under the effect of heavy drinking, music, dance and the Congress, they sacrificed the young boy Sean O'Boyle during a ritual on the island. Following the murder there were signs of the deed on the site: "Burned-out fires – empty wine bottles – clothes left behind – blood smeared on rocks. It's thought there was some sort of orgy. Anyhow, at some point they dismembered him. That's accurate enough – from the pieces they found" (WT 425). As Terry provides further details on the sacrificial killing he explains that it created strong animosity between the families, which the police had difficulty in controlling. Finally, the dispute was settled by the bishop – the religious leader of the Eucharistic Congress, who made the group promise firmly never to reveal anything about what had happened on the island on that day and leave Ireland for good. Afterwards, the bloody ritual along with the Great War had a baleful impact on the local site which became abandoned having no inhabitants for ten years. The only remaining artefacts of the place was a derelict church and the witnessing nature. Also, it is believed that the ritual killing put a curse on the island and that no organism would ever grow and live there again. Terry's story suggests that the island rather than being 'wonderful' gives the impression of a sinister, "evil place" (WT 467) because it had been the locus of death during the pilgrims' sacrificial ritual. Ironically enough, the place still exerts power on the living beings attracting the couples' attention and perpetuating the air of mystery.

As the play draws to a close, it is observed that the characters' experience on the Ballybeg pier has had such a significant effect on them that the place and the landscape act on them. Following Terry's story, they, tidying the place up, all prepare to leave and attend to their belongings. However, their actions signify a ritual carried out delicately without hesitation, inspired by Terry's account of his memory of the visit to Oileán Draíochta. First, Berna knots her scarf on the cruciform stand on the pier, followed by Frank who places his belt on it. Witnessing this, Trish approaches the stand and hangs her bracelet on one of its arms. She also wants George to make a votive offering; therefore, she takes his handkerchief and knots it beside the bracelet. Apart from these personal belongings, they also offer some of the stuff they have brought with themselves, a sealed tin cake for Carlin and some cherry.

When it is Terry's turn to make a sacrifice, in the manner of a real bookie, Terry offers money. However, the group does not approve of this decision. Encircling Terry, they all start chanting: "We want the shirt—we want the shirt"/ The shirt—the shirt—the shirt!" (WT 432). As the incantations and George's accompanying song continue, the group challenges Terry until he falls to the ground like a sacrificial animal. When they finally manage to tear a portion of Terry's shirt leaving it with no buttons, they make him hang the torn piece up on the stand so that he "will be remembered here for ever" (WT 435). In a way, Terry, the birthday boy, becomes the 'other,' an appropriate choice for the group's symbolic sacrifice, which completes the life-death-rebirth cycle of mystery cults in the play.

Angela tells the last story of the play, the Eleusinian Mysteries, which contributes to the ritual based atmosphere of the play and Friel's blend of the Greco-Roman references and Christian elements:

ANGELA. All we know about the ceremonies is that they began with a period of fasting; that there was a ritual purification in the sea; and that young people went through a ceremony of initiation. And there was music and dancing and drinking. And we know, too, that sacrifice was offered. And that's about all we know. Because the people who took part in the ceremonies vowed never to speak of what happened there. So that when the civilization came to an end it took the secrets of the Eleusinian Mysteries with it. (WT 437)

Angela's account provides vivid details about the religious festivals held in honour of the harvest goddess Demeter and her daughter Persephone signifying the mythological

life-death cycle. Moreover, with this story, the play comes full circle as Angela's depiction of the mythical ceremonies echoes the characters' ritual performance in the second act which represents the link between the characters and the place. As Bertha asserts, by performing ritual and forming a connection with the past cultures and communities the characters can experience the co-presence of opposite existences: one is the "linear nature of singular human life on its way towards decay and death, the other is the cyclical, eternal continuity of nature: in constant danger of disappearing, "fossilizing' but with the possibility of renewing itself" ("Island of Otherness" 133). Bertha's juxtaposition here highlights the point Friel made in *Wonderful Tennessee* and various other plays by both affirming the idea and critiquing it – the evocation of the mythical Irish past along with the spaces and places of Ireland so as to draw attention to their relevance and significance to the contemporary Ireland and Irish psyche.

Claudia Moser and Cecelia Feldman open *Locating the Sacred* with a very strong claim that "to practice ritual is to be emplaced" (1). Focusing on the mutual relationship between ritual practice and its location, the writers argue that ritual performance and physical surroundings are intertwined. In other words, rites and practices which are kept intact within certain societies and among different communities might indicate how geographical positioning can be a determining factor in characterizing and shaping ritual (2). By drawing attention to the bond between ritual and place, Moser and Feldman in fact foreground the spatial quality of ritual action as well as opening the ground for further discussion relating to human geography and a plurality of other disciplines such as theology, anthropology, and archaeology. Throughout the essays in the volume, Feldman and Moser express that ritual has a significant effect on topography, which can be traced in a multitude of forms: for instance, "through votive deposition ..., the architecture of temples, altars, residences ..., manipulation of the 'natural' environment ..., visual representations, textual transmission, pilgrimage routes ..., human remains ..., and the landscape of the human mind ..." (7). All these details find resonance in *Wonderful Tennessee* where the characters emplace themselves on Ballybeg pier and the mysterious island through the narratives and ritual practices of ancient civilisations.

In the end, resolving to revive their desire to visit the island again the couples prepare themselves for their return journey to Dublin, upon Charlie's arrival. However, they look as if they had no intention of leaving the place. They all bid a fond farewell to the place and the things surrounding it – the sheep, cattle, coloured birds, whin bush, bell, clothes on the bushes, low hill, oak trees, apple trees, the dancing dolphin and St. Conall. Interestingly enough, their departure takes the form of a ceremony in which they perform a series of actions characteristic of ancient rituals: “And this ceremony – encircling, lifting a stone, encircling, lifting a stone, touching the votive offering – is repeated by every character. ... And when they finish they pick up their belongings and – still humming to George's accompaniment – move slowly off” (WT 444).

The six characters' return starts just in the same way as their arrival in the place; the engine starts up and the group's singing permeates the air. This time it is the landscape that possesses them: “Both sounds [singing and the engine] are encompassed by the silence and complete stillness and gradually surrender to it” (WT 445). Friel does not provide any details about their inward journey nor does he elaborate on the outward one. However, the journey back home, into the heart of the non-spaces of the city actually becomes a journey to the self, which they own, disown, reject and embrace, question and criticize as the vivid landscape fades behind them like a snapshot, not a freezing of time and space but a moment suggestive of its dynamism and power. In the words of Massey “these ... takes give us, in the midst of the rush and flow of globalisation, a certain stillness. But they are not stills. They are about duration. They tell us of ‘becoming,’ in place.” (Landscape/Space/Politics 3)

#### 5.4. Here and There: Oileán Draíochta

Ballybeg pier in Donegal with its picturesque pastoral landscape, myths of the land, and with its liminal status between wilderness and civilisation signifies a presence of its own which gradually takes effect on the characters. In the same vein, the mystery of Oileán Draíochta captivates them to such an extent that at some point the pier itself becomes the island in the characters' spatial imagination, which can be observed in several instances. For example, in the second act, upon listening to Terry's account about the ritual killing of Sean O'Boyle and the effect it had on the

surroundings Berna approaches Frank and shows the blue wild flowers: “These grew (her flowers). . . . He said nothing ever grew again. These did” (WT 427). Berna sees the island as an extension of the pier and unites both spaces in her imagination. By bringing two spaces together, she also defies the fact that the island was regarded as a site doomed forever to be barren after the ritual murder on the island. On another occasion, when Trish wants to make a fire to clear the mess away on the pier, Angela, remembering Terry’s account of the island, does not allow her to do so because she fears that the fire would dispel the mystery upon the place. Moreover, in the course of the play the couples confuse several times ‘Minibus Charlie,’ the driver who will pick them up from the pier with Carlin the boatman who is supposed to take them to the mystery island. With all its details and special features Ballybeg pier converts to Oileán Draíochta. In other words, the space of the pier and that of the island become one merging in the landscape of Donegal in the characters’ imagination. As this section aims to highlight, such a transformation also echoes the transformative quality of the literary islands and the way how they enable one to create alternative spaces of hope and possibility as well as multiple selves.

Once the space of the pier and the island converge, time also closes its linearity and becomes circular and subjective. One example of this can be observed in the second scene where Frank, unaware of the fact that a day had already passed on the Ballybeg pier, wishes Terry ‘Happy Birthday:’

FRANK. Happy Birthday, Terry.

TERRY. That was yesterday.

FRANK. Was it? All the same. (WT 394-5)

As the dialogue illustrates, because the idea of the island offers them a different sense of time Frank considers the difference between yesterday and today as an insignificant detail. Ironically enough, as a writer focusing on accurate time measurement and its effect on monastic practices in the Middle Ages, Frank now surrenders himself to the subjective time of the island space. Similarly, time for Berna also loses its meaning as she throws her watch into the sea when she realizes that it had stopped due to salt water upon her jumping into the sea in the previous act for ‘purification’ in a ritualistic sense. It is clear that the idea of the island offers the characters a different sense of time

transporting the past into the present, which encourages them to focus on the ‘here and now’ and experience the chance of space, difference and possibility as they imagine the island in the remote Donegal landscape.

At this point, it is worth mentioning the significance of islands in literary studies to complement the picture Friel draws in *Wonderful Tennessee* with regard to the mystery island, Oileán Draíochta. In his article, “Island Spatialities,” Johannes Riquet asserts that geographers often find it difficult to provide an exact definition of an island because of a “cognitive uncertainty” about the idea of the island presents (214). On the literal level, an island is defined as ‘a piece of land surrounded by water,’ which also informs its literary connotations as sites of seclusion and privacy in Western tradition. As remote locales, evoking freedom and promising peace and quiet, islands have always been associated with the idea of escape and retreat from the chaotic atmosphere of everyday life. However, being geographically distinct lands isolated from the world, they are also regarded as bounded spaces where the play of exclusion and inclusion prevails. On both the literal and literary level, the concept therefore bears the inside – outside dichotomy in relation to the spatial features of the islands and the mainland. Accordingly, the state of being encircled by the sea, the idea of confinement in space plays a significant role upon place and human relations, affecting human consciousness in diverse ways in the course of a literary work. As David Floyd asserts in his chapter titled “The Orphaning Island,” island narratives by taking the characters to a different space and emplacing them in a different time frame allow the writers to trace certain social issues with psychological outcomes like “belonging,” “exile” and “crises of identity” (105). Even though Friel does not offer an island narrative in *Wonderful Tennessee*, the island itself as a spatial construction and the main location of the play enables Friel to explore the aforementioned issues by establishing an even broader context in which to place myth, ritual, and history.

There is an established canon of island narrative in literature beginning from the early fifteenth century accounts of Renaissance travellers to utopian narratives of the Irish monk St. Brendan, from robinsonades to the twentieth century anti-utopias which all gradually resonate in Friel’s play. Typically, as natural spaces the islands in literary works are thought to offer an idyllic retreat for people freeing them from the

everyday constraints of the city life. However, as Floyd puts, modern construction of literary islands is far more different from the previous ones, which he explains by drawing attention to what he terms the “orphanic entity” of the islands (89). According to Floyd, while the islands used to have positive connotations in the past such as heaven, an otherworldly place or a mysterious plane, modern topological features of the islands are more unfavourable. The island now can be regarded as “the topographical orphan space” since as a space outside the standardized systems and social relations and of constant transformation, it resists possession and ownership (88). Therefore, what is usually pictured now is an island where “personal, individual, physical and often psychological trauma and metamorphosis” reign (90). In a similar vein, in his article, “Literary geographies of possession, separation, and transformation,” James Kneale, tracing the geographies of fictional islands, draws attention to three features which he thinks to be the defining attributes of such islands: “possession, separation, and transformation” (204). Among the three features, Kneale pays specific attention to the idea of ‘transformation’ which is in consonance with Friel’s dramatization of the characters’ renewal in the play. Kneale explains that the islands bear potential for transformation, which enables the writers to subvert realistic representation through taking their characters to the edge of life and enabling them to have “encounters with otherness, encounters that prompt new experiences and identities” (204). Within this framework, since Oileán Draíochta is separated from the pier and surrounded by water all around, it can be regarded as a potential site for the idea of ‘transformation.’ Nevertheless, the place inflicted by problems, permeated by stories of violence and sacrifice does not present the possibility of metamorphosis very smoothly. As in Friel’s *Gentle Island*, the bounded space of Oileán Draíochta in *Wonderful Tennessee* creates a feeling of anomaly deviating from its expected attributes. Still, such anomaly comes with its potential for transformation and hope which Friel has emplaced on the Donegal landscape much in the same way Massey has proposed regarding the ‘chance of space.’

The possibility of metamorphosis in the play appears when Friel enables the characters to relate to space in Donegal. Viewing the island, experiencing all the edges and even naming it, the characters come to possess the island imaginatively which in

turn possesses and transforms them in various ways. During their interval on the Ballybeg pier, the couples find a chance to engage in intimate dialogues. Talking to each other, they come to resolve their personal dilemmas and cure themselves in the island space.

Berna and Angela's having a tête-à-tête about marriage, happiness, and particularly Terry can be considered as the first of many indications that the island space provides a more private and privileged space for the characters to reassess their lives. In their conversation, Berna tells Angela how she is trying to survive in an unhappy marriage, struggling with psychological problems. She admits that she would not mind at all if Terry left her because he is not happy with her: "There are times when I feel I'm ...about to be happy" but "He has no happiness with me – Terry. Not even 'about-to-be happiness'" (WT 387). The reason why Berna feels hopeless about their marriage is that they cannot have children, a predicament experienced by Terry's sister Trish as well. Berna reveals that this issue of not having children makes Terry highly anxious, almost "neurotic" (WT 387), yet she does not feel much concerned about it. What makes Berna more bothered, however, is Terry's everlasting infatuation with Angela, which throughout the play is revealed in his flirtatious manner towards her.

Berna interprets Terry's fixation with children and his discontent in conventional terms that without procreation of children future seems to hold no promise to them. Her unhappiness, however, has existentialist undertones: "there are periods- occasions- when just being alive is . . . unbearable" (WT 387). It should be noted that these couples do not fit into the traditional patriarchal Irish family model with crowded households<sup>34</sup> nor do their homes are the "cosy homesteads" with the "romping of sturdy children," which Eamon de Valera describes in his St. Patrick Day's Speech. This is thoroughly a modern society, a fluid space that Friel portrays, shifting and moving towards a more urban and individualistic life-style characterized

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<sup>34</sup> For a detailed and more nuanced discussion of Irish family patterns in the twentieth century see Rudy Ray Seward et al in "Irish Families in the Twentieth Century: Exceptional or Converging?" in the *Journal of Family History* (410-430).

by less family obligations and unresolved relationships. In the end, the couples come to terms with the complications in their minds, and embrace and experience the transformation the island space offers them. Terry reassures himself that owning the island for two months was also a “wonderful” thing. He also convinces himself that although they could not reach the island, they experienced it: “Well, at least now we know . . . it’s there” (WT 440). Similarly, Angela who is often depicted with an exaggerated and uncontrollable excitement because of her unhappy marriage with Frank, now frees herself from all her reservations and makes a promise to revisit the island: “Yes, we will! . . . Damn right we will, Terry! Yes –yes –yes!” (WT 442). In the same vein, the island space enables Frank to voice his doubts about the essence of his book, “The Measurement of Time and Its Effect on European Civilization.” As a writer disappointed with his own book, Frank understands that there is no point in trying to explain the dynamics of time-measurement. His book, in his own words, is nothing but “a silly game of blind man’s buff” (WT 399). He realizes that what matters in life is to explain away the mystery and “to be in touch with whatever it is we desire but can’t express. What is beyond language. The inexpressible. The ineffable” (WT 398). Frank believes in the necessity of challenging the rational structures and finding a language to express “the experience” rather than the reason. Therefore, what he actually after is “a book without words!” (WT 398), a realm, a created space beyond language and reason.

These examples demonstrate that despite the characters’ personal problems and their psychological and physical disorders, displacement unites the characters on the island, and they become sympathetic and protective towards one another. Their sojourn provides them with the opportunity to reconcile with each other and reassess their lives. In a sense, they come to believe that another world is possible because space is “the sphere of the possibility” (Massey 9). Undoubtedly, the space of the island which they revive in their imagination provides a chance for transformation for them as if it was “a laboratory in which new selves, spaces and ideas are made.” (Kneale 204)

Even though the characters literally could not reach the island, they actually touch it in the metaphorical sense in their imagination. Situated in the imaginative

geography of the play, this fictional space, therefore, stands as a metonymy for Ireland, appearing here and there, between tradition and modernity, mystery and menace, faith and defiance, and constantly informs the characters. Bearing the stories and social practices of past cultures and different communities as well as the contemporary traces of globalisation, this deserted mythical island occupies a different time-space and plays a role upon the characters' relation to the contemporary and future landscapes of Ireland, nurturing hope and possibility, promising renewal.

At this point, Friel's spatial construction of the imaginary island Oileán Draíochta also strikes a sympathetic chord with Gilles Deleuze's idea of the desert island in the sense that they both evoke a potential for re-creation and re-worlding. In an early essay "Desert Islands," Deleuze concentrates on what he claims to be the isolated nature of all islands. In order to orient his discussion, he mainly departs from the geographical distinction between two different types of islands, continental islands and oceanic islands. Deleuze defines continental islands as "accidental, derived" because they are cut off from the continent, whereas oceanic islands are "originary [and] essential" due to their organic ties with the sea itself. These two islands, both detached from the mainland, actually signify the prevalent polarity between earth and water. Deleuze, in fact, problematizes the rationale lying behind such a categorization believing that there no longer exists a water/earth dichotomy. People should refuse to accept the validity of such opinions because the only condition to be able to live on an island is to "forget . . . what an island represents" (9). Indeed, one can only grasp the significance of the island by turning to imagination, an action which the characters in *Wonderful Tennessee* carry out significantly.

Deleuze's desert island is an imaginary place which has the quality of transforming spaces leading to a "mythical creation of the world" (12). It is the imagination that grants it such a quality and transforms the island into "a model," a place where people could create the world anew. Only through coordinating with the *élan*, the vital force that produces the island, could people occupy the deserted island and renew life. Deleuze calls this process the marriage of imagination and geography in the re-creation of the world. However, the individual imagination would not suffice to form such an entity; thus, what is required, as Deleuze maintains, is collective

imagination, a common spirit significantly observed in myths and rituals. In mythological accounts and rites, people create alternative spaces through transformation and repetition. In the same way, the inhabitants of the desert islands by becoming a member of the community and constituting their selves, try to envision and construct a model society based on collective imagination. In this sense, the deserted island is a re-creation and a re-beginning. It is “the origin, but a second origin. From it everything begins anew” (13). Deleuze’s reference to and emphasis on the second origin is an evocation of the idea of birth/re-birth, death, renewal and continuity, which Friel also foregrounds in *Wonderful Tennessee* with the characters’ mythical stories, references to the Eleusinian Mysteries and their ritual performance. In his reading of Deleuze’s “Desert Islands,” the American philologist Tom Conley asserts that if Deleuze’s island is a product of imagination, it is also possible to conceive it as a space of “singularity,” a site of “difference and repetition” because here is a place where one can grasp the meaning of the originary myths and their creative forces. Also, as the island is not a representation but a plane open to various interpretations, it actually turns into “an enchanted space where concept continually moves in all directions and reinvents itself.” (217)

In this emphasis, Friel’s *Oileán Draíochta* in *Wonderful Tennessee* should not only be conceived as an island with drawn boundaries but an elusive place whose significance and effect are in constant negotiation. It should be regarded not as a point on a map but as a spatio-temporal event. Through such a conceptualisation, Friel’s imagined place would become a more expressive and suggestive notion as opposed to the fixed interpretations of home, nation and identity, an epitome of the fifth province, an alternative space embracing difference and multiplicity in terms of Irish space and subjectivity.

## 5.5. Landscape, Place and Conclusions

*Wonderful Tennessee* with its eclectic assortment of stories written on the Donegal landscape stands as a response to Massey’s idea of landscape as the bearer of multiple trajectories and the representation of the shifting Irish space during the Celtic Tiger period. For this reason, this chapter concludes by drawing together some ideas

regarding space, place and landscape mainly focusing on Massey's notion of landscape as "a simultaneity of stories-so-far" ("Landscape/Space/Politics" 14) and the way how Friel's landscape in the play is not a fixed representation but a continuous production, a Becoming.

As this chapter has foregrounded, Friel, in *Wonderful Tennessee*, setting the play against the backdrop of increasing modernisation explores the close relationship between space, place and landscape by questioning a variety of ideas including sense of place, belonging, dwelling and displacement. Through exploring these concepts, Friel, in fact, disrupts the notion of nostalgia attached to the eternal, wild landscapes of Ireland, and draws attention to the changing status of place in the wake of the Celtic Tiger period. Introducing the audience and the characters first into the serene landscape of Ballybeg pier in Donegal and later to its history and stories, without succumbing into nostalgia, Friel actually underlines how Ireland as an "anomalous space [is] open to multiple readings and conflicting interpretations"<sup>35</sup> (Harte xi). Nostalgia, on the other hand, as Bertha notes in "Six Characters in Search of Faith," is presented through the characters' evocation of the past traditions and their quest for the Other in nature, in the perennial landscape of the Ballybeg pier. Nevertheless, in the course of the play Friel makes them realize that it is never possible to achieve a prelapsarian wholeness, and that the past is pervaded by stories of violence and sacrifice which find resonance in the present. Therefore, only "after demythologising his characters' nostalgic mythologising of the past; [does] Friel allow them to 'remythologise' the present" (122). Through such remythologising, the characters, in fact, configure future landscapes as they try to navigate themselves in and through the anomalous space of the Celtic Tiger Ireland.

Nonetheless, that *Wonderful Tennessee* depicts a group of characters' weekend getaway to the countryside should not be read against an oversimplified understanding of nature and landscape. Such an approach is actually what Friel aims to undermine by reversing the terms of localism, dwelling and belonging in Heideggerian sense.

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<sup>35</sup> In his introduction to the edited collection *Ireland: Space, Text, Time*, Liam Harte states, "Ireland has long been a debatable land, both literally and metaphorically, an anomalous space open to multiple readings and conflicting interpretations" (xi).

Nature in the play is not still; space is not stasis or surface nor is the landscape a palimpsest on which histories have been constantly scripted, effaced and re-scripted. It is not closed down in the way Nature provides an idea of a fulfilment or gratification of a desire. Instead it is opened up to reinterpretation as it constantly stirs the imagination of the characters and evokes mystery as well as ferocity. Therefore, the dramatization of the landscape in the play goes beyond the conventional representations of the Irish landscape as continuous or coherent, preserving “an essential harmony of rhythms and resonances” (Massey, “Landscape as a Provocation” 41). By conceptualising landscape within this perspective, Friel aims to avoid nostalgic interpretations of the Irish landscape and draw attention to the infinite openness of space in Massey’s sense.

It might be contended that by undermining the way how the Irish landscape lends itself to pastoral interpretations evoking nostalgic feelings, Friel actually illustrates what Massey criticizes regarding romanticized view of places, which she puts forward in *For Space*:

Some of our strongest evocations of place (in the Western world but not only there) indeed draw on hills, on ‘the wilderness’ (dubious category anyway), on the sea. We escape from the city maybe to replenish our souls in contemplating the timelessness of mountains, by grounding ourselves again in ‘nature’. We use such places to situate ourselves, to convince ourselves that there is indeed a grounding. It recalls too, however, that untenable disjunction between the celebration of cultural flow and mixity and the nervousness at a natural world that will not stay still . . . (131,133)

To elaborate on this idea that nature is constantly on the move, Massey draws on her observation of the landscape of Skiddaw in the Lake District in England. She identifies this spot with a series of details regarding the so-called “timeless” north west side of England, farmers, grey-stone country estates of the aristocracy, traditional cottages, poets of the Romantic era, ruins of the Roman empire, and a touch of the “sublime.” Among all these attributes, Massey describes Skiddaw as a “massive block of mountain over 3000 feet high, grey and stony; not pretty, but impressive; immovable, timeless” (131). This mountain, standing with all its glamorous entity, bears close relations to the place and its history. In the first place, the present-day landscape of Skiddaw holds traces of the ancient ice ages and volcanic eruptions which reveal

themselves in the U-shaped valleys, drumlins, egg-shaped hills, cliffs and waterfalls covering the area. Apart from its “antiquity,” Skiddaw also appears “quite new” because the rocks in the mountains are “immigrant rocks” passing through the site, moving and changing all the time (134 -7). Skiddaw here, as the human geographer and Massey’s colleague at Open University, Steve Hinchcliffe states, is “as physical as it is human, but its physicality is neither fixed nor timeless. As climates shift and landforms move, places are events, constellations of more than social relations.” (“A Physical Sense of World” 182)

Basing her argument on the geological features of Skiddaw, Massey further claims that thanks to certain Earth sciences studies such as geology and palaeontology places and landscapes could now be interpreted in a new light because these disciplines unsettled some predominant ideas regarding time, history and Judeo-Christian theological philosophy. What is revelatory about such a geological study of places is that, as Massey concludes, “this ‘natural’ place to which we appeal for timelessness has of course been (and still is) constantly changing” (133). Therefore, it could be inferred that one cannot flee to nature as the excursionists in Wonderful Tennessee do to find fixity and settledness nor can one regard places as timeless and everlasting.

Place in the play is rendered dynamic and heavily imbued with human social relations as emphasized in Massey’s idea of “a global sense of place.” Referring again to the ‘migrant rocks’ in Skiddaw mountains, in “Landscape as a Provocation: Reflections on Moving Mountains,” Massey explains that what actually matters is not the geographical features of Skiddaw, its being formed up of glaciers and tectonic movements, but the effect these geological formations create, directly acting on one’s imagination. This imagination is, in fact, in harmony with the notion ‘a global sense of place,’ “place as meeting place rather than as always already coherent, as open rather than bounded, as an ongoing production rather than pre-given” (34-35). Massey complements this idea of place with the reimagining of landscapes and argues for an understanding of place and landscape “as events, as happenings, as moments that will be again dispersed” (46). She also emphasizes the significance of space and time in approaching landscape and nature, which she once again explicates with the image of the moving rocks:

Bearing in mind the movement of the rocks, both space and landscape could be imagined as provisionally intertwined simultaneities of ongoing, unfinished, stories. Space, as a dimension, cuts through such trajectories, but not to stabilize them into a surface; rather space is imbued with time. Moreover, one constantly emergent, ongoing, product of that intertwining of trajectories is what we call the landscape. (And conceptualizing it thus can also encourage a disaggregation of 'Nature' too into a multiplicity of trajectories – a move which further militates against the temptations of foundationalism. ("Landscape as a Provocation" 46)

With regard to the aforementioned statements, it should be maintained that in Massey's case landscape along with space, place and nature is taken as an active force evoking movement and happening rather than representation. It is characterized by dynamism, simultaneity, and temporality as well as a certain mode of political challenge.

In this respect, Massey's extended analogy of the Skiddaw slates moving more than million years and shifting over the planet is a challenge to the idea of a metaphysical truth, an anti-foundationalism insisting on "a commitment to openness and questioning" ("Landscape as a Provocation" 44). This landscape imbued with temporality, histories and stories-so-far, in fact, urges us to alter our perceptions regarding time, space, place, and nature. Massey defines this process as "provocation," one among many potentials of landscape, because only through such an approach can we realize the co-constitutive nature of the relationship between human and beyond human, and avoid the expectations of a grounding in nature and oneness in landscape.

What Massey finds in Skiddaw rocks and in its landscape, is, in fact, in line with the way Lloyd retrieves myth in ruins and Friel contextualizes space in *Wonderful Tennessee*. Like Lloyd, Massey holds the view that thinking about the relationship between past, present and future of a place facilitates one's formalizing of those geographical places and landscapes as both temporal and spatial. In that sense, rather than regarding places as permanent sites where Being dwells, one should consider places as "temporary constellations" or time-space events bearing relations to the natural world. Places are not simply surfaces on maps with histories of linear progression but they are in Massey's terms "heterogeneous associations" of time and space, of human and non-human trajectories (For Space 131, 137). In the same way, Friel's Ballybeg in *Wonderful Tennessee* can be considered as a convergence point, a

place formed through the turmoil of history, the sectarian conflicts, wars, famine and emigration, all echoing at present. This place and its landscape with its ancient stones, roads, mountains, the shimmering sea, deserted island, and boggy lands reveal constant spatial shifts and movements evoking change in places and addressing the intermingling of the physical and human geography across multiple trajectories. As Massey reminds us, “landscape is stories that speak to today.” (“Landscape/Space/Politics” 33)

As a final point, it should be noted that even if Oileán Draíochta or Ballybeg does not appear on the physical maps of Ireland, Friel presents a revisioning of the history of the Donegal landscape through the pervading mythical stories and such topographical details as the ancient stones, the coloured birds, the oak trees, the bogs, and the remaining pieces of a fishing town before the industrialisation entered into the locale. Massey once states that while looking at a certain place the first thing she does is to refer to a geological map to trace out the relations between geological features and the stratum so that she would be able to alter radically the spatio-temporal dimensions for re-imagining landscapes (29). This is exactly what Friel does with Oileán Draíochta in *Wonderful Tennessee*. Inspired by the monastic site Inishkeel island in Gweebarra Bay, a coast famous for its sandy estuaries as well as the bogland area dotted with different-size lakes and fish farms, Friel’s “Island of Otherness” combines time and space in the Donegal landscape. Emphasizing these natural assets as well as the pervading myths and rituals of the site, Friel grants the characters the chance to think about places and their pasts and envision future landscapes. In this sense, myths and rituals become the characters’ only recourse against the world of reason to go beyond time and place because they create a bridge between the ancient civilisations and modern Ireland allowing the characters to experience multiplicity of times and spaces. Through experiencing the temporalities of Irish modernisation in this landscape, the characters become more awakened to the existence of alternative spaces and truths, the subjectivity of other people and other places as well as the landscape in a relational form. Consequently, they embrace the idea that there is no such thing as the quintessential Irish landscape where one can experience absolute serenity and groundedness. Landscapes are provisional, always existing for the present

but possibly to be changed later. Therefore, as Friel urges us, one should perceive Ireland in its totality as a space formed, transformed and filled with multiple trajectories and stories-so-far.

## CHAPTER 6

### 6. CONCEPTUALISING SPACE WITH BLINDNESS IN MOLLY SWEENEY

Is the true self this which stands on the pavement in January,  
or that which bends over the balcony in June? Am I here, or  
am I there? Or is the true self neither this nor that, neither here  
nor there, but something so varied and wandering that it is only  
when we give the rein to its wishes and let it take its way  
unimpeded that we are indeed ourselves?

— Virginia Woolf, “Street Hunting”

Written in 1994, a year after *Wonderful Tennessee*, and first produced at the Gate Theatre, Dublin in the same year Brian Friel’s *Molly Sweeney* presents another form of landscape, a landscape of the blind massage therapist Molly’s mind, vividly drawn against the ever-changing village Ballybeg and its social space. The play offers a journey into the main character Molly’s subjectivity where she tries to come to terms with her “Being” which is always constructed and deconstructed by “Others,” namely by her father, the judge, her husband Frank Sweeney, and her ophthalmologist Paddy Rice. Throughout the play, taking Molly’s blindness as an anomaly to be defined and corrected, they act as the constant reminders to Molly that, as unsighted, she is different and out of place, which ironically parallels the concerns regarding the anomalous status of Ireland in the global arena. These three men control and structure Molly’s space and subjectivity by exerting power on her body and making decisions concerning her blindness. For instance, the father holds himself responsible for Molly’s schooling and prefers to tutor her at home rather than sending her to a private institution for the blind. Molly’s husband, on the other hand, pushes her into two cataract surgeries consulting with the self-seeking ophthalmologist Mr Rice, which totally transforms Molly’s perception of reality along with her interaction with social space, finally granting her a partial sight, a condition called ‘blindsight.’ In the end,

embracing her liminal situation between ‘sight’ and ‘blindness,’ Molly, rather than returning to the consolation of Being, moves forward gradually towards an ontology of ‘Becoming,’ a movement which can be metaphorically applied to Ireland’s place in the globalized space, and Friel’s celebration of such a dynamic trajectory.

For all these reasons, the present chapter aims to explore the issues of spatiality and subjectivity as well as the questions of body and borders in Molly Sweeney drawing on Doreen Massey’s relational approach to space and place especially relating to her key concepts, ‘place identity’ and ‘a global sense of place.’ That space in Massey’s sense is a product of relations-between and it is always an ongoing process suggests that a progressive politics can also be imagined regarding Ireland’s case and its course towards globalisation, which Friel presents through Molly’s medical story and her symbolic journey into the light. In order to evaluate the above-mentioned critical points regarding Molly’s blindness, her conceptualization of her space and subjectivity as well as the Irish space, the ideas of Edward Soja and his concept of Thirdspace along with Merleau-Ponty’s ideas on lived body and subjectivity will be explored in this chapter; however, it is mainly through Massey’s conceptualization of space and place that the spatial dynamics of the play will be addressed. To familiarize the readers with the issue of blindness and its echoes in literature and philosophy, the chapter also incorporates a section on the conceptualization of blindness and Friel’s writing Molly Sweeney. With references to the positions of certain philosophers and scientists from the Enlightenment concerning the relationship between seeing and human understanding, this part elaborates on ocularcentrism, the hegemony of vision in Western culture and the institutionalization of medical practice borrowing also from Foucault’s ideas on politics of health in the eighteenth century and the medical gaze.

### 6.1. Blindness, Blindsight and Beyond: Molly Sweeney

Brian Friel in Molly Sweeney<sup>36</sup> presents the title character Molly as a blind massage therapist in her late thirties living in Ballybeg, in the northwest of Donegal

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<sup>36</sup> Hereafter abbreviated as MS for parenthetical references.

which is now a thoroughly modernised town with beauty salons, dance halls, new Chinese restaurants, and specialized medical centres. Having been blind since early childhood, Molly actually looks and behaves like sighted people. She does not wear dark glasses nor does she use a stick to support her when walking. As Friel notes in the stage directions: “The only evidence of [her] disability is usually a certain vacancy in the eyes or the way the head is held. [She] should indicate her disability in some such subtle way. No canes, no groping, no dark glasses, etc.”<sup>37</sup> (MS 455). Unlike most blind persons who usually withdraw into their private spaces, Molly seems to have formed strong connections with the outside world and created proper relationships in social space. There are no specific instances in the play that suggest Molly experiences rejection or social marginalisation due to her visual handicap. Additionally, despite losing both parents early and being condemned to loneliness, Molly lives her life to the fullest, happy and at ease, engaging in various pastime and sports activities such as dancing, swimming, diving, and cycling. As Molly’s ophthalmologist Mr Rice describes her, “when she spoke of her disability, there was no self-pity, no hint of resignation” (MS 458). All these details relating to Molly help portray her as someone who is self-sufficient, physically, emotionally and intellectually independent, and undermine the idea that unsighted people are usually helpless, incapable of coordinating themselves in space, dependent, and ready to accept others’ instruction or control.

Nevertheless, the very same self-determining character is also shown to have been manipulated by the male authority, namely represented by her father, her husband and her ophthalmologist. Opening the play with the childhood memories of her father when she was five years old touring with him in their garden, Molly recounts how she liked the way her father kissed her cheeks, in the “old-world formality with which he did everything” and how his “whiskey breath” made her feel dizzy (MS 456–57). This brief moment of recollection and sense of homesickness, however, is juxtaposed at the end of the play with a feeling of anger and disappointment over Molly’s father’s failure to send her to a school for the blind when she was young.

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<sup>37</sup> Even though Friel in the stage directions adds this detail regarding Molly’s characterization, Mr Rice later describes Molly using a white cane. (MS 458)

Molly describes her father as “the first man” she “really knew” (MS 477), and Frank Sweeney, her husband would be the second for he “was everything [her] father wasn’t” (MS 477). At the age of 39, after one month of dating Molly marries Frank, “an ebullient fellow; full of energy and enquiry” (MS 458), a man of many ideals and pursuits, one of which becomes the restoration of Molly’s sight with the consultation and help of Mr Rice, a successful ophthalmologist who was led to a downfall in his medical career by his wife’s betrayal. Mr Rice likes Molly immediately when Frank brings her to his house, thinking that she somehow resembles her wife, Maria. Frank’s intense research on Molly’s lack of eyesight, his insistence on Molly’s operation and Mr Rice’s intention to regain reputation through this case unites two men for one cause, restoring sight to the blind woman. Molly, then, becomes the project of these men whose ambitions and false intentions have actually blinded them to reality. Equating blindness only with “not seeing,” Frank and Mr Rice disregard the fact that there is more to Molly’s blindness and that she possesses strong, complex sensory relations. Consequently, both men regard Molly’s disability as an anomaly to be normalised, her bodyspace as a site of invasion, which provides the enterprising husband with a worthwhile pastime and the doctor with an opportunity to reclaim his previously prestigious status. In the end, Molly, though recovered from blindness through sequential cataract surgery, is unable to cope with her newly acquired visual space and ends up in the closed space of a mental asylum, institutionalised like her mother, traumatized, having visions, and caught up in a condition called “blindsight,” bordering on sight and blindness, vision and illusion, which she embraces wholeheartedly and learns to live finally beyond the boundaries of disability and the self.

Like the preceding plays in this study *Dancing at Lughnasa* and *Wonderful Tennessee*, usually defined as Friel’s ‘late plays,’ in *Molly Sweeney* Friel also departs from the exploration of the individuals’ private, mental spaces only to arrive at a plane where it is possible to draw conclusions about the contemporary social space of Ireland and its politics.<sup>38</sup> This fusion of the personal and the political in the plays and their

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<sup>38</sup> Unlike *Translations* which is considered a thoroughly political play relating to its references to “an open political conflict between Ireland and England” through tracing various issues like

forming an organic whole have long distinguished Friel's work among Irish literary figures. As Martine Pelletier observes, Friel's plays have always reflected the strained relations between "the private realm of the individual story and that most public of realms, History with a capital H" ("Telling Stories" 186). In a similar vein, Terence Brown draws attention to how Friel's drama often focuses on the "Irish social experience" ("Have we a context?" 190), a collection of transitional moments in a society in transformation along with the individuals caught in their inner turmoil:

Friel's theatre in its social dimension is a theatre of societal transformations, of transitions. But it is also a theatre in which the individual characters are beset by manifold difficulties when they seek to define themselves as anything other than members of a family or of a markedly local community. The society in which they live, move and have their being affords little or no civic space for such self-expression and at moments of transition this becomes strikingly evident. For transition itself confronts the familial and local worlds of Friel's characters (in which they seek such meaning as seems available to them) with fundamental challenges. (192)

As Brown emphasizes, the characters in Friel's plays are often portrayed as overwrought by internal conflicts because they could not feel a sense of belonging and are in continual change nor could they communicate themselves in a society constantly in flux.

In *Molly Sweeney*, the transformation in the individual emerges in parallel lines with the transition in society. Although Friel does not provide any clues about the political atmosphere in Ireland or the then-present social situation in Ballybeg, judging by the date 1993, some conclusions can be drawn in relation to the narrative of the play. The 1990s in Ireland marks the beginning of the Northern Ireland peace process which covers the events and negotiations leading up to the Downing Street Declaration of 1993, the ceasefire of Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) in 1994, and the Good Friday Agreement (Belfast Agreement) in 1998. In a way, Friel, through the story of Molly's making peace with herself sheds light on the peace process in Ireland,

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history, anthropology and language (Dantanus 199), in *Molly Sweeney* Brian Friel does not present an overt attempt to open up any political debate. However, in the play, as Karen M. Moloney states in "Molly Astray: Revisioning Ireland in Brian Friel's *Molly Sweeney*," Molly's story fuses with the history of Ireland, which makes it an epitome of "Friel's tradition of political theater." (287)

which opens the play for a discussion of a politics of place in Massey's sense. Massey's relational politics of the spatial emphasizes how both "entities and identities" (For Space 147) should live through differences in spaces and places by practicing and forming relations in a plane of heterogeneity and contemporaneous multiplicity. Such a politics, to Massey, also necessitates a different understanding of geography, a certain negotiation within place, and "the possibility of an outwardlooking local politics which reaches out beyond place" (For Space 148). Friel, in this sense, through Molly's story also draws attention to the political space and atmosphere of the 1990s in Northern Ireland.

Apart from Friel's emphasis on the contingency of the public and the private, the personal and the political in Molly Sweeney, the play is also significant considering "a woman's place" in society. While Friel in his earlier plays usually portrays public spaces dominated and controlled by men and presented accordingly on stage, the plays of the later part of the 1970s such as *Living Quarters* and *Aristocrats* foreground the central role of women characters on stage and in social space. With *Dancing at Lughnasa* and the plays following it – *Wonderful Tennessee* (1993), *Molly Sweeney* (1994), and *The Home Place* (2005), however, the portrayal of women in Friel's drama gains a new dimension coming to its full fruition. As George O'Brien reminds us, these plays following *Dancing at Lughnasa* "sustain the enduring presence of Ballybeg as a lieu théâtral, extend Friel's repertoire of pivotal roles for women, continue probing the politics of private life – that is, of the distribution of power and domestic sphere" ("The Late Plays" 91). More important, however, is that with its emphasis on Molly's embodied self, Friel in *Molly Sweeney* highlights the significance of bodies and spaces along with their meeting place, boundaries, to which he refers both through Molly's blindness/blindsight and Ireland's betwixt and between positioning in the globalized space.

Taking into centre one woman character and focusing on her story, Friel in *Molly Sweeney* moves away from the rabble of noisy mid-life travellers of *Wonderful Tennessee* and the shrieking frantic dancers of *Dancing at Lughnasa*. As the only piece that Friel himself directed in his whole career the play is distinguished with its dramatic form and theatrical production. With *Molly Sweeney*, the crowded stage of

Friel's dramatic artistry gives way to a platform shared by three characters each "performing" on the space allocated to them. As the stage directions indicate, "each character inhabits his/her special acting area – Mr Rice stage left. Molly Sweeney centre stage, Frank Sweeney stage right" (MS 455). However, the word 'performance' does not suggest acting and dramaturgy in the literal sense in *Molly Sweeney* because the play is composed of a group of alternating monologues and delivered randomly by three characters, Molly, Frank and Mr Rice. To Friel, the form of these monologues is "contrapuntal and overlapping" (Essays, Diaries, Interviews 157). Such a method is not an unusual style concerning Friel's dramatic artistry. As Friel notes in one of his diary entries, "The new play [*Molly Sweeney*] – form, theme, characters – is so like *Faith Healer*. A second candlestick on the mantelpiece; a second china dog" (Essays, Diaries, Interviews 162). In *Faith Healer* (1979), a much earlier play, Friel also follows the same pattern of monologue style offering four extended monologues delivered by the main characters Frank, the faith healer, Grace his wife and Teddy, Frank's manager. Unlike *Faith Healer*, the monologues in *Molly Sweeney* are relatively shorter and much more interspersed. Besides, in *Faith Healer*, the audience is presented with three different versions of the same story, and the stage is lit as each character takes turn to deliver one monologue, except Frank Hardy, who narrates the play's final monologue as well. Similarly, in *Molly Sweeney*, the characters, despite sharing the same stage space, never talk to one another or interact during the course of the play. They only narrate in the manner of storytellers and provide individualized accounts from their own points of view, yet each threading the story of Molly, "a medical story that is also offered as a love/spiritual story" in Friel's own words. (Essays, Diaries, Interviews 156)

With his 'medical story' *Molly Sweeney*, Friel seems to be alluding to all the men of letters and philosophers who contributed to the literary topos of blindness which has been predominant in world literature from the Antiquity to the Enlightenment, and from the Romantic period to the more recent times. As he himself noted in his diaries, while writing the play he ordered "various books and papers on this subject" and read vigorously on "Valvo, Strampelli, Berkeley, Locke, Van Sinden, Sacks etc. etc." (Essays, Diaries, Interviews 157). In a way, as *Molly Sweeney*

embarks on a journey from the realm of the unsighted to that of the sighted and to the liminal space of the condition of blindsight, Friel metaphorically engages in a dialogue with all those philosophers, Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, Diderot whom he makes references in the play through Frank Sweeney's speeches:

FRANK. And interestingly interestingly this very same problem was debated three hundred years ago by two philosophers, William Molyneux and his friend, John Locke. I came across this discussion in a Do-It-Yourself magazine of all places! Fascinating stuff, philosophy – absolutely fascinating. Anyhow – anyhow. If you are blind, said Molyneux – he was an Irishman by the way and in fact his wife was blind – if you are blind you can learn to distinguish between a cube and a sphere just by touching them, by feeling them. Right? Right. Now, supposing your vision is suddenly restored, will you be able – by sight alone, without touching, without feeling – will you be able to tell which object is the cube and which the sphere? Sorry, friend, said Locke – incidentally he went to Westminster School where he was flogged regularly – sorry, friend, you will not be able to tell which is which. Then who comes along to join in the debate but another philosopher, George Berkeley, with his essay entitled *An Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision*. Another Irishman incidentally; Bishop Berkeley. And actually when I say along came the Bishop, his 'Essay' didn't appear until seventeen years after the discussion I told you about between Locke and Molyneux. Anyhow – anyhow. When the problem was put to the Lord Bishop, he came to the same conclusion as his friends. But he went even further. He said that there was no necessary connection at all between the tactile world – the world of touch – and the world of sight; and that any connection between the two could be established only by living, only by experience, only by learning the connection. (MS 462-463)

Above description of Molly's case by the self-taught, enthusiastic Frank Sweeney is actually an ironic remark on the various experimental discussions regarding the relationship between seeing and human understanding, vision and knowledge as proposed in a variety of modern key texts including the "Molyneux's Problem"<sup>39</sup> (1688) by William Molyneux, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690) by

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<sup>39</sup> Molyneux's Problem is a question addressed to John Locke in 1688 by the seventeenth century Irish philosopher William Molyneux about a newly sighted blind person's perception and reception of the visual world. The question reads as follows: "Suppose a Man born blind, and now adult, and taught by his touch to distinguish between a Cube, and a Sphere of the same metal, and nighly of the same bigness, so as to tell, when he felt one and t'other, which is the Cube, which the Sphere. Suppose then the Cube and Sphere placed on a Table, and the Blind Man to be made to see. Quaere, Whether by his sight, before he touched them, he could now distinguish, and tell, which is the Globe, which the Cube" (Locke 482–83)

John Locke, *An Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision* (1709) by George Berkeley and a much later treatise by Denis Diderot, *Letter on the Blind* (1749).

The emphasis on blindness by such philosophers along with the advancements in medicine, specifically the cataracts surgeries in the eighteenth century played a part in the varied perception, interpretation and representation of blindness as well as the blind in society in different cultures, in world literature, and on stage. Dispelling darkness with the aim of bringing the light of reason established the foundations of the hegemony of vision in the modern thought. Accordingly, what became a major centre of interest in literary and scientific circles of the eighteenth century was the ‘blind restored to light,’ a phenomenon best described by Michel Foucault as follows:

The ear has its preferences, the hand its lines and its folds; the eye, which is akin to light, supports only the present. What allows man to resume contact with childhood and to rediscover the permanent birth of truth is this bright, distant, open naïvety of the gaze. Hence the two great mythical experiences on which the philosophy of the eighteenth century had wished to base its beginning: the foreign spectator in an unknown country, and the man born blind restored to light. (*The Birth of the Clinic* 78)

As Foucault’s quotation also implies, with the introduction of the cataract surgery as a cure for blindness in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the blind figure once excluded from society as the source of darkness, now becomes the subject of scientific gaze paving the way to ‘light,’ human understanding, and knowledge.

Provoked by Molyneux’s question and put into discussion by Locke first, this idea concerning the relationship between seeing and knowing emphasizes that the blind possess no innate ideas nor do they have sensory skills; therefore, once restored to light they should learn how to see and how to speak in order to be able to articulate their ideas. It should be maintained that equating sight with knowledge and regarding it as “the most comprehensive of all our senses, conveying to our minds the ideas of light and colours” (Locke 129), Locke follows an exclusionary track while conceptualising the discourse of blindness. As Michael Schillmeier argues in “Othering blindness – on modern epistemological politics,” Locke’s ideas and the following theories of vision which forge a relationship between sight and knowledge regard blindness as the lack of vision, thereby determining the boundaries of the condition, “abstract[ing] and exclude[ing] the complexities of blind people’s life”

(481). Schillmeier's statement about Locke's approach to blindness befits Molly Sweeney where Friel illustrates how all the paternal figures, the rational subjects around Molly, disregarding her identity, try to define and redefine her blindness in line with the modern scientific discourse.

The play also makes a critical comment on this relationship between knowledge and sight in Mr Rice's account of his wife's elopement with his colleague, the "treacherous Icarus" Roger Bloomstein:

Maria and he were at the airport and about to step on a plane for New York. They were deeply in love. They would be in touch in a few days. He was very sorry to have to tell me this. He hoped that in time I would see the situation from their point of view and come to understand it. And he hung up. The mind was instantly paralysed. All I could think was: He's confusing seeing with understanding. Come on, Bloomstein. What's the matter with you? Seeing isn't understanding. (emphasis mine) (MS 475)

Friel's reference to the ocularcentrism and the interpretation of knowledge through a vision-centred approach in this quotation strikes a sympathetic chord with Foucault's criticism in *The Birth of the Clinic* of the hegemony of vision in Western culture and how equating light with enlightenment has resulted in the institutionalization of medical practice in the eighteenth century. Opening the book with a quite direct statement, Foucault refers to how the improvements in medicine in the late eighteenth century created the medical gaze and led to a different understanding of sight and speech: "This book is about space, about language, and about death; it is about the act of seeing, the gaze" (ix). To Foucault, modern medical experience and knowledge born once the clinical gaze penetrated the world beyond the visible, which created "a new alliance . . . between words and things, enabling one to see and to say" (xii). As a result, through the reconceptualization of language, the medical discourse and the medical perception in the late eighteenth century, human body became the object of the empirical gaze and the endless scientific observation, which turned the individual patient into a passive recipient, an object of surveillance. This process, as Foucault mentions elsewhere, in "The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century," the emphasis on clinical medicine, individual examination and private consultation actually led to the emergence of a certain politics of health as disease came to be regarded as "a political and economic problem" which needed to be settled to secure the general policy of the

government (165). In a sense, bodies become public properties upon which personal concerns can be inscribed, which brings to our minds the Dance Halls Act and the body politics of the 1930s in *Dancing at Lughnasa*. Consequently, the impingement of the public space on the private space brings out the problematization of the health and sickness dichotomy.

Even though Foucault's treatise mainly refers to the development of the medical market in the eighteenth century and the emergence of the clinical medicine, his ideas have actually a particular resonance in *Molly Sweeney*, a twentieth century text, where Molly's blindness is regarded as a problem to be effectively dealt with while she herself gradually drifts out of the picture. For instance, after the operation on the right eye, as Molly suffers from a new condition called *gnosis*, impaired vision, she expresses how troubling a phase it has been:

MOLLY. Tests – tests – tests – tests – tests! Between Mr Rice and Jean Wallace and George Wallace and indeed Frank himself I must have spent months and months being analysed and answering questions and identifying drawings and making sketches. And, God, those damned tests with photographs and lights and objects – those endless tricks and illusions and distortions – the Zöllner illusion, the Ames distorting room, the Staircase illusion, the Müller-Lyer illusion. And they never told you if you had passed or failed so you always assumed you failed. (emphasis mine) Such peace – such peace when they were all finished. (MS 496)

Molly's agitation reflects how she has been treated as a guinea pig by her ophthalmologist Mr Rice, her husband Frank, her psychotherapist Mrs Wallace, and the behavioural psychologist Mr Wallace who together with his wife was writing a book on Molly, in Frank's words, "a sort of documentation of her 'case-history' from early sight to life-long blindness to sight restored to . . . whatever." (MS 493)

Departing from Foucault's ideas regarding the medical gaze, at this point, it is also worth elaborating on the conceptualization of blindness in literature across the centuries in order to complement the picture Friel has drawn in *Molly Sweeney*. In *Enlightenment, Romanticism and the Blind in France* (1987), William R. Paulson, drawing a trajectory of blindness and how it is characterized throughout the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries provides examples from world literature. Paulson argues that blindness in the nineteenth century as "incurable loss of sight," is usually

associated with romantic visionary tradition and with an emphasis on imagination as the path to the transcendental truth, and is represented in the works of such writers as Balzac and Hugo. However, during the eighteenth century, there was practically a more pessimistic picture. The discourses relating to blindness and its dynamics changed with the advancements in philosophy and medical sciences. There was now a plane where the blind would be the focus of a variety of psychological, philosophical and pedagogical as well as literary studies. Paulson describes this situation as a process of “desacralization,” attributing a new discourse to blindness or the “construction of a new kind of social and cultural status for blindness” (5). By saying this, Paulson also explains how the word ‘sacred’ was associated with blindness before the eighteenth century and finally left its mark on the Enlightenment providing examples from Greek and Roman literature and society.

In the Classical ages and in the Old Testament blindness was linked with punishment and exclusion from society. However, such blindness appeared with its double irony that those who were punished by blindness were actually gifted with divine powers or compensatory faculties – prophesy, poetic inspiration and artistry, which made them godly. With the arrival of Christianity and the New Testament the term blindness gained a new meaning though preserving its negative undertones. The third century witnessed the opening of various infirmaries for the sick and terminally ill people, which provided home care for most of the blind; outside however blindness was still associated with begging, charity and the Christian tradition of almsgiving. The blind beggars travelling in groups around the country were usually associated with outcasts and imposters, which redefined the image of blindness as an advantage to be taken for making money. On the other hand, the farcical mystery plays of the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries portrayed the blind in parallel with the biblical account of the miraculous cure performed by Jesus. The blind in these plays were often depicted as vulnerable and were subjected to ridicule or mockery as the promised miracle did not always take place. As Paulson concludes, all these attributes including the Christian charity practice and the miraculous treatments were ultimately no different from regarding the blind as the Other or blindness as mysterious, unknown and thus menacing. In the end, both literature and the social practice reinforced the

image of blindness as a source of exclusion and derision (9). Nonetheless, with the Enlightenment period the issue of treating the blind as intrinsically different gains a new dimension; due to the advancements in medicine and philosophical discussions, the difference of the blind now comes to be regarded as “natural, accessible to science and subject to rational remedies,” a history which Paulson defines as “the story of desacralization” (9). Eighteenth century literature and the stage presents this new blind figure as “innocent and sensitive” rather than “grotesque or comic or pathetic” (13). In that sense, the interest in blindness by the medical practitioners and the philosophers leads to a new understanding of blindness stripped off its epithets of “exclusion, malediction and compensation” (13). It basically focuses more on the individual, his emotional state and his naiveté in confronting the world of the sighted, which Paulson thinks formed this new myth, desacralization, in a different shape. Blindness then turns into an object of modern epistemology and “the oculist becomes a ‘priest’ . . . for his is the power to redeem them and implicitly to confound those who, seeing, would have left them in darkness” (13). In a word, to Paulson, while the developments in the cataract surgery makes the world more visible for the blind, this newly gained visibility actually makes them feel more in darkness and thus alienated in a society blind to their subjectivities, which is also observed in Molly Sweeney through the title character Molly’s ‘dance’ with darkness and light.

Friel’s *Molly Sweeney* appears at this juncture as “a postmodern case history”<sup>40</sup> giving also a nod to this modern history of blindness and the medical practice. However, there is one specific work which is thought to have shaped the play thoroughly: Oliver Sacks’ essay “To See or Not to See” (1993). In one of his programme notes to the play’s 1996 production, Friel expresses his gratitude to the

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<sup>40</sup> Christopher Murray in his article “Brian Friel’s *Molly Sweeney* and its sources: A postmodern case history” contends that *Molly Sweeney* should be considered as a postmodern text because of Brian Friel’s preoccupation in the play with certain issues like “freedom, perception and irony” (82). Murray’s departure point here is the tendency in literary circles to address the thematic resemblance between Friel’s *Molly Sweeney* and J. M. Synge’s *The Well of the Saints* which was reintroduced at the Abbey Theatre around the same time as *Molly Sweeney*’s premiere. To Murray, while Synge is a modernist writer and his play a modernist text, Friel is a postmodernist writer, one who has gone far in the way he uses language, setting and dramatic form as well as the way he modulates the tone of public discourse and private discourse. (81–96)

writer: "I'm particularly indebted to Oliver Sacks' case history 'To See and Not See,' and the long, strange tradition of such case histories" (Playbill 27). In the essay Sacks presents, unlike Friel, a male hero, a fifty-year-old man called Virgil who has been blind from early childhood and was finally pushed into surgery by his fiancée Amy. Just like Molly, Virgil after the operation could not make sense of the light, images and objects nor could he discern distance or space. He was totally unable to cope with his new situation defined by Sacks as 'blindsight,' a "singular state, in which he [Virgil] manifestly responded to objects, could locate them, was seeing, and yet denied any consciousness of it" (345). It is beyond question that there are many similarities between Sacks' essay and Friel's handling the condition of blindness in Molly Sweeney, which makes the play lend itself into a comparative reading. However, what is really worth to note, as Murray indicates in "Brian Friel's Molly Sweeney and its sources: A postmodern case history," is the way Friel makes Sacks' essay suitable for the stage to the extent that the story bears the traces of a certain "Frielian ... tone, emphasis and form" (82). Considering Friel a versatile and multitalented writer Murray claims that Friel's skill lies in the way he makes use of different texts, discourses, histories and regards intertextuality and palimpsest as essential elements of his art and composition, which to Murray, characterizes him as a postmodern writer (83).

Taking Murray's argument one step further it could be proposed that there is one more dimension to Molly Sweeney affirming Friel's engagement with postmodern art: the play lends itself to the exploration and evaluation of a series of spatial relations and interconnections which, in Frederic Jameson's words, is the defining feature of 'the postmodern condition.' To Jameson, the flux of spatial connections is the indication of a difficult situation requiring "our insertion as individual subjects into a multinational set of radical discontinuous realities" (Postmodernism 413). Although Friel does not make any direct references to Ireland's political situation and her spatial positioning in Molly Sweeney, he presents the initial stage of the impact of such discontinuous realities through Molly's character and her condition, blindsight. Moreover, Jameson's contention regarding spatial relations also correlates with Massey's conceptualization of space as constitutive of a series of interrelations and

interactions covering a series of different, simultaneous spatial dimensions at both local and global levels.

In this sense, regarding the relational nature of space and the significance of social patterns in its constitution, Friel in *Molly Sweeney* illustrates how the disruption of the local space into fragmented ‘realities’ in Ireland in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is paralleled in Molly’s conceptualization of her body space, and her self. Drawing on Massey’s conceptualization of space and place to trace Molly’s experience the present chapter, therefore, reiterates the claims posited in the preceding chapters that what constitutes space is a series of interactions and encounters both social and material, human and non-human while place as a dynamic entity is the articulation of such certain relations.

Living in and through the social space of Ballybeg, Molly’s body engages in a constant process of spatial practice, which proves instrumental in the production and reproduction of spaces as well as bodies. Experiencing blindness provides a way for her to understand her body, her space and her movement and mobility through it, which in the same manner re-shapes her conception of her identity and subjectivity. As Lefebvre maintains, “it is by means of the body that space is perceived, lived – and produced” (162). For this reason, this chapter focuses on the way how these experiences in social space can be understood and interpreted within the context of Molly’s chronic condition, blindness and how Molly’s environment, the spaces she inhabits – her home, the beauty salon, the swimming pool along with her network of people, employers, health practitioners, and neighbours contribute to Molly’s bodily experience. As Pamela Moss and Isabel Dyck express in *Women, Body, Illness*, conceptualizing the body without taking into consideration its surrounding circumstances would give no idea about the challenges of being chronically ill; instead, it would strengthen the images of body as an ideal and incorporeal entity (36). Therefore, exploring Molly’s public space and her relations in and through Ballybeg is significant in the sense that it provides a background against which Molly’s coping with her blindness, reconciling with her body, and the social, political and economic contexts of this condition in relation to Ireland and the Irish space can be read.

## 6.2. Body, Politics, and Space in *Molly Sweeney*

MOLLY. I think I see nothing at all now. But I'm not absolutely sure of that. Anyhow my borderline country is where I live now. I'm at home there. Well . . . at ease there. It certainly doesn't worry me any more that what I think I see may be fantasy or indeed what I take to be imagined may very well be real – what's Frank's term? – external reality. Real – imagined – fact – fiction – fantasy – reality – there it seems to be. And it seems to be all right. And why should I question any of it any more? (MS 509)

Thus, ends Friel's Molly Sweeney with the final speech of the title character Molly who denies having any questions yet leaves a question mark over the play's ability to provide a clear-cut resolution. Like the narrator-character Michael's final monologue in *Dancing at Lughnasa*, and Frank's Ballybeg epiphany in *Wonderful Tennessee*, Molly's speech is weaved through blurred dichotomies, 'real, imagined, fact, fiction, fantasy, reality,' representative of her own situation verging on blindness, eye-sight recovery, and blindsight.

This final monologue delivered in the heterotopic space of the mental hospital where Molly, in and out of sleep, is having various visions, along with "loads of visitors" (MS 507) leads us to consider the significance of body/space relations and subjectivity along with the issues of power and resistance in the play. It is in this very last scene alone we are given a total insight into Molly's thoughts about her conceptualization of her body and her space. She has now moved forward from a mood of resigned acceptance of the control over her body exerted by the male actants around her to an attitude of embracement and self-control, which manifests itself through her decision of blurring the boundaries between blindness and sight.

Resolved to live in the liminal space of blindsight which she calls her 'borderline country', Molly pushes against the boundaries of the body as sighted, unsighted, abled, or disabled, healthy or ill so that she could open a space for herself. In bell hooks' sense, Molly "chooses the margin as a space of radical openness" and embraces multiplicity and difference in this newly acquired 'home.' Locating herself in the margin, and determined to live on the edge, she "develop[s] a particular way of seeing reality" and learns to look "both from the outside in and from the inside out" (hooks 229). Such an experience of Molly, in fact, emerges in parallel lines with bell hooks' definition of home, which proves useful in clarifying ideas about Molly's transgression in the final scene:

At times, home is nowhere. At times, one knows only extreme estrangement and alienation. Then home is no longer just one place. It is locations. Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and everchanging perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference. ("Choosing the Margin" 227)

In the threshold space of blindsight, Molly realizes that there is not only one side to her body but there are multiple; similarly, there are multiple ways of perceiving light and darkness. In the literal sense, Molly rejects human vision and moves towards blindness again; in a way, she defies the Lockean ideal of vision only to gain a different type of 'vision' in another space which she calls her borderline country, her home.

This new space Molly enters into is actually a space of resistance which offers 'varied and everchanging perspectives.' Here she can challenge and subvert the Cartesian rational identity and form her own truth and understanding of the self, which is also rendered smoother through Friel's narrative pattern in the play. Allowing Molly to have the final word, amongst the third person narration of Frank and Dr Rice, Friel actually shows how Molly has developed a growing awareness of her individual, multiple identity as sighted and unsighted. Her experience therefore is a clear indication of how human subjectivity is open to various alterations; it is unstable, in constant flux and subject to transformation through time and space.

Regarding Molly's embrace of her in-between status as both sighted and unsighted, it might be asserted that perhaps Molly has never had a strong desire in the first place to 'see' in the way that sighted people do. For example, following her first operation, on the day when her bandages are to be removed, while waiting for the doctor to arrive, Molly muses on the possibility of gaining sight yet rather hesitant:

MOLLY. Yes, I did want to see. For God's sake of course I wanted to see. But that wasn't an expectation, not even a mad hope. If there was a phantom desire, a fantasy in my head, it was this. That perhaps by some means I might be afforded a brief excursion to this land of vision; not to live there – just to visit. And during my stay to devour it again and again with greedy, ravenous eyes. To gorge on all those luminous sights and wonderful spectacles until I knew every detail intimately and utterly – every ocean, every leaf, every field, every star, every tiny flower. And then, oh yes, then to return home to my own world with all that rare understanding within me for ever. (emphasis mine) (MS 483)

As the quotation indicates, even before stepping into the 'land of vision' Molly thinks of 'returning home.' She is not yet ready to venture out into this visual space where she will be exposed to a series of spaces and temporalities. However, she also has an urge to experience this space yet for a while not forever. As opposed to Frank's phantom desire to visit Abyssinia and Mr Rice's fantasy to restore reputation through Molly's operation, Molly's phantom desire is "a brief excursion to the land of vision" (MS 483). What follows this pondering is in fact an act of assertion which proves how vague Molly's attitude towards this idea of journeying to the land of vision which she later calls "a stupid fantasy" is. (MS 483)

Molly's detached approach to 'seeing' can also be observed in her dialogue with the nurse on the same day, the day of bandage removal. While the nurse is preparing her, and making her more attractive before Mr Rice arrives, Molly, disoriented in her space, asks where the bathroom is. When the nurse assures her that she will take her there, Molly rejects firmly: 'No,' ... I will find it' (MS 482). She later admits that she actually did not need to use the bathroom nor did she need the nurse's assistance. She only wants to experience her familiar world once more before leaving for good: "I just wanted to take perhaps a last walk; in my own world; by myself" (MS 482). Later, on another occasion, it is observed that even in her first experience with the land of vision, Molly immediately goes back to her own world where she has her own 'rare understanding.' When Frank visits her in the hospital on that day, he brings her some flowers, her favourite ones. As Molly takes the flowers from Frank, Mr Rice starts asking questions in the manner of testing her. Molly without hesitation tells what colour the flowers and the wrapping paper are; however, when she is asked about the type of the flowers she falls into silence after looking at them fixedly with eyes wide open. Frank describes that moment as follows:

FRANK. We waited. Another long silence. Then suddenly she closed her eyes shut tight. She brought the flowers right up against her face and inhaled in quick gulps and at the same time, with her free hand, swiftly, deftly felt the stems and the leaves and the blossoms. Then with her eyes still shut tight she called out desperately, defiantly, 'They're cornflowers! That's what they are! Cornflowers! Blue cornflowers! Centaurea!' (MS 487)

As Frank's account indicates, Molly, following the operation on the right eye, uses her old methods to perceive the objects. She closes her eyes only to see that they are cornflowers, just the way she used to do in her father's walled garden. At this stage, her memory becomes the sole aid in her process of perception. She does not want to turn to the assistance of her newly gained sight but prefers to be situated on the space of darkness.

In this first visit Frank describes Molly "in buoyant form," "animated" with "unnaturally bright" eyes, and "open and joyous" expression (MS 488); however, upon leaving, he adds: "But as I said good night I had a feeling she wasn't as joyous as she looked" (MS 488). On the other hand, Mr Rice seems to be satisfied with the result of the first operation along with the progress Molly has made. He believes that he actually did something miraculous and the miracle worked on both Molly and himself because Molly was now sighted and he was this "artist" again performing his art (MS 488). Ballybeg was the place where he lifted away the darkness from Molly's world and restored sight to her, at the same time, it was the place "where the shaft of light glanced off [him] again" (MS 490). For this reason, he would always remember Ballybeg, "the courageous Molly" and the operation he performed "so assuredly and with such skill, so elegantly, so efficiently, so economically:"

MR RICE. But I was talking of Molly's operation and my memory of that. And the core of that memory is this. That for seventy-five minutes in the theatre on that blustery October morning, the darkness miraculously lifted, and I performed – I watched myself do it – ... – but suddenly, miraculously, all the gifts, all the gifts were mine again, abundantly mine, joyously mine; and on that blustery October morning I had such a feeling of mastery and – how can I put it? – such a sense of playfulness for God's sake that I knew I was restored. No, no, no, not fully restored. Never fully restored. But a sense that a practical restoration, perhaps a restoration to something truer – that was possible. Yes, maybe that was possible ... . (MS 489–90)

Molly also seemed to be pleased with the changes in her life to a certain extent, and for a few weeks following the operation she thought that she "lived in a very exciting world ... Not at all like that silly world [she] wanted to visit and devour – none of that nonsense" (MS 491–92). What she would describe as "terrifying" later on, to Molly, was now "a world of wonder and surprise and delight" (MS 492): "Oh, yes; wonderful, surprising, delightful. And joy – such joy, small unexpected joys that came

in such profusion and passed so quickly that there was never enough time to savour them” (MS 492). Nonetheless, Molly would never have the real enthusiasm to enjoy this world completely because:

MOLLY. [It] was a very foreign world, too. And disquieting; even alarming. Every shape an apparition, a spectre that appeared suddenly from nowhere and challenged you. And all that movement – nothing ever still – everything in motion all the time; and every movement unexpected, somehow threatening. Even the sudden sparrows in the garden, they seemed aggressive, dangerous. (MS 492)

As the above quotation suggests, Molly’s diction changes in parallel with the unrest in her state of mind and her chaotic situation. Such description of her recent state through the use of various dynamic adjectives such as ‘disquieting’, ‘alarming’, ‘unexpected’, ‘threatening’ ‘aggressive’, and ‘dangerous’ indicates how she feels trapped amidst the state of flux, a continuous change through time and space.

It is obvious that Molly cannot orient herself in space amongst all this fusion of images and sounds which shatter at once her visionscape and soundscape. She depicts this period as “exciting” and “strange” at the same time, which somehow makes her think about her parents, “especially about my mother and what it must have been like for her living in that huge, echoing house” (MS 492). Molly, in a way, resembles her post-operation world to a huge echoing house where there is a lot of voice but not audible enough to discern. Similarly, her visual world is full of images which she cannot make sense of or clarify. Consequently, unable to locate herself in space and emplace her identity, Molly feels like a stranger in a strange land, exiled for ever. Then, similar to many women who had to “leave home precisely in order to forge their own version of their identities” in Massey’s sense (Space 11), Molly also realizes that she has to depart to start a new journey towards a new self, a new in-between identity open to the myriad positions and possibilities. Mr Rice describes this venture as follows:

MR RICE. She had moved away from us all. She wasn’t in her old blind world – she was exiled from that. And the sighted world, which she had never found hospitable, wasn’t available to her any more. My sense was that she was trying to compose another life that was neither sighted nor unsighted, somewhere she hoped was beyond disappointment; somewhere, she hoped, without expectation. (MS 501)

Through this observation, Mr Rice actually admits that Molly was sad and displeased because the operation, this adventure of gaining sight, failed to fulfil her hopes and expectations. Therefore, she was in search of a new space where ‘sight’ or ‘blindness’ was not the prerequisite of place attachment or social interaction.

Mr Rice’s observation which draws attention to Molly’s exilic situation leads us directly into a consideration of Friel’s *Dancing at Lughnasa* in which ‘exile’ appears as a recurrent subject. In his “Introduction” to *Brian Friel, Essays, Diaries and Interviews*, Christopher Murray referring to Father Jack in *Dancing at Lughnasa* and Molly Sweeney comments on the exilic figures of Friel’s drama. Murray asserts that Friel’s exilic characters usually end up as losers because in his drama “exile is symptomatic of unbearable dislocation; it is in itself a spiritual state. To venture into this other territory is to venture into instability rather than into fulfilment” (xiii). This contention is true; however, I think, Molly with her celebration of exile as ‘home’ goes beyond this argument and breaks the mould. Her situation in a way echoes the final speech of Columba in Friel’s *The Enemy Within* (1975): “we are awake now and ready to begin again – to begin again – to begin again!” (64)

Evoking a new beginning *Molly Sweeney* closes with Molly’s description of her conceptualization of her new condition, blindsight. Referring to her own space and status, she seems to have found peace and a place which she can finally call home, her own space, and where she can feel at ease. Her opening monologue in the play, however, indicates how her father gradually conceptualised the space for her controlling it and her identity during their learning sessions in his ‘walled garden.’

This initial scene in the play captures a moment in Molly’s childhood as she travels back in time remembering her visits to the garden with her father. Stage space does not imply any spatial features regarding the walled garden, yet Molly’s temporal movement through her consciousness reflects how Friel brings together temporal and spatial dimensions in one specific tableau:

MOLLY. By the time I was five years of age, my father had taught me the names of dozens of flowers and herbs and shrubs and trees. He was a judge and his work took him all over the county. And every evening, when he got home, after he’d had a few quick drinks, he’d pick me up in his arms and carry me out to the walled garden.

'Tell me now,' he'd ask. 'Where precisely are we?'  
 'We're in your garden.'  
 'Oh, you're such a clever little missy!' And he'd pretend to smack me.  
 'Exactly what part of my garden?'  
 'We're beside the stream.' 'Stream? Do you hear a stream? I don't. Try again.'  
 'We're under the lime tree.'  
 'I smell no lime tree. Sorry. Try again.'  
 'We're beside the sundial.' 'You're guessing. But you're right. And at the bottom of the pedestal there is a circle of petunias. There are about twenty of them all huddled together in one bed. They are – what? – seven inches tall. Some of them are blue-and-white, and some of them are pink, and a few have big, red, cheeky faces. Touch them.'

And he would bend over, holding me almost upside down, and I would have to count them and smell them and feel their velvet leaves and their sticky stems. Then he'd test me. (MS 455- 6)

Associated with the garden scene outlined above, it can be deduced that in contrast to her father whose "work [as a judge] took him all over the country" Molly's space is confined and walled, and would always be defined within the boundaries her father has drawn for her, which can be observed in his assuring sentence: 'I promise you, my darling, you aren't missing a lot; not a lot at all. Trust me' (MS 457). Molly indeed trusts her father blindly. He regards her as a "scholar," (MS 457) "a clever lady" (MS 456) with an aptitude for learning words he himself has chosen for her rather than sending her to an institution for the blind.

Molly's description of the walled garden with the bed of colourful flowers and trees along with her father's training sessions later takes the form of a reflection through which Molly contemplates and indirectly comments on her father's attitude to her and on handling her condition:

MOLLY. Of course I trusted him; completely. But late at night, listening to Mother and himself fighting their weary war downstairs and then hearing him grope his way unsteadily to bed, I'd wonder what he meant. And it was only when I was about the same age as he was then, it was only then that I thought – I thought perhaps I was beginning to understand what he meant. But that was many, many years later. And by then Mother and he were long dead and the old echoing house was gone. And I had been married to Frank for over two years. And by then, too, I had had the operation on the first eye. (MS 457)

Molly never goes to a blind school for reasons she neither knows nor fully understands. The two-act play does not provide us with proper information, except a

few references, about why the parents held back Molly's advancement. For instance, towards the end of the play, Molly recounts a memory of her mother revealing that the father did not send Molly to school only to "punish" her mother (MS 500). When Dr Rice describes his first encounter with Molly, he also provides some details about her medical condition along with a comment on why she has never been sent to a private institution for the blind: "perhaps because her father thought that he could handle the situation best at home" (MS 458).

Mr Rice's remark further provides means to explore the effect of Molly's father's decision on her self-improvement. It is clear that the father encourages mechanical and habitual repetition of words so that Molly could learn them by rote rather than encouraging her to use her imagination or fostering creative, critical and adaptable thinking. Consequently, Molly, as a child is never given the chance to pursue her interests because it was her father who defined the boundaries of her knowledge, skills, abilities, and her pastime activities. Interestingly enough, the play keeps the line blurred between why her father behaved in this way and what the circumstances were. Only in her final monologue, in delirium, does Molly explain that the reason lying behind her father's attitude towards her schooling was money matters rather than her father's excuse that Molly was needed at home because of her mother's nervous system problems and frequent hospital visits:

MOLLY. And sometimes Father drops in on his way from court. And we do imaginary tours of the walled garden and compete with each other in the number of flowers and shrubs each of us can identify. I asked him once why he had never sent me to a school for the blind. And as soon as I asked him I knew I sounded as if I was angry about it, as if I wanted to catch him out. But he wasn't at all disturbed. The answer was simple, he said. Mother wasn't well; and when she wasn't in hospital she needed my company at home. But even though I couldn't see the expression on his face, his voice was lying. The truth of the matter was he was always mean with money; he wouldn't pay the blind school fees. (emphasis mine) (MS 509)

There is yet one more dimension to the issue hinted at by Dr Rice's remark, which is related to Foucault's discussion of the politics of health. Molly's father exercises his power on Molly and tries to educate her rather than sending her to a blind school. In a way, Molly's body becomes an "object and target of power" (Discipline and Punish 136). It becomes a space for the father upon which he can exert power and

control, disregarding Molly's corporeality and identity. Similarly, the 'walled garden' becomes the father's "functional site" in Foucault's sense (143) where he can construct Molly's space and identity within his own discursive context: "Excellent!" . . . Excellent testimony! We'll adjourn until tomorrow" (MS 457). Treating Molly's disability as a case to be looked into and taken action about, Molly's father actually fails her, and in Molly's words "he wasn't at all disturbed." (MS 509)

Molly's father is not the only patriarch in the play who lets Molly down exercising power on her; there is also Mr Rice, the "pompous" and "sarcastic" (MS 466) ophthalmologist who takes advantage of Molly's case to reshape his career which he describes as "a phantom desire, a fantasy in my head":

MR RICE. [P]erhaps – up here in Donegal – not in Paris or Dallas or Vienna or Milan – but perhaps up here in remote Ballybeg was I about to be given – what is the vulgar parlance? – the chance of a lifetime, the one-in-a-thousand opportunity that can rescue a career – no, no, transform a career – dare I say it, restore a reputation? And if that opportunity were being offered to me and if after all these years I could pull myself together and measure up to it, and if, oh my God, if by some miracle pull it off perhaps ... (He laughs in self-mockery.) (MS 460)

Mr Rice regards Molly's case as an opportunity, 'the chance of a lifetime' to straighten out his life and career. Unaware of his intentions, Molly recounts that when they first met she did not like Mr Rice, but as the time passed she came to like him unlike Frank who found the way he speaks to and approaches Molly intimidating. Molly trusts Mr Rice yet with a second thought "for all his assurance there was something ... unassured about him" (MS 464). Despite such uncertainty concerning the doctor, Molly admits that she gradually liked him because Mr Rice was different from the other doctors in his approach to her case. To Molly, doctor Rice "was the only one who never quizzed [her] about what it felt like to be blind . . . what the idea of colour meant to [her], or the idea of space, or the notion of distance" (MS 465). There was one question however which was challenging for Molly: "did the idea, the possibility of seeing excite [her] or frighten [her]?" (MS 465). Molly regards this question as "stupid" and later comments that her world was "disadvantaged in some ways," but to her, it was never "frightening" or "deprived." (MS 465 – 6)

Molly does not describe her world as lacking specified benefits that are usually considered important; on the contrary, she considers herself to be in an advantageous position for experiencing the “total” (MS 466) pleasure her world offers her. She even thinks that sighted people must be envious of her because unlike Molly’s full experience “their pleasure was actually diminished” (MS 466). In fact, throughout the play, Molly is portrayed as a character who is very much absorbed in daily activities such as walking, singing, listening to radio, cycling and swimming which she takes much delight in doing as unsighted.

Molly was actually born sighted, but she became blind at a very young stage, when she was ten months old. According to Mr Rice’s health record,

MR RICE. She was functionally blind and lived in a blind world for forty years. But she wasn’t clinically blind: her retinas weren’t totally insensitive to light. ... she could distinguish between light and dark; she could see the direction from which light came; she could detect the shadow of Frank’s hand moving in front of her face. But for all practical purposes she had no useful sight. Other ophthalmologists she had been to over the years had all agreed that surgery would not help. (MS 467, 459)

The reason why Mr Rice provides various details about Molly’s medical condition is that he wants to justify himself for his decision to operate on Molly whose case he finds not “exactly hopeless” in theoretical terms (MS 467). To Rice, there is a possibility that Molly might be able to see because she is functionally blind but not clinically. Therefore, he decides to operate her on the right eye even if he believes that if the operation did not go as planned “her vision, however impaired, ought to be stable for the rest of her life” (MS 468 – 9). Thus, Molly becomes the victim of Mr Rice’s ‘phantom desire’ and his self-serving decisions. After all, he holds the opinion that Molly did not have anything to lose: “What has she to lose for Christ’s sake? Nothing! Nothing at all!” (MS 470). It is clear that determining the nature of Molly’s present condition as well as speculating on her post-surgery state, Mr Rice, quite in a controlling way, marks the boundaries of Molly’s space and self.

Frank Sweeny, “Mr Autodidact” whom Molly married “for no very good reason at all” (MS 480) is another powerful figure in the play who structures and shapes Molly’s life imposing solutions on her blindness. Although Mr Rice only hopes that Molly would have partial sight following the operation, Frank believes that with the

surgery she would gain “the perfect vision that sighted people have” (MS 482). Hence, he conducts an arduous research on blindness and devotes a considerable time and energy to Molly’s case, even complying a folder to keep record of her condition:

MR RICE. His ‘essential’ folder . . . Photographs of her cycling by herself across a deserted beach. Results of tests she had undergone years ago. A certificate for coming first in her physiotherapy exams. Pictures of them on their honeymoon in Stratford-on-Avon – his idea of self-improvement, no doubt. Letters from two specialists she had been to in her late teens. An article he had cut out of a magazine about miraculous ophthalmological techniques once practised in Tibet – or was it Mongolia? Diplomas she had won in provincial swimming championships. And remarkably – in his own furious handwriting – remarkably, extracts from essays by various philosophers on the relationship between vision and knowledge, between seeing and understanding. A strange fellow, indeed. (MS 459–61)

Nonetheless, Frank’s efforts to restore sight to Molly would have no significant or successful result in the end very much like his various business attempts, especially the cheese business with the Iranian goats, which would make him believe that he wasted his time: “God knows why I’ve spent my life at dozens of mad schemes. Crazy . . . I’m haunted for God’s sake, always looking for ... whatever ...” (MS 464). Consequently, Frank with his intense and eager interest in everything in life would create a world of fantasy for himself, which would immediately overwhelm Molly as well.

In his effort to bring light into Molly’s life, Frank actually invades her space and controls it. Making decisions on behalf of her, to a certain extent, Frank feels responsible for Molly’s life. For instance, one day when he gets a call from a friend from Nigeria about a start-up in Ethiopia, in fact, the first job offer he received within months, he immediately rejects the offer. Even though he admits that he was truly interested in his friend’s food convoy plan, he could not go anywhere because “Molly was on the verge of a new life” and he “had to be with her now” (MS 469). With the intention of accompanying Molly towards her new life, Frank actually learns and relearns her so that he could easily instruct and manipulate her. To illustrate, following the first operation, Frank spends a week in the library trying to understand everything about blindness and vision, and comes to define Molly’s world in a scientific discourse:

FRANK. But Molly's world isn't perceived instantly, comprehensively. She composes a world from a sequence of impressions; one after the other, in time. For example, she knows that this is a carving knife because first she can feel the handle; then she can feel this long blade; then this sharp edge. In sequence. In time. What is this object? These are ears. This is a furry body. Those are paws. That is a long tail. Ah, a cat! In sequence. Sequentially. (MS 477)

Frank dedicates himself "patiently" to teaching Molly how to form a relationship between the objects she already knows and the ones she has come to know through her newly gained sight: "As soon as tea was over, he'd sit at the top of the table and he'd put [Molly] at the bottom and he'd begin [her] lesson. He'd put something in front of [her]— maybe a bowl of fruit — and he'd say, 'What have I got in my hand?' . . . Every night. Seven nights a week" (491). However, Frank's patience does not last forever as his teaching and instructions prove to be a failure for Molly who, following her improvement, suffers deterioration and withdraws into herself.

Six weeks later, Molly has had her second operation, this time on the left eye which does not seem to be as healthy as Mr Rice had anticipated. Much to Rice's surprise, there lies now another deformed retina under the cataract. He therefore comes to the conclusion that removing the cataract, he could only grant partial sight to Molly, "both eyes functioning to some degree" (MS 493). In Dr Rice's own words, Molly could now see "from a medical point of view. From a psychological point of view she was still blind. In other words, she now had to learn to see." (MS 493)

Towards the end of that year those around her realize a tremendous change in Molly's behaviour which Frank finds very "extraordinary" and "difficult" to cope with (MS 494). For instance, she insists on going for a swim in the sea on a chilly, dark, rainy night in December or she wants to go out to the rocks, climb up on a very dangerous cliff and dive from the top into the Atlantic Ocean. When Frank does not really approve of her suggestions, she reacts: "And why not, Frank? Why not for God's sake?" (MS 494). Drawing on Molly's psychotherapist's views on Molly's situation, Frank realizes that these are actually the "symptoms" of her case: "the defiant smile, the excessive enthusiasm, some reckless, dangerous proposal" (MS 494). Moreover, she would spend hours sitting at the dressing table, peering into the mirror and adjusting her hair in different styles only to end up switching off the lights and crying

in the dark. Whereas in her final stage at the mental asylum where she embraces her in-between status, Molly, leaving the space of the material facts, would no longer need the distorted and limited space reflected by the mirror because she “enter[s] the space of modality that is controlled by imagination rather than sight” (Štefl 118). In her state of blindsight she would not rely on sensory perception but express herself and experience the space around her through imaginary journeys in the no-where land.

Frank is not the only person who is aware of the changes in Molly and therefore worried. Mr Rice is also concerned about what Molly has been going through recently, which he calls “the dangerous period” (MS 495). He understands that like all the other patients Molly lost her enthusiasm for life because the only thing he could offer her was a partially sighted world which required a great effort to comprehend and cope with. Her psychological and physical health deteriorates sharply, and she even gets sudden dizzy spells in different times and places, which Mr Rice explains as the condition of impaired vision called ‘gnosis.’ Consequently, unable to handle the sudden changes in herself and her vision, Molly withdraws into herself. Her mood swings drastically alter and destroy the pattern of her social life; she goes to work late for several days or she never goes at all. Finally, she loses her job in the beauty salon as well as the friendship of Rita “who probably knows [her] better than anybody” (MS 471). The only activity Molly does during this period is to sit alone in the dark, in silence with closed eyes or listen to the radio, which marks the beginning of her new condition called ‘blindsight,’ a kind of unconscious vision defined by Rice as follows:

MR RICE. This is a physiological condition, not psychological. On those occasions she claimed she could see nothing, absolutely nothing at all. And indeed she was telling the truth. But even as she said this, she behaved as if she could see – reach for her purse, avoid a chair that was in her way, lift a book and hand it to you. She was indeed receiving visual signals and she was indeed responding to them. But because of a malfunction in part of the cerebral cortex none of this perception reached her consciousness. She was totally unconscious of seeing anything at all. In other words she had vision – but a vision that was utterly useless to her. (MS 498)

As Mr Rice’s description of Molly’s final state explains, Molly was different now; the woman always praised for being self-sufficient, confident and with an ability to “experience the world with her hands alone” (MS 500) had long gone. For someone

who takes delight in physical activities and engages with the physical world as often as possible through bodily activities of dancing and swimming, this period proves to be a 'dark' and distressing time. Along with losing touch of the spatial and the sensuous world in which she used to take much pleasure, Molly also loses touch of the self. Her description of her pre-surgery pastime activities and the sense of thrill she gets from them illuminates how difficult it would be for her to face a world different than that of her own:

MOLLY. Oh I can't tell you the joy I got from swimming. I used to think – and I know this sounds silly – but I really did believe I got more pleasure, more delight, from swimming than sighted people can ever get. Just offering yourself to the experience – every pore open and eager for that world of pure sensation, of sensation alone – sensation that could not have been enhanced by sight – experience that existed only by touch and feel; and moving swiftly and rhythmically through that enfolding world; and the sense of such assurance, such liberation, such concordance with it ... Oh I can't tell you the joy swimming gave me. I used to think that the other people in the pool with me, the sighted people, that in some way their pleasure was actually diminished because they could see, because seeing in some way qualified the sensation; and that if they only knew how full, how total my pleasure was, I used to tell myself that they must, they really must envy me. (MS 466)

As Molly's evocation indicates, swimming as a physical, bodily activity plays a significant part in Molly's relation to her own body and environment. It arouses such liveliness and energy in Molly that she feels herself full of potential, secure, liberated and at ease in water. Her explication of the nature of this joy is linked to the way how she lets herself experience the water by touching and feeling rather than relying on her impaired vision. To her, such an experience of the physical world and her sensory perception of it prove to be much more whole because it is far beyond the visual sense.

Molly's notion of swimming actually gives an account of the nature of bodily experience, the lived body which Merleau-Ponty puts forward in *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) through the theory of 'embodiment.' Ponty with embodiment draws attention to the role of body regarding the subject's comprehension and experience of the world, one's interaction with the Other/s and his/her self-transformative process. In this sense, it is understood that Molly, while swimming, experiences her own body as full and unified, therefore, in a phenomenal way rather than as an objective body.

Her body becomes the mediator for her to experience the world and engage and interact with the other swimmers in the pool. Sharing the same lived space of the swimming pool with sighted people and communicating her experience, Molly actually depicts how spatial and corporeal experiences are interconnected and how she manages to merge them with skill and ease only relating to water and sounds. Additionally, comparing her condition to that of the sighted, Molly challenges the conventional structure of the binary model of the sighted/unsighted and places herself onto the powerful leg of the binary: “but I really did believe I got more pleasure, more delight, from swimming than sighted people can ever get.” Moreover, swimming allows Molly to enjoy the unbounded space of water and explore the limits of her senses and body so as to push it forward and beyond. As Ojzyńska suggests, “The brisk, rhythmical movement of the protagonist’s body in the water is both a reflection and an expression of Molly’s inner balance of confidence” (“One, Mad Hornpipe” 256). Totally aware of her self and abilities, as Molly moves with ‘assurance’ and ease in water, she assumes the world folds and unfolds before her, and she is able to capture all the sensation of that moment, and experience the chance of space in Massey’s sense.

Nevertheless, in her later condition of blindsight, Molly’s relation to the physical world is totally changed as she no longer wants to reside in the safe haven of pure sensation or intuition to connect with the outside world. Seeing that ‘seeing’ is not the only component that defines her nor visual impairment is a lack; she would dismiss any sensory connection with the world outside as inadequate and inappropriate. Before succumbing into this state, Molly once more manifests how she actually challenges the dichotomous nature of visual ability through another bodily activity, dancing, which once again manifests her own version of subjectivity and Friel’s ongoing “experiment with a non-verbal language.”<sup>41</sup> The following section

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<sup>41</sup> In *The Art of Brian Friel*, Elmer Kennedy-Andrews, referring to Friel’s preoccupation with non-linguistic forms asserts that Friel in his works often draws attention to the significance of “aesthetic experience” because he constantly pushes the boundaries of language, explores its limitations and edges by focusing on non-verbal elements, music space, performance, ritual and rites so that his characters would express themselves more freely. Bringing these elements together along with the traditional methods of Brecht and Artaud, Friel in a way acknowledges and illustrates the fact that “life itself is an inseparable complex of impressions and judgements, illusion and disillusion.” (218)

therefore introduces and explores Molly's dance scene the night before the operation and its significance in terms of body/space relations and subjectivity.

### 6.3. Dancing in the Dark: Molly's 'Frantic' Party

Many feminist geographers and theorists of space, place, and spatiality emphasize the gendered nature of the conceptualization of space. In *Space, Place Gender*, Doreen Massey argues that the fact that the very same binary opposition regarding masculine and feminine also applies to time and space in Western dualistic thinking. Time, regarded as masculine is often associated with history, progress, civilization, politics and transcendence while space is defined within feminine terms and linked with stasis, passivity and depoliticization (6–7). As this section aims to foreground, Molly's dance on the eve of her operation in many ways challenges and questions such fixed notions of subjectivity imposed on her by others who do not recognize her differences. Molly's dance, therefore, like the sisters' dance in *Dancing at Lughnasa* is often taken as "a tool of subversion"<sup>42</sup> and a powerful dramatic device despite being an offstage element, residing in Molly's memory.

Friel presents the dance off-stage through the title character's monologue told in past tense like the Mundy sisters' dance in the kitchen and Frank's account of the dancing dolphin in his Ballybeg epiphany in *Wonderful Tennessee*. Like these preceding dance scenes, Molly's dance scene is also revealing in the sense that it shows how Molly feels prior to the operation and how her feelings affect her movements in space. Treating the stage space as a dance floor in which Molly narrates the memory of the hornpipe rather than performing, Friel once again draws attention to the significance of memory in transforming the moment both spatially and temporally.

The night before the eye surgery Molly and her friends and neighbours have an impromptu, "frantic" (MS 472) party in Molly's house. They spend the whole night joking, singing, dancing, and drinking never worrying about the time or Molly's operation, which, to Molly, turns the event into something "a bit unreal" (MS 472).

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<sup>42</sup> See Katarzyna Ojzyńska, "One, Mad Hornpipe: Dance as a Tool of Subversion in Brian Friel's *Molly Sweeney*," for a more detailed analysis of the play within the context of Irish folk dance and subversion.

Normally, she would expect people to ask about the operation, pass comments or judgments; however, nobody speaks a word. Feeling bereft even in such a crowd gathering and finding no one to turn to, Molly engages in an internal chatter with herself articulating her distress and doubts:

MOLLY. I was afraid that I would never again know these people as I knew them now, with my own special knowledge of each of them, the distinctive sense each of them exuded for me; and knowing them differently, experiencing them differently, I wondered – I wondered would I ever be as close to them as I was now. . . . And then I knew, suddenly I knew why I was so desolate. It was the dread of exile, of being sent away. It was the desolation of homesickness.  
(MS 473)

Thinking the possible outcomes of the operation, Molly fears that she might never have the chance to re-establish her old intimacy with these people, once she steps into the world of the sighted. She already feels lonely and miserable, which she interprets as the anxiety triggered by the consequences of ‘exile,’ ‘being sent away,’ and ‘homesickness.’ Thus, she starts questioning the motives behind her operation:

MOLLY. And then with sudden anger I thought: Why am I going for this operation? None of this is my choosing. Then why is this happening to me? I am being used. Of course I trust Frank. Of course I trust Mr Rice. But how can they know what they are taking away from me? How do they know what they are offering me? They don’t. They can’t. And have I anything to gain? Anything? Anything? . . . (MS 473)

Until now, Molly has never had second thoughts about undergoing this operation on the eye. She did not ask Frank once why he insisted on this eye surgery nor did she ever ask doctor Rice about the potential complications of the surgery. Quite in a passive way and in an obedient manner, she conducted herself in accordance with the norms set by the male figures around her, her father, her husband and her ophthalmologist. However, she finally understands that they do not know her in the way she knows herself; hence, they could never estimate the extent of the damage they could do to her identity.

Having such a change of opinion and anger towards the men who have chosen what is right for her, Molly finds herself dancing gaily in the middle of the sitting room. Addressing to Tom McLaughlin, the “great fiddler” (MS 471), she calls out: “A hornpipe, Tom! A mad, fast hornpipe!” As if challenging the others’ skills and

asserting her identity with the stress on the word “me”, Molly cries in excitement: “Now watch me! Just you watch me!” (MS 473). She then starts dancing a “wild and furious” hornpipe very much like the Mundy sisters’ dance in *Dancing at Lughnasa*:

MOLLY. And in a rage of anger and defiance I danced a wild and furious dance round and round that room; then out to the hall; then round the kitchen; then back to the room again and round it a third time. Mad and wild and frenzied. But so adroit, so efficient. No timidity, no hesitations, no faltering. Not a glass overturned, not a shoulder brushed. Weaving between all those people, darting between chairs and stools and cushions and bottles and glasses with complete assurance, with absolute confidence. (MS 473)

Molly dances alone as if trying to assert some sort of identity and individuality. She does not invite Frank or Rita to the floor but chooses to trust in her own senses and skills as she coordinates herself in space with poise. Even though she dances in a limited, closed space she moves in such a self-controlled manner that she does not break anything on her way nor does she crash anyone, in which she herself takes pride: ‘Not a glass overturned, not a shoulder brushed.’ She in a way feels proud of her skills of managing her movements effortlessly in space. Moreover, giving this “wild and furious” performance and not having any idea about “how long it lasted” (MS 473), Molly seems to have lost track of time but she is totally aware of her own place. She no longer feels out of place for she is right here, right now, transitioning away from passivity to assertiveness. Her dance, in this sense, signifies how she has finally figured out to challenge the power mechanism that operates spatially over her body constructing her space and subjectivity.

Molly’s choreography of her stance, her movements and turns around the room lend itself into various readings providing clues about body/space relations very much like the sisters’ céili dance in *Dancing at Lughnasa*. Dancing together, the sisters make space while their bodies meet space and their subjectivities interact with one another. They perform in their own way showing assertiveness and sharing gestures of defiance and subversion against the practices of the patriarchy namely represented by the Irish Free State and Catholicism. Similarly, Molly’s dance with its powerful manifestation of her bodily rhythms and corporeal capacity can be interpreted as a challenge to the totality of the rational subjects monitoring her life. Her performance brings to mind especially Kate Mundy in *Dancing at Lughnasa* whose solo dance is distinguished

from the sisters' dance with her elegance, self-control and moderation. Like Kate who, dancing, goes out to the garden and comes back to the kitchen exploring the borders of the restricted domestic space of the Irish kitchen, Molly also dances around the room, goes out to the hall; and then, she dances around the kitchen and heads back to the room again, "mad and wild and frenzied" (MS 473). It is clear that both characters push the boundaries of their space as well as the self and move from a notion of unified subject to intrasubjectivity. There is yet one striking difference between the two dance scenes in terms of the use of architectural space. The sisters dance in the 'private' space of their kitchen, and there are no onlookers around or anyone watching them except for the male gaze of the seven-year old Michael, the narrator-character in the dark. Molly also dances in the private space of her house; however, the performance actually turns into a public event with Frank and the neighbours watching, singing, and cheering.

Molly definitely feels that all the eyes are on her yet being blind she cannot reverse the gaze of the people gathered in the room, especially that of Frank who seems to be feeling edgy and unsettled because of Molly's frantic movements. However, with the exultation and the anxiety of the dance, Molly suddenly feels herself out of place: "Frank whispered something to me. I don't know what he said – I was suddenly lost and anxious and frightened. I remember calling, 'Rita? Where are you, Rita?' (MS 474). She then rushes to her friend Rita who consoles her kindly: "We'll have none of that. You're not allowed to cry" (MS 474). Like Mundy sisters who suddenly resume their daily chores in the middle of the dance as if they had never had that moment of frenzy, Molly dances until Tom, the fiddler stops playing at Frank's request. Thus ends Molly's dance in tears and despair. Molly does not actually stop because she wants to but finishes her performance upon Frank's intrusion, which emphasizes precisely how powerful an effect he has on Molly. It is actually Frank who disrupts her pattern and makes her lose her balance while dancing in such an eloquent way. In this respect, the finale of the dance scene is a foreshadowing to how Frank would prove to be a space invader interfering with Molly's life and making her leave her 'safe' haven.

Katarzyna Ojzyńska in her article, "One, Mad Hornpipe: Dance as a Tool of Subversion in Brian Friel's *Molly Sweeney*" interprets Molly's dance within the

context of the history of traditional Irish dance and concludes that the dance can be regarded as a “female opposition to the Irish patriarchal order” (255). Ojrzyńska’s contention is indeed insightful, and it illuminates the ideas put forward by Friel in the play regarding Ireland and its socio-political space; however, due to the scope of this section my argument will be more on embodiment and subjectivity as the relationship between bodies and spaces revealed through dance. The exploration of the interconnected nature of body/space relationship in the play is significant in the sense that Molly interacts with her space through her body, which enables her to feel herself in the world, reconnect with people and place forming relations. Such an interaction inevitably opens up the questions of identity and subjectivity, which the following part aims to trace.

In the chapter “Foregrounding the Body: The Plays of the 1990s” in *The Art of Brian Friel*, Kennedy-Andrews observes how Friel’s late plays including *Dancing at Lughnasa* and *Wonderful Tennessee* put a stronger emphasis on “the pagan consciousness of the body” and its “potential for wholeness” (209). Referring to Friel’s approach to language and subjectivity, Kennedy-Andrews argues that Friel’s understanding of subjectivity is not totally based on language but a variety of discourses the most important of which is ‘intuition,’ the individual’s sticking to certain moral and political beliefs in search of meaning in life (208). In this sense, even if Friel’s characters are observed in their critical moments of ‘subjection’ in some plays, especially the earlier ones, Friel confirms us that it is something which can be avoided. According to Kennedy-Andrews,

Plays such as *Aristocrats* and *The Communication Cord* tentatively, but explicitly, move towards the insight that we do not have to remain trapped in the ‘given’ network of linguistic and social relations. By being true to ourselves, to our own pre-verbal intuitions, we can take charge of our own destiny, assert our own intentions, recentre our own transcendent subjectivity and break out of the ‘given’ patterns and control systems. The fabulous kiss with which *The Communication Cord* ends inaugurates new possibilities, including the possibility of a new language of the repressed unconscious, a new language of the body. That closing embrace or the dancing in *Dancing at Lughnasa* reminds us that, as Raymond Tallis puts it, ‘the fundamental reality, the reality from which all human lives begin and which no human life ever fully escapes, is the intercourse of one body (the human body) with other human and non-human bodies’. (208-209)

Kennedy-Andrews does not refer to Molly Sweeney in any part of this discussion, yet his arguments remind us of the play and the dance scene where Molly's body engages with the others immediately sharing an invisible, intuitive bond with them. Unlike the traditional dance performances in which various dances which bring together a group of individuals who during the performance show some sort of "intimacy and affection" through gestures of touching and eye-contact (Briginshaw 3), Molly cannot maintain eye contact with the guests in the room; however, the intimacy she shows is different. Her "mad and wild and frenzied" yet elegant moves around the room actually seize the participants' imagination and adds to the "unreal" (MS 472) atmosphere in the party.

In line with Kennedy-Andrews' views, it could be asserted that through the dance, Molly declares her break with the radical empiricism and conventional discursive modes of Lockean ideology and situates herself beyond words, in the non-rational, non-discursive realm of music, dance, movement and gesture. In a sense, the dance becomes for Molly the harbinger of a new beginning, a re-defining of her self, finding 'a new language of the body, and a re-consideration of her place amidst the desires and plots of the men around her. Similarly, the hornpipe becomes the overt manifestation of her transformation from a passive woman to an assertive individual who takes control of her life just in the way she takes her body in hand during her spontaneous performance. In a way, through interacting with her body and her space quite in an improvisational way, Molly gives a contemporary dance performance subverting historical legacies of the dance hall space.

Valeria A. Briginshaw in *Dance, Space and Subjectivity* explores various examples of postmodern dance performances in an effort to address body/space relations in dance and its role in interpreting questions of identity and subjectivity especially the way how they are "negotiated, constructed and resisted" (7). To Briginshaw, dance as a bodily activity is an essential tool in addressing issues of and around subjectivity because it allows one to understand the unfolding of bodies in spaces along with their interaction with the spaces and other bodies (5 -7). Moreover, Briginshaw claims that during the dance as bodies meet space, the dancers exchange

a “piece of space in the form of air which disappears into bodies through mouths and ears” which are along with lips and noses and like skin are regarded as “both inside and outside the body” (3). Occupying both spaces as inside and outside, bodies become edge spaces where the feeling of “ambiguity” and “ambivalence” is prevalent. Once the limits and borders of bodies are exposed there opens a room for a myriad of possibilities and change, which, to Briginshaw, illuminates the discussions around subjectivity and body/space relations.

Molly’s blindness laying bare the borders and limits of her body opens the play into a variety of readings contributing to its interpretation within the context of the above mentioned critical concepts. Her blindness and her exquisite dance skills during the hornpipe scene prove how she crosses out the borders of her body which delimit her movement in space and shows that bodies, like spaces, are permeable and that boundaries can actually be challenged. In the same vein, her latest condition, blindsight that we come across towards the end of the play is an illustration of how she posits herself in the realm of possibility where she embraces the unravelling of her Selves and the dissolving of the unified subject. Molly no longer defines herself standing on the subordinated leg of the binary nor is she on the privileged one but she occupies both spaces challenging the Cartesian understanding of the subject as a bounded and bordered entity. Therefore, through Molly’s image in the dance and her acceptance of her in between position as both sighted and unsighted, Friel draws attention to how binary structures can be blurred and disrupted once Molly focuses on “the spaces in between; on spaces of ambiguity and hybridity, and of becoming, rather than being.” (Briginshaw 14)

Molly’s locating herself in an in-between space, therefore, opens the ground for a discussion of how the play problematizes and challenges the dominant discourses and binary oppositions. In a way, Molly’s body becomes, in Elizabeth Grosz’s terms, the “threshold” or “borderline concept” hovering “at the pivotal point of binary pairs”. Her body is “neither – while also being both – the private or the public, self or other, natural or cultural, psychical or social . . .” (Volatile Bodies 23). Her body lends itself into multiple definitions now each of which is unique to her Self and none is to be determined by any other actor occupying her space. In this way, rethinking her body

and the self as independent attributes yet dependent on one another, Molly goes beyond the reductionist mind-body dualism and posits her self on a neutral terrain. Within this ambivalent space, Molly could experience time/space as fluid very much like the borders of her body, and she could reconsider her relations to the world challenging the fixity of her identity as sighted/unsighted, healthy/ill. Accordingly, through this subversive dancing scene, Molly transcends the borders of her body and plays with the idea of fixed identity constructions. Her challenge to the identities as essences rather than processes can further be linked to the Massey's relational view of space which, like identities, as a product of relations and interactions, is always under construction and in a constant process of being made.

#### 6.4. Conclusions, Molly, Ireland, and Place

In the end, like all the preceding plays of this study Molly Sweeney with its depiction of the title character's experience with her space and subjectivity gives us a chance to think about space, place and Ireland in relational terms and with regard to Massey's key concept 'a global sense of place.' As Massey reminds us, the very idea that people have multiple identities can also be relevant considering places, and it is likely that such various identities will turn out to be "a source of richness or a source of conflict, or both" (Space 153). In Molly's case, her situating herself in the in-between space of blindsight proves to be a source of richness since she creates a plane to experience her subjectivity without intervention, outside the dominant social practices of exclusion which is based on intolerance towards bodily differences.

Portraying Molly in her constant effort of reinventing herself, and positioning herself amongst possibilities and pluralities like the new mestiza of Anzaldúa, Friel in a way affirms Massey's idea that a sense of place should be considered as "progressive," open and "outward-looking" rather than "self-enclosing and defensive" (Space 147). As Molly undergoes a series of surgeries on the eye along with a set of changes in personality till she finally achieves a certain consciousness to redefine herself, Friel introduces several ideas in the play which gradually resonate with the history of Ireland's social and spatial marginality and development, especially during the twentieth century. Moreover, Friel's dramatization of Molly's story and its echoes

in Irish social and spatial history can also be read in parallel lines with Friel's participation in the Field Day Theatre Company in 1980 and his advocating the idea of the fifth province, the envisioning of another possible Ireland, a rethinking of place much in the same vein as Massey's understanding of place and Edward Soja's conceptualization of the Thirdspace. For all these reasons, the final section of this study traces the way how Molly's personal story emerges in parallel lines with the history of Ireland drawing a conclusion about the idea of 'place and identities' in spatial terms.

Bringing Edward Soja to the scope of this chapter might open the ground for postcolonial theories of identity and community. In the same vein, given the abundance of scholarship on Friel's *Molly Sweeney* it should be noted that the play lends itself easily to a postcolonial reading regarding language, identity, race, gender, and Irish folkloric history and colonial past. For instance, F. C. McGrath in Brian Friel's (Post)Colonial Drama devotes a chapter to *Molly Sweeney* to analyse the play within the context of "language and illusion" (249). Similarly, in "Molly Astray: Revisioning Ireland in Brian Friel's *Molly Sweeney*," Karen M. Moloney, departing from Seamus Deane's comment that Sarah of *Translations* can be considered as a symbolic Cathleen Ni Houlihan figure characterizing Ireland, asserts that likewise, Friel's *Molly* can be interpreted in postcolonial terms:

The blind Molly acts as a symbol for Gaelic Ireland, the partially sighted Molly serves as a metaphor for the colonized country, and Molly hospitalized for madness represents the postcolonial state. But most poignantly of all, Molly is also a contemporary Irish woman, a damsel turned to hag by the postcolonial Irish male, and her experience signals the continuing vexed status of women in Ireland. (285)

To Moloney, Molly's story of blindness and blindsight echoes Ireland's colonial experience as well as the social standing of women in Irish society. Referring to various literary figures from Irish literature including William Butler Yeats, Lady Gregory, Seamus Heaney, and their interpretation of the Cathleen Ni Houlihan figure, Moloney states that equating Irish nation and Ireland with women in literary and cultural studies is actually problematical and limiting in terms of the representation of women, their place, and the Irish space. To exemplify this, she reminds us of Edna

Longley's famous article "Cathleen and Anorexia: The Breakdown of Irelands" where Longley critiques the representations of Irish women in literature and the prevalent mythical imagery beneath (286 - 287). Moloney finds such ideas highly illuminating yet adopts a cautious approach by emphasizing that "careful reading of a text – even one by a male author – can reveal canny infusion of subversive content into old stereotypes" (287). To this idea she links Friel's play *Molly Sweeney* where Friel with the "convalescent Cathleen Ní Houlihan" figure shows how the nation as woman trope can be subverted. Moloney propounds that *Molly Sweeney* is not much different from *Translations* in the sense that both plays treat the theme of "colonization and its consequences;" however, in *Molly Sweeney* the narrative discourse is focalized around the "colonizer's impact on the life of the individual Irish woman" (287). Throughout the article, in an effort to analyse the consequences of the colonizing practices on the lives of Irish women, Moloney gives a postcolonial reading of Molly's experience paying attention to the critical signposts colonizer, colonized, language, nation, otherness, Irishness and Englishness, and the borderline country.

Moloney's ideas undoubtedly offer a critical framework for the play in question to be interpreted in postcolonial terms; however, I think, they fall short of fitting into the scope of this chapter regarding Friel's approach to space and place relations and Molly's characterization. Introducing Molly in the final scene seeming more content with her new self and her new condition blindsight, Friel actually moves beyond such dichotomous social constructions as colonizer/colonized, Irishness/ Englishness, or Ireland/England as Moloney suggested, and he comes to problematize the very essence of such polarities which already abound in Irish social and spatial history. By creating an alternative space for Molly and situating her on a more neutral terrain where she would embrace differences, Friel aims at drawing attention to the constructedness of such ideas and the need for a more dynamic approach to Irish space. In that sense, my concern here overlaps with Edward Soja's ideas on space especially his conceptualization of Thirdspace as "a space of extraordinary openness" (Thirdspace 5), which strikes a sympathetic chord with Massey's understanding of space as open, progressive, and consisting a simultaneity of stories-so-far. Like Massey, Soja departs from Lefebvre's theory of spatiality which he considers to have caused a complete

change in understanding space and problematizing the prevalence of historical epistemology in conceptualization of space and time.

Soja's interpretation of Thirdspace is based on "a both/and logic", which he describes as "a creative recombination and extension" of the real and imagined representations of spatiality (Thirdspace 6). Adopting a critical method which he calls "thirling-as-Othering" Soja aims at addressing the abundance of possibilities and of other options in an effort to undermine the workings of binary thought and metanarratives. Such a critical strategy is actually significant because, as Soja notes, "the original binary choice is not dismissed entirely but is subjected to a creative process of restructuring that draws selectively and strategically from the two opposing categories to open new alternatives" (Thirdspace 5). In this sense, Thirdspace is always a way of thinking the other way to re-organize the binary though differently rather than disrupting it. It is therefore,

an efficient invitation to enter a space of extraordinary openness, a place of critical exchange where the geographical imagination can be expanded to encompass a multiplicity of perspectives that have heretofore been considered by the epistemological referees to be incompatible, uncombinable. It is a space where issues of race, class, and gender can be addressed simultaneously without privileging one over the other; where one can be Marxist and post-Marxist, materialist and idealist, structuralist and humanist, disciplined and transdisciplinary at the same time. (Thirdspace 5)

Soja's statement about the openness of Thirdspace also befits Friel's association with the Field Day Theatre Company and his appropriation of the idea of the fifth province. Like Soja's Thirdspace, Friel's idea of the fifth province also corresponds to a space where it is always possible to think otherwise, outside the binaries and established mode of thoughts. As a touring company around Ireland and its various territories, Field Day defies a centre, a fixed place which could be called 'home', and through adopting this idea of the fifth province the company draws attention to its own slippery nature in both the metaphorical and topographical sense. Nonetheless, as Richard Kearney<sup>43</sup> indicates, "If anything, it [fifth province] may be re-envisioned today as a

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<sup>43</sup> Richard Kearney is an Irish philosopher specialized in contemporary continental philosophy, and together with Mark Patrick Hederman, he reintroduced the medieval notion of "fifth province" in the first editorial of the periodical *The Crane Bag* (1977).

network of relations extending from local communities at home to migrant communities abroad” (Post-nationalist Ireland 80). In a way, it is the people and their interaction, their social practice in space that defines the spatiality of the fifth province. Referring to the various communities across the globe that comprise the Irish nation today Kearney claims that “Irishness is no longer co-terminous with the geographical outlines of an island” (80). The essentialist and fixed definitions of nation and identity do not hold any longer when one considers the dispersion of Irish people from their original homeland throughout Ireland and beyond. Still, Kearney thinks, there is a possibility to think otherwise, towards “alternative models of identification” one of which is the fifth province, a space endowed with multiplicity and deferring signifiers, an amalgamation of the local and the global:

The fifth province is to be found, if anywhere, at the swinging door which connects the ‘parish’ (in Kavanagh’s sense) with the ‘cosmos’. The answer to the old proverb— ‘where is the middle of the world’—remains as true as ever: ‘here and elsewhere’. We are speaking not of a power of political possession but of a power of mind. The fifth province can be imagined and reimagined; but it cannot be occupied. In the fifth province, it is always a question of thinking otherwise. (80–1)

Kearney also emphasizes his point by drawing attention to the geographical features of Ireland as an island. As a piece of land surrounded by water Ireland is often thought to be susceptible to outside attack or in a more positive way to intercultural dialogue with different places and peoples, which has been a significant contribution to Irish maritime literature. Various literary pieces such as *Mael Duin* and *Navigatio Sancti Brendani* explored how Irish immigrants and voyagers through various journeys observed and experienced the New World and the European Continent. Kearney links this situation to the contemporary panorama of Ireland asserting that the Irish historical culture is actually mirrored in the present-day society. To Kearney, Irish art has now taken its place in the global arena and incorporated well into its structure with such figures as the Chieftains, Van Morrison, Sinéad O’Connor, U2 in music; Jordan and Sheridan in cinema; Heaney, Muldoon, Banville in literature; Friel or *Riverdance* on stage” (81). The list illustrates how it is always possible to blend the local colour in cultural forms with the multicolour, global culture. Therefore, to

Kearney, the globalisation of Irish culture is a significant means for the Irish nation to find and define herself anew, in alternative ways:

Contemporary Irish identity is most at ease with itself, it appears, when the obsession with an exclusive identity is abandoned. Irish culture rediscovers its best self, not self-consciously, not selfregardingly, but in its encounter with other cultures—continental, British, American, etc. For as long as Irish people think of themselves as Celtic Crusoes on a sequestered island, they ignore not only their own diaspora but the basic cultural truth that cultural creation comes from hybridization not purity, contamination not immunity, polyphony not monologue. (81)

What brings these discussions around the play *Molly Sweeney* is that through Molly's experience of blindness / sight / blindsight, her practice within the social space, her process of negotiation and re-negotiation with her space, her body, and with the power mechanisms around her, Friel illustrates how the idea of the fifth province might be actualized in Molly's story. Through this, Friel also responds well to Soja's ideas about the possibilities in /of Thirdspace which can be "described and inscribed in journeys 'real-and-imagined' (or perhaps "realandimagined"?) places" (Thirdspace 11). Molly's final scene where she dances between many possibilities having no clear idea about what she has been going through in this "real-and-imagined" journey, yet feeling content to be home in a way affirms Friel's final resolution in the play: "Real – imagined – fact – fiction – fantasy – reality – there it seems to be. And it seems to be all right. And why should I question any of it any more?" (MS 509)

Moreover, Molly's in-between existence can be taken as Friel's reference to Ireland's transition from a traditional, rural society to a thoroughly modernized country, and taking part in the global race for economic superiority in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Irish people faced with constant change in the shifting space of Ireland has to find ways to reconcile themselves to the thought of a new identity, a fusion of tradition and modernity. As Fintan O'Toole asserts in his "Foreword" to the *Cultural Perspectives on Globalisation and Ireland*, "understanding globalisation in the Irish context is as much a task of remembrance and recovery as it is of encountering the new" (viii). Such encounter with the new would inevitably have consequences on people and place. Like Molly, who has to turn to her old methods to grasp the nature of her new condition, Irish people have to adopt ways to conceive the fact that place becomes space in

Ireland as they move towards accepting their position in the ‘global village.’ The situation is perhaps best described Frank’s efforts to undertake pioneering ventures outside Ireland for potential business opportunities as Gerry Evans of Lughnasa does. For instance, Frank imports “Iranian goats” to achieve the highest milk yield in his farm on the island of Inis Beag off the Mayo coast. He also conducts a feasibility study on the “blueback salmon” from Oregon and Alaska, and “African bees” to introduce them to Irish producers for more efficient outcomes in farming (MS 461, 476, 508). His dealings with the foreign influences express how Ireland has moved forward towards the idea of blending the global with the local and achieved to combine Irish economy and culture with that of the world’s. Frank’s characterisation also parallels the portrayal of Friel’s another character, the fictitious prime minister of the Republic of Ireland, F.X Ryan in *Mundy Scheme* (1969), and explicates Friel’s points regarding Irish space and globalisation. Referring to Ireland’s status in the world, Ryan stresses, “The days of parochial, provincial, parish-pump thinking are over. Either you proudly claim your membership of the global village – or you die. No country can live in isolation. We are all dependent and interdependent” (272)

Such characterization of Frank of *Molly Sweeney* as well as the prime minister in *Mundy Scheme* illustrates how Friel advocates a conceptualization of Ireland as open and hybrid, formed of a variety of routes and relations either dependent or interdependent, which might be said to bear out Massey’s points regarding place and place identity. As Massey reminds us, our local world is constantly exposed to the influences of the global world around us, which urges us to understand the “local character of our lives” as well as the “changing nature of the places” we live in so that we would be able to gain an awareness of the “wider, global context of which we are a part and what it is that makes us distinctively local” (*Geographical Worlds* 1). Places do change in varying ways, which plays a certain role on the formation of places somewhere else and their possibilities. Therefore, what defines their uniqueness or individual quality is not the survival of “mythical internal roots” which are likely to be harmed by globalisation but is the existence of the blend of the influences abounding there (*Power Geometries* 22). When complemented with this notion of Massey’s ‘a global sense of place,’ Brian Friel’s *Molly Sweeney* reveals the dynamics

of spatial change in Irish space and its implication regarding people and places. Intertwining text, space and lives in *Molly Sweeney*, Friel, therefore, paves the way for reading Molly's blindness as metaphorical and her experience as a reflection of Irish space and Ireland's spatial positioning amidst the globalized world. His final depiction of Molly on the verge of blindness and sight which she herself has difficulty in clinging on to one but chooses to enjoy the potentials and promises of the both, residing in blindsight elucidates how people like places are susceptible to change and can have multiple identities. Regardless of the desire and the efforts of Mr Rice and Frank to fix Molly in a normalized identity and thus in space, Molly immerses herself in a world full of possibilities, dances freely with the idea of both vision and blindness, but finally is resolved to 'see' in her own ways, which metaphorically hints at Friel's understanding of globalisation and his reference and response to contemporary concerns with globalisation in Ireland.

## CHAPTER 7

### 7. CONCLUSION

Ireland is something that often happens elsewhere.

— Fintan O'Toole, *Black Hole*

One part of my mind must learn to know its place.

— Derek Mahon, "Spring in Belfast"

This dissertation has attempted to explore three plays by Brian Friel, namely, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Wonderful Tennessee* and *Molly Sweeney* against the background of Doreen B. Massey's relational view of space and place. Reading space in these three plays, the study argued that Brian Friel's drama defies nostalgic interpretations of place, which foreground the centrality of land and language to national space and national identity, by offering an alternative sense of place as embracing both local and global ties in a relational manner within the contested geographies of Ireland. Emphasizing the inherent dynamism of space and its simultaneity, the plays analysed in this study challenge conceptualizations of place in Ireland as singular, fixed, unproblematic and as a site of authenticity and stasis by forging a new understanding of place as open and porous; a meeting place, a constellation, a cluster of various other places within the wider topographies of Irish space. This is a way of viewing place beyond its geographical boundaries rather than as a fixed point on a map, an approach which Friel adopts to undermine the notion of the immanent Irish 'sense of place,' and re-define it in progressive terms.

This study has highlighted that in Friel's drama place is not construed as fixed, closed or coherent but it is open, prone to change over time across social relations and interactions, and it is always on the making through a process of production and re-production. In parallel with such versatile identity of places, personal identities are also fluid, ever-shifting, polymorphous and decentred as the characters are often

portrayed as wandering on threshold spaces, which strikes a sympathetic chord with Friel's liminal position as a playwright from Northern Ireland but with one eye on the other side of the border, the Republic of Ireland and the world beyond.

As a literary figure occupying an interstitial space in both the literal and metaphorical sense, the relationship Friel kept with Northern Ireland has always been intimate yet intricate because the connection he has created between his homeland and his text actually works to de-familiarise the effects of the immanency attached to 'Irish soil' rather than valorising it. He does not turn to Northern Ireland for a search of origin or rootedness. Instead, his plays symbolize a break away from such interpretations of home as a stable ground, a site of dwelling and belonging, a safe haven for dreams and hope. Through undermining such accepted formulations of the conceptualization of place, Friel comes to redefine the notion of 'a place called home' as a site offering a new space of signification, a chance for 'Becoming' as described in Doreen Massey's relational understanding of space and place.

Writing in the second half of the twentieth century when the country was caught in the grip of the "Northern Irish problem," Friel's personal experience and the political situation of the country became inextricably interwoven. However, as this study has shown, his plays signify the blurred and porous nature of this interlacing line. As befitting to the resurgence of interest in space in the humanities and Irish Studies along with the shifts in Irish theatre,<sup>44</sup> Friel engaged with the 'sense of place' trope from a novel perspective as he addressed global issues through the lens of local themes. Once expressing his wish to appeal to both Irish people and beyond, he would say: "I would like to write a play that would capture the peculiar, spiritual, and indeed material, flux that this country is in at the moment. This has got to be done . . . at a local, parochial level, and hopefully this will have meaning for other people in other countries" (qtd in *Medieval and Modern Ireland* 74). As this study attempted to bring to the fore, although Friel has often been lauded for writing Ireland, in Ireland and about Ireland his writing evokes different places and strongly draws attention to the

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<sup>44</sup> In the 1990s, as opposed to the revivalist plays which depicted rural idylls and the timeless landscapes of the Irish countryside, there was a tendency to counter such ruralist portrayals through offering global themes and move beyond Abbey realism, a trajectory also followed by Brian Friel.

‘chance of space,’ the existence of other places and times and their web-like nature. Spaces of Ireland in his plays spread out into global space since there are many journeys, travels, excursions, rides, movement and wanderings, which allows for a re-conceptualization of Ireland as a sweeping, rhisomatic space extending in a continuous curve. In such a space where there is a surge of paths and passages, links and trajectories, the identity of places and people are open to question, which underlines Friel’s anti-essentialist view of place and identity as transcribed in his drama.

It is at this juncture that Friel’s representation of spaces and places of Ireland in his plays crosses with Massey’s relational understanding of space and place, especially with her key concepts “a global sense of place” and the “chance of space.” This study made use of various conceptual tools by Massey but specifically these two concepts to highlight the significance of the fictional town Ballybeg and its relevance to Friel’s idea of the fifth province as a new space of signification for Ireland and Irishness. Massey’s understanding of place is dynamic and processual, which calls attention to the always in-the-making nature of places. Such an understanding of place poses a challenge to the singular and introspective conceptualizations of place as nationalist and regionalist which both have resonances in the quintessential and predominant formulations of Irish sense of place. As opposed to such limiting conceptualizations, Massey advocates a theorization of place which forms a liaison between social relations and the spatial organisation of society, thereby encompassing a wide range of relations across space from the most local, national to the global. Place, in this sense, is a cluster of related and co-constitutive trajectories all intersecting in diverse planes either social, economic and/or cultural. Within such a crisscross pattern, the uniformness regarding places is rendered meaningless because what specifies a place is not the cultural homogeneity of its society but the way how it hosts multiplicity and difference in terms of class, race, and gender as well as disparities in religion and politics. To this end, place is the sphere of possibility, a space of promises and hope which allows for a negotiation with others and with the geographical and historical conditions contouring our lives.

Like place, Massey’s understanding of space is also relational entailing social relations and the simultaneous multiplicity of places and people. Space is produced

through connections, linkages and interrelations; therefore, it is not a “surface” or a distance nor is it a “continuous material landscape” but “a momentary coexistence of trajectories, a configuration of a multiplicity of histories all in the process of being made” (Massey, “Travelling Thoughts” 229). Such a configuration of space as the product of social relations which are incessantly in the making and re-making draws attention to the incomplete nature of space and the element of “chance.” Space always bears within itself the distinct possibilities, the potential for envisaging a new future of flows and flux. Such an understanding of space produced through connections, linkages and interrelations inevitably brings into question the already given, hierarchical formulations of the spatial and the temporal, and draws attention to their cohesive nature as space-time and their active role in the production of history, geography, and the politics.

Massey’s conceptualization of space and place as outlined above provided the framework for me to be able to analyse Friel’s chosen plays from a spatial perspective. Massey’s idea of a ‘global sense of place’ which suggests the converging path of a variety of influences both from within and outside overlaps with Friel’s representation of Ballybeg as a place open to a fusion of wider social relations across space. The plays analysed in this dissertation, namely, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Wonderful Tennessee* and *Molly Sweeney* are characterized by their shared setting as Friel’s fictional town Ballybeg, a small town in a remote part of County Donegal in Ireland. Geographically marginalized, Ballybeg brings to mind a vivid rural landscape, a symbolic space suggestive of spaces outside the mainstream. Nevertheless, as this study pointed up, the same space is also remindful of the border which cuts across lands and lives and reduces Ireland to a line on the map. Donegal, in the plays, in fact is no longer that idyllic space in the countryside which has long been conceptualised as a realm of retreat connoting a sense of home and belonging. It is now a border county in the southern part of Ireland geographically carved up and turned into a site of conflict. Even though Friel makes no reference to the border nor does he describe the liminal status of the County Donegal throughout the plays, his dramatization reveals that these diverse places are fluid entities set in relation to one another. As I have demonstrated through the discussion of the plays, both Donegal and Ballybeg along with the border

exhibit and evoke alternative spaces as complex structures imbued with meanings of control and power; of interaction and connection, which informing Friel's portrayals of places and personal identities, signifies Ireland in a broader sense.

In order to open up a space for the discussion of these three 'Ballybeg plays' within the broader map of Ireland and in parallel with the spatial turn in the humanities and social sciences, in two consecutive chapters, I tried to give an account of the historical context and the theoretical key concepts which will prove pivotal to the readings of the plays. Initially, I offered a general review of the Irish political and social history, mainly concentrating on the periods 1920s, 1930s and the 1990s. Informing the plays chosen for this study, these periods were all characterized by 'change' which occurred through government regulations, constitutional amendments and repressive religious strategies. Drawing attention to the nationalistic policies of the Irish Free State and the conservatism of the Catholic Church, I have tried to expound how these two apparatuses, the State and the Church, took oppressive actions to construct a homogeneous Irish nation and a uniform idea of Irishness. Among the various stratagems that the government and the religious authorities pursued to define certain moral codes for society I specifically concentrated on the Public Dance Halls Act as a significant marker of the repercussions of the policies of the Irish Free State concerning identity and nation. Being central to the scope of the dissertation, 'dance' played a pivotal role in explaining the various ways how Friel's characters revolt against the workings of the structured space around them and transform this space into a new space of signification. In this section, to elucidate what I believe the most essential part in terms of space and spatiality I also brought in the ideas of Michel Foucault on the exercise of power and subjectivation, which enabled me to examine the dynamics of the dance hall space and the negotiation of bodies, spaces and the cultural identities through surveillance and gaze. After providing an overview of the 1930s, the Public Dance Hall Acts and a discussion on the dance hall space against the background of the Foucauldian concepts, I turned to another important period, the 1990s, and explicated the details leading to the Celtic Tiger Phenomenon and its social and spatial ramifications. Describing the circumstances surrounding the setting and time of the plays, I intended to emphasize how Friel actually responded to the events

taking shape in his homeland and around the world without explicitly referring to them. Following this historical framework was a section on Friel's Field Day Theatre Company and the idea of the fifth province. Since this dissertation aimed at developing an alternative way of approaching space and place in Ireland as advocated by Massey's relational view of space, it was also of paramount importance to clarify Friel's vision of a new sense of Ireland and Irishness as epitomized in his Field Day enterprise and his appropriation of the notion of the fifth province, which, in fact, are in parallel lines.

In chapter three, I provided a theoretical framework on space and spatiality in theory especially paying attention to the way how space and place conceptualised in Western epistemology and how their defining features evolved from being geometric concepts to relational ones. Firstly, I provided a section on the spatial turn in the humanities and social sciences in the twentieth century and the shifting definitions of space and place. After tracing the divergences in the definitions of space and place in the Classical times and the Enlightenment, I moved to their more recent conceptualizations, namely the philosophical insights of Gaston Bachelard and Martin Heidegger who drawing attention to the human dimension in space, calls into question the Cartesian view of space as characterized by subject/object dualism. Bachelard's and Heidegger's theorizing, no matter how illuminating it proves, falls short within an Irish context when the complexities of the spaces of Northern Ireland are concerned. As the analytical chapters of this study showed, such concepts as dwelling, building, and belonging or the idea of house as a shelter for dreams and hope are rendered quite problematic, and they are subverted in different ways. While the plays exhibited these notions as underlying themes, Friel's characters constantly play with the categories producing space and being produced by it in different ways, not through dwelling or belonging but displacement. They dwell as long as they relate to other times, other places and other people in a state of continuous Becoming. In this sense, by bringing Bachelard and Heidegger's notions of space into the scope of this thesis, I have tried to emphasize that issues related to identity and place in an Irish context needs a more nuanced approach. In other words, they should be dealt with delicately in pluralistic terms, viz., in the context of a more relational understanding of space. Accordingly, along with the analytical discussion of

Massey's relational theory of space, I provided an overview of the ideas of Henri Lefebvre and Edward Soja who both emphasizing the integrated nature of social relations and the spatial structures have been major influences in space and social theory. As I have centred my discussion of the plays on the spatial theory of Massey, I provided a detailed theoretical section on her relational understanding of space focusing on her key theoretical ideas. Elaborating on Massey's conceptual tools prepared the ground for a more sophisticated response to the plays at hand in terms of space, place, and landscape.

The first play that was discussed in this study is *Dancing at Lughnasa*, a recollection of the narrator-character Michael and his real-and-imagined depiction of the Mundy sisters' tumultuous life in Ballybeg. In this chapter, focusing on the segregated social space of Ballybeg, I explored the clash between religious/national identity and the changing dynamics of social relations in the shifting space of the Ireland of the 1930s, a time when the country was going global at an accelerating phase through the invasion of technological advancements and industrialisation. I emphasized that the marginalized space of Ballybeg allows no easy passage for the Mundy sisters to transgress its boundaries; however, it is through their frantic céili dance in the 'private' space of their cottage kitchen, the sisters engage with their space and subjectivity and emplace themselves in society. To be able to expatiate on the Mundy household and the house within a spatial scope, along with Massey, I consulted Bachelard's ideas concerning the conceptualization of the house as a felicitous space. Through the juxtaposition of these two different figures and their ideas about 'home' both as a place and idea, I demonstrated how Friel problematizes fixed notions of home, dwelling, belonging as well as places as sites of loss and nostalgia. Friel, in fact, emphasizes the need for a reconceptualization of home/homeland and identity in terms of openness and multiplicity, hosting both local and global influences and disregarding any notion of place-boundedness as proposed by Massey's relational view of space. Departing from this anti-essentialist view of place, I have forged a relationship between Michael's digressive narration and the way Friel represents the spaces and places in the play. Michael's narrative lacks any centre, defies unity and fixity, which runs in parallel lines with conceptualization of

Ballybeg and Ireland as embedded in a dynamic space-time, in a liminal position between tradition and modernity, between regionalism and globalisation, which Friel treats in a celebratory fashion drawing attention to the multiplicity of times, spaces, stories, and subjectivities.

Moving from the real-and-imaginary space of Friel's narrative in *Dancing at Lughnasa*, in chapter five, with *Wonderful Tennessee* I have tried to delve further into the imaginary geography and landscape of Ballybeg by providing an analysis of the abandoned pier and the desert island within a spatial scope. *Wonderful Tennessee* is set in contemporary Ireland at a time when modernisation of rural Ireland altered the landscape producing a thoroughly modernised, globalised new space. However, as I have tried to argue, there is still the residue of the pagan Irish past lingering on the present landscape marked with ruins and informed by a variety of myths and the sacred practices as observed in the six couples' ritualistic experience at Ballybeg pier. To be able to interpret Friel's turning to myth, ruins, and the ritual in the play, I drew on David Lloyd's idea that the significance of myths and ruins of Irish landscape should not be defined within the boundaries of historicism; rather myths and ruins should be regarded as open structures embodying future possibilities. Accordingly, I have illustrated that 'Time,' in the play is not viewed as a phenomenon proceeding straightly from the past into the future, nor is the past taken as 'another country,' a non-space in ruins which can never be visited. Time is treated as a dynamic unit defying teleological narratives of the land and forging future landscapes. With regard to ritual experience, I turned to Claudia Moser and Cecelia Feldman's idea that "to practice ritual is to be emplaced," and I foregrounded that by weaving narratives and practicing rituals in their own ways, the characters relate to space and emplace themselves on the imagined island landscape. This section thereby concluded that employing myths of the contemporary Ireland and the mythical stories surrounding Ballybeg pier, Friel illustrates how the Irish space is a plane where temporality and spatiality are at play and how such a space can be opened up to further interpretations. Following this section on the play's spatial reading within the context of myths and ritual, I moved to Friel's another spatial trope, the desert island. In order to highlight the spatial significance of this imagined place in the play, I initially provided a

background information on the canon of island narratives and their literary relevance arriving at the conclusion that island spaces have the potential for transformation, a feature which echoes Massey's idea of the 'chance' of space. To be able to elaborate on this spatial quality of the islands, I also provided a reading of Deleuze's "Desert Islands" by drawing a parallel line between Friel's mystery island and Deleuze's contextualisation of the desert islands as spaces of re-creation and re-beginning, a kind of re-worlding. Drawing to a close, in the last section of this chapter I evaluated the discussion on space, place and landscape borrowing from Massey's notion of landscape as a simultaneity of "stories so far." The chapter concluded that through this landscape endowed with the multiplicity of spaces, Friel grants his characters the opportunity to imagine future landscapes and alternative histories in the contested geographies of Ireland as in his notion of the fifth province, an alternative realm to think Ireland and Irishness otherwise.

The last play discussed in this study is *Molly Sweeney*, a play focusing on the medical case of the blind massage therapist Molly and her self-transformation following a series of cataract surgeries. In this chapter, so as to contextualize the play by underlining the significance of Molly's medical condition and its spatial resonance, I presented an initial section on Friel's dialogue with a variety of texts and philosophers from the Antiquity and Enlightenment to contemporary literature regarding the trope of blindness. Through providing such a framework, I demonstrated how Friel in the play achieves to conceptualize space with blindness by undermining the hegemony of vision and the power/knowledge binary. Moreover, I emphasized that reading Molly's experience against its earlier literary examples and various clinical sources is always considered an apt strategy to follow, yet my analysis, departing from Massey's spatial scope, showed how Molly's experience in social space as a blind woman bears within itself various spatial aspects, discourses, and contestations; and how the paternal figures around her spatialize her identity and how Molly in turn reads herself against the narrative pattern of such power mechanisms deconstructing the binaries of health and illness, ability and disability, Self and Other. The blind massage therapist Molly achieves self-actualization in blindsight through playing with the resonances of sight and evacuating the meaning

of sight and blindness. Rejecting both, Molly redefines the boundaries of being sighted and blind, and resides in the interstitial space between blindness and sight, the space of blindsight. Another significant point which was emphasized in the chapter is that Friel presents Molly's journey from blindness to blindsight and the way she embraces her liminal situation between blindness and sight in parallel lines with Ireland's socio-political atmosphere. In that vein, reading Molly's medical case, against the political space of Ireland in the 1990s, I have tried to pinpoint the betwixt and between status of Ireland in the globalized space as well as Ireland's political stance. Like Molly who takes the non-locus as a reference point, Friel also takes Irish geography as a psychic space which is unmappable, resisting cartographic interpretations. Through this, he comes to re-define national identity and national space which both dissolve in the open space, come undone and become shifting signifiers constantly deferring.

Throughout the analytical discussions in these chapters I have tried to emphasize the spatial dynamism of Friel's three plays *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Wonderful Tennessee* and *Molly Sweeney*, especially with regard to their central locale Ballybeg, and their thematic continuity and the stylistic correspondence between the plays in terms of Friel's preoccupation with history in the form of memory, myth, ritual, and storytelling. Each play discussed in this study is rich in mythical accounts and ritual stories, but it is *Wonderful Tennessee* that made myth and ruins its central concern. In Brian Friel's (Post)colonial Drama, F. C. McGrath explains that during the Irish Revival the emphasis on Celtic folk beliefs, myths and traditions bespoke a cultural phenomenon that "beneath the superficial veneer of Catholicism the Irish soul was fundamentally pagan" (234). In those years, many Irish writers, including Synge and Yeats, were inclined to represent the characteristics of Celtic Ireland which they associated with paganism and peasantry rather than with Catholicism. However, in most of his plays especially in *Dancing at Lughnasa* and *Wonderful Tennessee*, Friel did not wish to marginalize Catholic religion but combined its elements with Celtic paganism, Gaelic myths, and rituals as well as a variety of ancient religions, and he emphasized their equal significance in creating alternative spaces. As I have tried to corroborate, employing such

temporal notions as stylistic devices Friel oppugns the validity of totalizing narratives and subverts established modes of thinking and their centrality to understanding and interpreting the significance of spaces and places of Ireland.

Moreover, as another powerful influence and dramatic device, music along with dance forms an essential part of all three plays in this dissertation, which drew attention to Friel's concern with non-verbal signifying sets as counterparts to language. In each play, there is a dance scene which, creating alternative movements and trajectories, opens a new space of signification for the characters. For instance, in *Dancing at Lughnasa*, the Mundy sisters' through their Bacchic dance in their cottage kitchen transgress the walls of their social space and the self. Similarly, in *Wonderful Tennessee*, the couples struggle to express the inexpressible through musical performances and their own ritualistic dance on the Ballybeg pier while Molly's frantic hornpipe in *Molly Sweeney* enables her to reconceptualise her blindness going beyond the limits of the hegemonic discourses of vision. Through underlining the significance of these scenes, I have contended that Friel calls into question the power of language against extra-linguistic forms like dance or music which work through undermining the already established structures of expression or the truth. By way of music and dance, the characters create a different space to release their wild, Dionysian exuberance. They get 'in touch with some otherness,' (as in the words of Friel himself), negotiate with place, and accommodate themselves in society. In addition to this, each play testifies to Friel's experiment with narrative styles, another way of subverting totalizing structures. In these plays, dialogue as a theatrical device operates in diverse ways. The characters talk much, resort in storytelling and faint memories, and they sometimes speak through the song lyrics especially in *Dancing at Lughnasa* and *Wonderful Tennessee* where the speeches overlap and appear in the form of babblings. Similarly, in *Molly Sweeney* there are contrapuntal and overlapping monologues delivered by three characters. Friel, in a way, disperses the narrative voice among subjectivities. For this reason, I have argued that by undermining the authority of the speaking subject, Friel opens space for multiple readings and multiple subjectivities very much like the Irish space which he imagines to be an alternative realm marked by openness rather than fixity and

authenticity. Accordingly, the digressive narrations and babblings the characters present in the plays go hand in hand with the unruly spaces of Ireland which fold and unfold through time resisting against being tamed.

The main contribution of this study to Brian Friel studies is that it offers an analysis of Friel's three full-length plays from a geographical perspective while also bringing history to the picture. As an alternative to the large body of scholarship which explores Friel's plays within a teleological frame, namely drawing attention to the Troubles and the Irish political history along with certain references to Celtic mythology, this dissertation adopts an interdisciplinary (or "transdisciplinary" as in Soja's Thirdspace) approach, transcending the binary of history/geography, and emphasizes the integrated nature of the spatial, social and the historical in thinking about space and social relations (as in Soja's Thirdspace). Through this, I have tried to open an-Other space within Friel studies, a fifth province, characterized by openness, not in terms of the abstract formulations of the spatial but with regard to the social relations.

By way of conclusion, in this dissertation, I have offered an analysis of Friel's three plays of the 1990s against the background provided by the reassertion of space and spatiality in the humanities in the twentieth century and within the context of the Celtic Tiger boom in Ireland. I have emphasized the way how Friel's concerns with space and place in an Irish context constantly evolve and deepen, gradually becoming more experimental, nuanced, and more geography-aligned. Such a suggested evolution manifests itself in this study through the choice of the plays and their division. In *Dancing at Lughnasa* the segregated public space of the town, the architectural space of the Mundy house with its doors and windows as threshold spaces along with the uncanny space of the back-hills where the Lughnasa fires are lit give way to the imaginative geographies of *Wonderful Tennessee* and its real-and-imagined island, Oileán Draíochta. Finally, in *Molly Sweeney* place becomes space dissolving and turning into an a-centred, ever-flowing, non-locus, which accords well with Friel's redefinition of nation and national identity in open and pluralistic terms. In that sense, opening the study with *Dancing at Lughnasa*, a play in which place and space intertwine, and closing the analytical discussion with *Molly Sweeney*, a

play where the place is actually a non-place, a concept which had been stripped of its meaning, I have tried to illustrate how Friel undermines nationalistic constructions of space and identity regarding Ireland. In these plays, a monolithic understanding of nation and identity either personal, national, or place identity weakens or breaks apart opening the ground for a re-conceptualization of such concepts as multivocal, with various meanings. Therefore, instead of regarding Ballybeg/Ireland as a fixed identity within a chaotic tide, one should trace how the place emerges out of particular relations, encounters and meetings because a place is conceptualised in the context of circumstances and influences which occur outside of it but somehow reach beyond. Friel's Ballybeg/Ireland is a place which holds the chance of space within itself, therefore, it has the potential to transform and to be transformed, paving the way for a journey from the realm of Being to the space of Becoming.

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## APPENDICES

### A. CURRICULUM VITAE

#### PERSONAL INFORMATION

Surname, Name: Öztürk Yağcı, Dilek

Nationality: Turkish (TC)

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

Marital Status: Married

email: [REDACTED]

#### EDUCATION

| Degree      | Institution                                           | Year of Graduation |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| MA          | Boğaziçi University,<br>English Literature            | 2011               |
| BA          | Ankara University,<br>English Language and Literature | 2008               |
| High School | Pendik Anatolian High School                          | 2004               |

#### WORK EXPERIENCE

| Year           | Place                                                             | Enrollment         |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 2012 – Present | ITU, School of Foreign Languages<br>Advanced English Program      | Instructor         |
| 2009-2012      | Ministry of Culture and Tourism,<br>Istanbul Regional Directorate | Tourism Consultant |

#### FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Advanced English, Beginner German.

## CONFERENCE PAPERS AND PUBLICATIONS

1. Öztürk Yağcı, Dilek. “Neither Fish nor Flesh’: Translations in Brian Friel’s Translations.” in *esse: English Studies in Albania*. Journal of the Albanian Society for the Study of English (ASSE) Volume 8, No.2, Autumn 2017. pp. 81-95. ISSN: 2078 – 7413 (MLA International Bibliography)
2. Öztürk Yağcı, Dilek. “Home as the Unhomely in Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*.” *Parlour Journal*. Ohio University. Issue I/2016. [https://www.ohio.edu/parlour/library.cfm\\_](https://www.ohio.edu/parlour/library.cfm_)
3. Öztürk Yağcı, Dilek. “The Myths of the Happy Multicultural London: Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth*” *Istanbul University 5th International Literature and ...Conference* 31/10/2019, Istanbul University, Istanbul.
4. Öztürk Yağcı, Dilek. “A Sign Without Interpretation: Holderlin and His Poetic Madness.” *10th International IDEA Conference* 14-16 April 2016. Bogazici University, Istanbul.
5. Öztürk, Dilek. “The Trembling Limits of Our Language: Beckett and Derrida in Deconstructive Concepts.” *9th International IDEA Conference*, 17-19 April, 2014. Pamukkale University, Denizli.
6. Öztürk, Dilek. “Acoustic Stories of the Stage: Samuel Beckett’s *Not I* and *Footfalls*.” *7th International IDEA Conference*, 17-19 April 2013. Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, Mugla.
7. Öztürk, Dilek. “Stories of the Storehouse: Beckett’s *Last Tape*” *Çankaya University Post-Graduate Conference on English Literature and Translation Studies*. 17-18 May 2012. Ankara.

## B. TURKISH SUMMARY / TRKE ZET

Bu alıřma İrlandalı oyun yazarı Brian Friel'in 1990'lerde yazmıř olduėu Lughnasa'da Dans (Dancing at Lughnasa), Harika Tennessee (Wonderful Tennessee) ve Molly Sweeney adlı oyunlarını İngiliz sosyal kuramcı ve coėrafyacı Doreen Barbara Massey'nin ilişkisel uzam kuramı erevesinde incelemektedir. Sz geen oyunlar İrlanda'nın tartıřmalı coėrafyasında toprak ve dilin ulusal mekân ve ulusal kimlik kavramları zerindeki merkezi roln n plana ıkaran nostaljik yer anlayıřına karřın hem yerel hem de evrensel baėları kucaklayan alternatif bir yer fikrini ne srmektedir. Friel bu oyunlarda İrlanda ulusu ve uzamıyla zdeřleřtirilmiř kkllk ve otantik kimlik olgularını ters yz ederek yeni bir uzam anlayıřı, ilerleyen ve geleiřen bir yer duygusu (a progressive sense of place) oluřturmaya alıřmaktadır. Uzamdaki dinamizmi ve eřzamanlılıėı vurgulayan bu alıřmada incelenen oyunlar, İrlanda'nın tekil ve sabit bir yer olarak tanımlanmasını sorunsallařtırarak, iinde daha geniř topoėrafyaları barındıran bir buluřma kmesi ve ok boyutlu bir uzam olduėu fikrini vurgulamaktadır. Bu alıřmada Lughnasa'da Dans, Harika Tennessee ve Molly Sweeney adlı oyunlarda uzam, yer ve manzara kavramlarının İrlanda baėlamında nasıl ilişkisel hale geldiėinin altını izmek iin aėdař uzam kuramlarına ait birok kavramsal aratan yararlanılmaktadır. alıřmada Henri Lefebvre, Gaston Bachelard, Michael Foucault, Merleau-Ponty ve Edward W. Soja gibi sosyal bilimler ve coėrafya alanında eserler vermiř kuramcıların grřlerine sıklıkla yer verilmiřtir; fakat aėırlıklı olarak Doreen Massey'nin ilişkisel uzam kuramı baėlamında bahsi geen oyunlar incelenmiřtir.

Friel'in oyunlarında yer kavramı sabit, kapalı, kendi iinde uyumlu ve tek boyutlu olarak deėil bunun aksine aık, geirgen; sosyal iliřkiler ve etkileřimler sonucu zaman iinde deėiřime meyilli olan bir uzam olarak temsil edilmiřtir. Bu uzam hibir zaman tamamlanmıř bir mevhum deėil, srekli bir devinim ve retim srecinde olan bir oluřumdur. Yerlerin bu deėiřken kimliėine paralel olarak, kiřisel kimlikler de ok ynl ve ok boyutludur; srekli deėiřirler ve kendilerini zc sylemlerin tesinde yeniden konumlandırmaya alıřırlar. Dil, din, cinsiyet ya da ırk gibi

toplumların mutlak referans noktası olarak aldığı kavramlar Friel'in karakterlerinin çoklu yapısını tanımlamakta yeterli gelmemektedir. Bu karakterler çoğu zaman eşik karakterler olarak tasvir edilmişlerdir. Bu betimlemeler de Kuzey İrlandalı oyun yazarı Friel'in eşikte sürdürmüş olduğu yaşamı ile paralellik göstermektedir.

Brian Friel Amerika'da Guthrie tiyatrosunda geçirmiş olduğu kısa bir süre dışında tüm hayatı boyunca Kuzey İrlanda'da yaşamış ve eserlerini burada vermiştir. Bu durum Friel'e anavatanını hem tanıdık hem de yabancı bir gözle değerlendirme imkânı sunmuş, öz benlik ve yer arasında bir bağ oluşturmuştur. 1929'da Tyrone kasabasında doğan Friel, 1939'da siyasi bölünmeler ve politik tartışmaların yoğun olarak yaşandığı Derry kasabasına taşınmıştır. 1969 Kuzey İrlanda Sorunu (Troubles) başladığında ise Friel ve ailesi bu sefer sınırın ötesinde bir bölge olan Donegal'a taşınmıştır. Donegal Friel'in yazın hayatında her zaman büyük bir öneme sahip olmuştur. Burası Friel'in birçok oyununun geçtiği yer olarak yazarın yalnızca Kuzey İrlanda'nın değil İrlanda Cumhuriyeti'nin kargaşasına da aşina olabileceği, her iki tarafın sorunlarına da objektif bir gözle bakabileceği hem gerçek hem de sembolik olan bir yeri simgelemektedir.

Hayatını bu sınır kasabasında sürdürmüş olan ve hem gerçek hem de mecazi anlamda bir eşik edebi figür olarak karşımıza çıkan Friel, Kuzey İrlanda ile hep yakın bir ilişki içinde olmuştur. Ne var ki benlik ve metin arasında yaratılan bu ilişki hiçbir zaman pürüzsüz olmamış, kendi içinde problemler barındıran, karmaşık bir yapı halini almıştır. Friel yer kavramını yazınının ortasına koymuş olsa da onu mutlak hale getirmemiş, yaşamış olduğu topraklar ile yazdıkları arsındaki bağlantının etkilerini yabancılaştırmaya çalışmıştır. Bu çalışmada da altı çizildiği gibi Friel için İrlanda toprağı her zaman önemli olmuştur; fakat, onun için İrlanda hiçbir zaman bir köken veya köklülük arayışının sembolü değildir. Bu sebeple, bu tezde incelenen oyunlarda Friel'in yer temsilleri, yer kavramını korunaklı bir liman, bir sığınak ve ait hissedebileceğimiz bir ev olmaktan ziyade bütün bunların çözünmesine işaret eden kesin çizgilerle tarif edilmesi zor bir alana işaret eder. Friel, yer kavramının nostaljik, tekil ve durağan olan bazı kabul görmüş anlamlarına karşı çıkarak, yer kavramını Massey'nin ilişkisel uzam anlayışında olduğu gibi, sürekli bir "Oluş" şansı sunan bir anlamlandırma alanı olarak yeniden tanımlar.

Friel, İrlanda'nın Kuzey İrlanda sorunu ile çalkalanmakta olduğu yirminci yüzyılın ikinci yarısında eserlerini vermiştir. Politik olarak çalkantılı bir döneme denk gelen Friel'in yazın hayatı ve kişisel deneyimi kaçınılmaz olarak ülkenin siyasi durumu ile ayrılmaz bir şekilde iç içe geçmiştir. Fakat bu çalışmanın da gösterdiği gibi, Friel'in oyunları bu iç içe geçmiş çizginin bulanık ve gözenekli doğasına işaret etmektedir; çünkü Friel uluslararası meseleleri ulusal temaların merceğinden ele alıp yer kavramına yeni bir perspektiften yaklaşmıştır. Hem İrlanda halkına hem de İrlanda'nın ötesine hitap etme arzusunu eserlerinde sıklıkla gözler önüne sermiştir. Böyle bir yaklaşımı benimsemiş olmasında İrlanda tiyatrosundaki değişimle birlikte İrlanda çalışmalarında uzam ve yer kavramlarına olan ilginin yeniden canlanmasının da büyük payı vardır. Bu çalışmanın öne çıkarmaya çalıştığı gibi, Friel hep İrlanda'da, İrlanda halkı için ve İrlanda'yı yazmıştır. Böyle bir yaklaşıma sahip olduğu için sık sık da övülmüştür; fakat onun yazını uzamın içinde barındırdığı olanaklara, başka yerlerin, zamanların ve hikâyelerin varlığına ve bunların örüntü seklindeki iç içe geçmiş doğasına güçlü bir şekilde dikkat çekmektedir. Bu sebeple, yolların, yerlerin, hikâyelerin ve sosyal ilişkilerin sürekli birbiri içine geçtiği böyle bir alanda yerlerin ve kişilerin kimlikleri sorgulanmaya açıktır. Yerler de kişisel kimlikler gibi hiçbir zaman tamamlanmamıştır, her zaman değişime ve dönüşüme açıktırlar. Bu durum da Friel'in oyunlarında aktarılan özcülük karşıtı yer ve kimlik anlayışı ile bağdaşmaktadır.

Bu noktada Friel'in İrlanda uzamı ve yer temsilleri ile Massey'nin ilişkisel uzam kuramının prensipleri denk düşer. Bu çalışmada Massey'nin uzam kuramının temel taşlarından olan birçok kavram kullanılmıştır, fakat en çok evrensel bir yer duygusu (a global sense of place) ve uzamın olanakları (chance of space) kavramları bağlamında sözü geçen oyunlar incelenmiştir. Bu kavramlar Friel'in kurmaca bir kasaba olan Ballybeg ve burayla özdeşleştirdiği beşinci bölge (fifth province) fikrinin öneminin altını çizerek çalışmanın temelini oluşturmuşlardır. Beşinci bölge kavramı Friel'in aktör arkadaşı Stephen Rea ile birlikte 1980 yılında kurduğu Field Day Tiyatro Kumpanyasının bir manifestosu niteliğindedir. Bu kavram İrlanda ve İrlandalı olmak fikrini milliyetçilik ile özdeşleştiren mutlak yorumlamalardan arındırarak tarafsız bir zemine oturtmayı ve yepyeni bir tanımlama alanı oluşturmayı simgelemektedir.

Mutlak ve özcü bir “yer duygusu” İrlanda yazınında uzun yıllar boyunca hüküm sürmüş, yer, kültür ve kimliğin vazgeçilmez bir parçası olarak sunulmuştur. Bu tezin de göstermeye çalıştığı gibi, bu tekil ve durağan yer anlayışı İrlanda yazınının temelini oluştursa da şimdilerde özcü bir bakış açısına işaret etmektedir ve yanlış temsillere yol açmaktadır. Bu sebeple, bu çalışma yerlerin ulusal anlamda mutlak olarak kavramsallaştırılmasına karşı çıkmakta, Massey’nin ilişkisel ve dinamik yer anlayışına dikkat çekerek, Friel’in oyunlarına bu bağlamda yaklaşmaktadır. Massey’nin yer kavramı sosyal ilişkiler ve uzam arasındaki bağlantıya vurgu yapan yerelden evrensele kadar birçok ilişkiyi kapsayan çok boyutlu bir anlayışa işaret eder. Yer bu anlamda sosyal, ekonomik ve/veya kültürel çeşitli düzlemlerde kesişen, birbiriyle ilişkili ve ortak yörüngeler kümesidir. Böyle çapraz bir örüntü içinde, yer ile ilgili tekdüze tanımlar anlamını yitirir, çünkü bir yerin özelliğini belirleyen, içinde bulunduğu toplumun kültürel homojenliği değil, sınıf, ırk, dil, din, cinsiyet ve politik görüş açısından çoğul olanı, farklılığı ve eşitsizlikleri bünyesinde barındırabilmesidir. Dolayısıyla bu çalışmada savunulan yer fikri, Massey’nin kuramı ışığında, bir olasılıklar alanı, başkalarıyla ilişkilerimizi düzenleyen ve yaşamımızı şekillendiren coğrafi ve tarihsel koşullarla müzakereye izin veren umut vaat eden bir alan, çok boyutlu bir uzamdır.

Yer kavramında olduğu gibi Massey’nin uzam kavramı da ilişkiseldir ve içinde sosyal ilişkileri, insanların ve yerlerin eşzamanlı çokluğunu barındırır. Uzam bağlantılar ve karşılıklı ilişkiler yoluyla üretilir; bu sebeple, Massey’nin de belirttiği gibi, harita üzerinde bir “yüzey” veya kastettiğimiz bir “mesafe”, ya da “uzayıp giden fiziki bir manzara” değil “birbirinden farklı yörüngelerin birlikte var olma süreci ve içerisinde henüz tamamlanmamış birçok öykü olan bir oluş sürecidir. (“Travelling Thoughts” 229).

Uzamın sürekli bir oluş aşamasında ve değişim sürecinde olan sosyal ilişkilerin bir ürünü olması, uzamın tamamlanmamış olan yapısına ve çok ihtimalli yapısına dikkat çekmektedir. Massey’nin ilişkisel kuramında, uzam her zaman farklı olasılıkları barındırır ve bu da içinde değişimin ve devinimin olduğu yeni bir gelecek tasavvur etme potansiyelini taşır. Bağlantılar, bağıntılar ve karşılıklı ilişkiler yoluyla üretilen bu tür bir uzam anlayışı hâlihazırda bulunan tüm hiyerarşik uzam ve zaman tanımlarını

kaçınılmaz olarak sorgular. Buna ek olarak belirtilmesi gerek bir diğer nokta da Massey'nin zaman ve uzam arasındaki bağlantıdır. Massey'nin ön plana çıkardığı uzam kavramında uzam ve zaman arasında kesin çizgiler yoktur ve bu iki kavram çoğu zaman birlikte düşünülür; çünkü her ikisi de tarih, coğrafya ve politik ilişkilerin üretiminde aktif rollere sahiptir.

Yukarıda ana hatlarıyla verilen Massey'nin ilişkisel uzam kuramı bu çalışmada seçilen Friel oyunlarını uzamsal açıdan derinlemesine inceleme fırsatı sunmuştur. Massey'nin evrensel bir yer duygusu fikri Friel'in Ballybeg kasabası temsilleriyle örtüşür. Bu çalışmada incelenen oyunların hepsi Donegal'in uzak bir kesiminde konumlanmış olan bu kurmaca kasabada geçmektedir. Coğrafi anlamda sınırda konumlanmış olan bu kasaba ilk bakışta köy yaşamına ait berrak bir tablo akla getirse de aslında burası birçok başka uzamları çağrıştıran olağanın dışında sembolik bir uzamdır. Bu çalışmanın da işaret ettiği gibi bu uzamın kendisi aynı zamanda İrlanda'yı Kuzey ve Güney olarak ikiye ayıran, ülkeyi harita üzerinde bir noktaya indirgeyen sınırı da hatırlatmaktadır. Bir başka deyişle, bu oyunlarda betimlenen Donegal uzun zamandır İrlanda yazınında yer etmiş olan ev ve aidiyet duygusunu bütünleyen bir kaçış alanı ya da pastoral bir mekân değil, coğrafi olarak bölünmüş bir sınır kasabasıdır. Friel bu oyunlarda Donegal bölgesinin bu marjinal konumuna açıkça gönderme yapmamıştır; fakat hem Donegal hem de Ballybeg, birbiri içine geçmiş akışkan uzamları temsil etmektedir. Buralar aynı zamanda içlerinde kontrol ve güç gibi karmaşık mevhumları barındıran, bağlantı ve etkileşim yoluyla çoğalan, alternatif uzamları çağrıştıran karmaşık yapılardır. İşte bu tarz bir betimleme Friel'in yerleri ve kişisel kimlikleri resmederken İrlanda'yı topoğrafik tanımlamalardan ayrı tutarak daha geniş bir yelpazede sunduğunu göstermektedir.

Bu çalışmada Friel'in Ballybeg'de geçen üç oyununu beşerî bilim ve sosyal bilim alanındaki uzamsal evrilmeye paralel olarak inceleyebilmek adına, birbirini takip eden iki bölümde tarihsel bağlam ve oyunların okunmasında önemli rol oynayacak olan kavramları içeren kuramsal bir çerçeve çizilmiştir. İlk bölüm İrlanda'nın bağımsızlığının ilk yirmi yılını kapsayan ve ülkenin bir dizi çatışma, ayaklanma ve anayasal reformdan geçtiği çalkantılı bir döneme işaret eden 1920'ler ve 1930'lu yıllara odaklanmaktadır. İrlanda sosyal ve siyasi tarihine genel bir bakış

sunarak aynı zamanda uzamdaki değişimlere de dikkat çeken bu bölüm çalışmadaki oyunlara bir arka plan oluşturduğundan önem arz etmektedir. İrlanda'da 1920'ler, özgür İrlanda Devleti (Irish Free State) ve Katolik ruhban sınıfının politikalarıyla kendini gösteren siyasi baskı ve dini ortodoksluk ile karakterize edilmiş bir dönemin başlangıcına işaret etmektedir. Bu bölümde dolayısıyla Özgür İrlanda Devletinin milliyetçi politikaları ve Katolik Kilisesinin muhafazakâr rejimine dikkat çekilerek, Devlet ve Kilisenin homojen bir İrlanda ulusu inşa etmek için nasıl baskıcı eylemlerde bulunduğu açıklanmıştır. 1930'lu yıllara damgasını vuran bu iki kurum toplumsal ahlak ve ulusal kimliğe ilişkin kanunlar çıkararak toplumda, özellikle de kadınlar üzerinde, çeşitli şekillerde güç uygulayarak uzamı ve özneyi yapılandırmaya çalışmıştır. Bu yapılandırma biçimi birçok şekillerde kendini göstermiş fakat özellikle aile ve kadının toplumdaki yeri üzerine yoğunlaşmıştır. İrlanda hükûmeti ve din otoriteleri toplumda belirli ahlaki kodlar tanımlayarak birçok kontrol mekanizması oluşturmuşlardır. Özellikle kadınları toplumsal alanda kısıtlayan ve onları dört duvar arasına itmeye yönelik yasalar çıkartılmış ve düzenlemeler getirilmiştir. Bu düzenlemelerin arasında en bilineni ve bu tezin konusu ve kapsamı bakımından da en önemli olanı 1935 yılında çıkarılan Dans Salonları yasasıdır. Bu yasa İrlanda'da o dönemde açık alanlarda sürdürülen dans etkinliklerinin durdurulmasını ve dansların din adamları tarafından inşa edilen özel dans salonlarında sürdürülmesini talep etmektedir. Kilise ve Hükûmet bu tür dansların toplumda ahlaki bir çöküşe sebep olduğunu, özellikle de Amerika etkisinde gelişen jazz müzik kültürünün toplumda dejenerasyon yaratarak tehlike arz ettiğini düşünmektedir. Bu yüzden ülkenin her tarafında dans salonları oluşturulmuş, danslar buralarda yoğun bir denetim ve gözetim altında gerçekleşmiştir. Dans Salonları Yasası ve toplum üzerindeki etkileri hakkında ayrıntılı bilgi veren bu altbölüm, bu çalışmanın ana temalarından biri olarak dans ve önemine dikkat çekmektedir. Dans olgusu Friel'in karakterlerinin etraflarındaki yapılandırılmış mekânın işleyişine karşı nasıl isyan ettiklerini ve bu alanı nasıl yeni bir anlamlandırma alanına dönüştürdüklerini açıklamada önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Bu sebeple, dans salonu mekânının dinamiklerini incelemek için Michel Foucault'nun iktidar ve özneleştirme üzerine fikirlerine de başvurulmuştur. Foucault'nun görüşlerinden yararlanılarak sürekli bir gözetim yoluyla dans salonunda beden, uzam

ve kültürel kimliklerin mercek altında tutulması ve şekillendirilmesinin sonuçları incelenmiştir. Bu kısmın ardından bir diğer önemli tarihsel belirteç olan 1990'lı yıllara ve İrlanda'da ortaya çıkan Kelt Kaplanı dönemine (Celtic Tiger) genel bir bakış sunulmuş ve bu dönemin toplum ve uzam üzerindeki etkilerine değinilmiştir. Bu çalışmada incelenen oyunların tümü 1990'larda yazılmış ve sahnelenmiştir. Bu anlamda, bütün oyunlar Kelt Kaplanı döneminde yaşanan ekonomik bolluk ve beraberinde gelen tutarsızlıklara belirli göndermeler taşımaktadır ve Friel'in İrlanda toplumunun yirminci yüzyılda geçirdiği derin değişikliklere nasıl tepki verdiğini göstermektedir. Bu tarihsel çerçeve aynı zamanda Friel'in kurmuş olduğu Field Day Tiyatro Topluluğu ve beşinci bölge nosyonu üzerine bir altbölüm de içermektedir. Bu tez, Doreen Massey'nin ilişkisel uzam kuramı ışığında İrlanda'da uzama ve uzam ile ilgili meselelere yaklaşmanın alternatif bir yolunu geliştirmeyi amaçladığından, Friel'in Field Day projesinde özetlendiği gibi yeni bir İrlanda anlayışının adımlarının atıldığı dönemi de netleştirmek büyük bir önem taşımaktadır. Bu yüzden bu tarihsel çerçeve Field Day Tiyatro Kumpanyası ve bu kumpanyanın hem İrlanda Tiyatrosu hem de Friel'in yazın hayatındaki önemi üzerine bilgiler verilerek kapatılmıştır. Sonuç olarak, tezin ikinci bölümünü oluşturan bu tarihsel çerçevede bu çalışmada incelenen oyunların geçtiği dönem, toplumsal ve siyasal koşullar açıklanarak, Friel'in anavatanında ve dünyada meydana gelen olaylara açıkça atıfta bulunmadan aslında nasıl tepki gösterdiğini vurgulamak amaçlanmıştır.

Tezin üçüncü bölümünde uzam üzerine kuramsal bir çerçeve çizilmiş, özellikle de uzam ve yer kavramlarının zaman içinde nasıl değiştiği, başlangıçta geometrik anlamlar taşıırken nasıl ilişkisel mefhumlara dönüştükleri açıklanmıştır. Bu bölümde ilk olarak yirminci yüzyılda beşerî bilimler ve sosyal bilimlerde yaşanan uzamsal evrilme ve bununla birlikte uzam ve yer kavramlarının değişen tanımları üzerinde durulmuştur. Klasik dönem ve Aydınlanma çağındaki uzam ve yer kavramlarının açıklanmasının ardından daha güncel tanımlara yer verilmiş, özellikle de Gaston Bachelard ve Martin Heidegger'in görüşleri üzerinde durulmuştur. Bu iki isim bu çalışmanın kapsamı açısından önem arz etmektedir; çünkü her iki düşünür de uzam ve insan arasındaki ilişkiye dikkat çekerek özne/nesne ikilemi ile karakterize edilen Kartezyen uzam anlayışına karşı çıkmaktadır. Bachelard ve Heidegger'in uzam

hakkındaki görüşleri her ne kadar bu tezin savunduğu noktalar açısından önem arz etse de Kuzey İrlanda bağlamında uzam konusunun çok yönlülüğü göz önünde bulundurulduğunda yetersiz kalmaktadır. Bu çalışmada da gösterildiği gibi Friel'in oyunlarında ev, bir yeri mesken tutma, ya da aidiyet gibi kavramlar son derece problemlidir ve bu kavramlar farklı şekillerde ters yüz edilmiştir. Oyunlarda her ne kadar bu temalar ön planda tutulsa da Friel'in karakterleri sürekli olarak bu kategorilerin anlamlarını sorgulamaktadırlar. Karakterler aynı zamanda ya kendi uzamlarını yaratmakta ya da uzam tarafından bir oluş sürecine dahil edilmektedirler. İşte bunu da kök salarak ya da bir yere ait olarak değil aksine yer değiştirerek yapmaktadırlar. Bu karakterler başka zamanlarla ve başka yerlerle ilişki kurdukları, onlarla bağlantıda oldukları surece bir yere ait olup, orali hissederek ve benliklerini bulurlar. Bu süreç hem yerler hem de kişisel kimlikler bağlamında, hiç bitmeyen bir oluşu (Becoming) simgeler. Bu doğrultuda, Bachelard ve Heidegger'in fikirleri bu çalışmanın kapsamına dahil edilerek aslında vurgulanmak istenen şey yer ve kimliklerle ilintili olan kavramların İrlanda bağlamında daha incelikli bir yaklaşım gerektirdiği gerçeğidir. Bir başka deyişle, bu kavramlara daha çoğulcu bir tutumla, büyük bir özenle ve ilişkisel bir uzam anlayışı içinde yaklaşılmalıdır. Bu sebeple bu bölümde Doreen Massey'nin ilişkisel uzam anlayışının temel kavramlarının detaylı bir şekilde açıklanmasıyla birlikte, Henri Lefebvre ve Edward Soja'nın uzam üzerine görüşlerine de yer verilmiştir. Özellikle Edward Soja'nın Lefebvre'nin yaşanan alan, algılanan alan ve tasavvur edilen alan kavramlarından yola çıkarak yeniden tanımlamış olduğu ve triyalektik yönteminin yapıtaşlarından olan "Üçüncü Uzam" (Thirdspace) kavramından sıklıkla yararlanılmıştır. Üçüncü Uzam kavramı tarihselliği ve toplumsal olanı, gerçek ve hayali olanı bir arada veren alternatif zamanları ve mekanları içinde barındıran çok boyutlu bir uzam üretimine dikkat çekmektedir. Bu görüş de Friel'in İrlanda ulusuna alternatif yollardan bakmayı simgeleyen beşinci bölge nosyonu ile paralel bir çerçevede ilerlemektedir. Sonuç olarak hem Lefebvre hem de Soja uzam ve toplum arasındaki karşılıklı ilişkiye dikkat çektiklerinden Massey'nin ilişkisel uzam kuramı ile ortak noktalar paylaşmaktadırlar ve bu çalışmada kuramsal açıdan referans noktası olarak alınmışlardır.

Bu tezde ilk olarak incelenen oyun Friel'in 1990 yılında yazmış olduğu ve Dublin'de Abbey Tiyatrosunda sergilenmiş olan Lughnasa'da Dans'tır. Oyun hem anlatıcı hem de oyunun içinde bir karakter olan Michael'ın gözünden sunulmuştur. Michael Ballybeg'de yaşayan teyzeleri Kate, Agnes, Maggie, Rose ve Christina adlı beş kız kardeşin zorluklarla dolu yaşamına dair anılarından oluşan hem gerçek hem de hayal ürünü olan öyküsünü anlatmaktadır. Aynı zamanda Uganda'da uzun yıllar misyonerlik görevinde bulunduktan sonra Balybeg'e dönmüş olan erkek kardeş Jack de bu evde Mundy kardeşler ile birlikte yaşamaktadır. Michael'ın ona dair anıları da oyunun uzamsal açıdan okunmasına katkı sağlamaktadır. Bu bölümde Ballybeg'in ayrıştırıcı toplumsal alanında var olmaya çalışan kız kardeşlerin yaşam öyküsünden yola çıkılarak dini kimlik ve ulusal kimlik arasındaki çatışma ve 1930'lar İrlanda'sında değişen sosyal ilişkiler irdelenmiştir. Bu dönem ülkenin teknolojik gelişmelerin ve sanayileşmenin sayesinde hızlı bir şekilde geliştiği döneme denk düşmektedir. Bütün bu düzenin içinde ekonomik olarak özgür olamayan ve kasabanın uzağında bir köy evinde yaşayan Mundy kardeşler için sınırların dışına çıkmak oldukça zordur. Mundy'ler hem Özgür İrlanda devletinin koymuş olduğu kısıtlayıcı yasalar hem de Katolik Kilisesinin onların içine islemiş olan baskıcı tutumuna karşı boyun eğmek zorundadırlar; aksi halde toplumdan dışlanacaklarını bilirler. Ne var ki, oyunun ortalarında karşılaştığımız mutfaktaki dans sahnesinde Friel karakterlere uzamı ve öznelliklerini tecrübe etme ve böylelikle kendilerini toplumda konumlandırma sansı tanır. Bu bölümde dans ve dansın uzamsal olarak ifade ettiği anlamların açıklanmasına geçilmeden önce Mundy hanesine ve yaşadıkları eve odaklanılmıştır. Bunu yaparken de Massey'nin görüşlerinin yanında Bachelard'ın ev kavramına da başvurulmuştur. Bu iki kuramcının bir araya getirilmesi ve ev kavramının hem bir yer hem de bir düşünce olarak karşılaştırılması sonucunda Friel'in ev, mesken tutma ya da aidiyet kavramlarının nostaljik tanımlamalarını nasıl sorunsallaştırdığı gösterilmiştir. Böylelikle vurgulanan nokta Friel'in aslında ev, yurt, vatan ve kimlik gibi kavramları kesin çizgilerle tanımlamaktan ziyade açıklık ve çokluk açısından nitelendirmek istediğidir. Friel Massey'nin ilişkisel uzam kuramında olduğu gibi, yerlere bağlı olan her türlü mutlak fikri reddetmekte ve yer kavramını açık ve özcülük karşıtı bir tutumla yeniden

tanımlamaktadır. Bu alternatif yer görüşünden yola çıkılarak bu bölümde aynı zamanda Michael'in anlatı tekniği ve Friel'in İrlanda uzamını temsilleri arasında bir bağlantının var olduğu savunulmuştur. Michael'in anlatımı konudan sürekli sapmaktadır, sabit bir çizgide değil de geriye dönüşlerle ilerlemekte ve anlatıda tek bir biçimin merkeziliğine karşı koymaktadır. Bu da Friel'in Ballybeg'i ve İrlanda uzamını dinamik bir uzam-zaman içinde, zamanların, mekânların, hikâyelerin ve öznelliklerin çokluğuna dikkat çeker bir şekilde temsil etmesiyle paralellik göstermektedir.

Bu çalışmanın beşinci bölümünde Friel'in 1993 yılında yazmış olduğu ve Lughnasa'da Dans gibi yine Abbey Tiyatrosunda sergilenen Harika Tennessee adlı oyunu incelenmiştir. Aslında oyun Lughnasa'da Dans gibi Broadway'e de gitmiştir; fakat onun göstermiş olduğu başarının gölgesinde kalmıştır. Lughnasa'da Dans oyununun aksine günümüz İrlanda'sında gecen bu oyunda modernleşme projeleriyle birlikte küreselleşen yeni bir uzama ve ülkenin değişen çehresine dikkat çekilmiştir. Oyun Dublin'de yaşamakta olan orta yaşlı, Terry ve Berna; George ve Trish; Frank ve Angela, adlı üç çiftin hafta sonunu geçirmek için Donegal kasabasının kıyısında bulunan Ballybeg iskelesine varmaları ile başlar. Grup aslında iskelenin karşısında boylu boyunca uzanmış olan Gizem Adasını (Oileán Draíochta) ziyaret etmek ve burada Terry'nin doğum gününü kutlamak istemektedir. Çiftlerin yolculuğu Dublin'den onları taşıyan minibüs şoförü Charlie ile başlar ve iskeleden onları botla Gizem Adasına götürecek olan Carlin ile devam etmesi gerekmektedir. Fakat Ballybeg'e vardıklarında görürler ki Carlin garip davranışları olan birisidir ve onları sürekli oyalamaktadır. Sonunda Carlin bir türlü sözünü tutmaz ve grup Gizem Adasına ulaşamaz. Böylece ada karakterlerin aklında sürekli bir arzu nesnesi olarak kalır. Adaya erişemeyeceklerini anladıklarından Ballybeg iskelesinde geceyi geçirmeye karar verirler. Burada gece boyunca şarkılar söyleyerek, Gizem Adası ile ilgili efsaneler anlatarak ve çeşitli ritüeller gerçekleştirerek uzamı deneyimlerler. Her ne kadar oyunda çağdaş bir İrlanda tasvir edilse de hala pagan geçmişine ait mitler ve ritüeller karakterlerin belleğinde yer etmektedir. Oyunun temel mekânlarından olan Ballybeg iskelesi ve karşısında uzanan Gizem Adası manzarası İrlanda uzamı ile özdeşleştirilen mitlerin ve kalıntıların önemini gözler önüne

sermektedir. Bu mitolojik hikâyeler ve ritüeller, İrlanda'yı çevreleyen harabeler ile birlikte oyunun uzam, yer, ve manzara kavramları bağlamında okunmasına imkân sunar. Bu noktada karakterlerin mitler ve ritüeller üzerinden uzamı nasıl dönüştürdüklerini açıklamak için David Lloyd'un mitler, kalıntılar ve modernite konusundaki görüşlerinden yararlanılmıştır. Lloyd'a göre İrlanda'nın doğasını çevreleyen mitler ve kalıntılar tarihselliğin sınırları içerisinde tanımlanmaktan ziyade, içinde geleceğe dair olasılıklar barındıran açık ve geçirgen yapılar olarak tanımlanmalıdır. Lloyd'un bu fikri Friel'in besinci bölge fikriyle de bağdaşmaktadır ve İrlanda uzamının nasıl açık ve ileriye dönük yorumlanması gerektiği görüşünü doğrulamaktadır. Buna paralel olarak, oyunda "zaman" kavramı da dinamik olarak verilmiştir. Böylelikle Friel'in ulus ile ilgili teleolojik anlatılara karşı çıkarak hem İrlanda uzamında hem de İrlanda yazınında yeni yaklaşımların benimsenmesini vurgulamak istediği fikri savunulmuştur. Bütün bu görüşlerin ışığında bu bölümde şöyle bir sonuca varılmıştır: Friel Harika Tennessee oyununda Ballybeg iskelesini çevreleyen efsanelere yer vererek ve karakterleri Gizem Adası manzarasına karşı kendi ritüellerini yerine getirir şekilde tasvir ederek İrlanda uzamının nasıl zaman ve mekânın iç içe geçtiği bir alan olduğunu ve nasıl alternatif anlamlar taşıyabileceğini vurgulamıştır. Ballybeg iskelesinin mitler ve ritüeller açısından uzamsal okunmasının yapılmasının ardından, oyunda uzam ile ilgili bir diğer tema olan ıssız ada kavramına geçilmiştir. İlk olarak ıssız ada kavramının edebiyattaki yerine ve önemine değinilmiş, sonrasında da Deleuze'un yorumlarına başvurularak ıssız adaların bir çeşit yeniden doğuş ve yeni bir başlangıcı sembolize ettikleri fikri savunulmuştur. Bu görüş Massey'nin uzamın sunmuş olduğu olanakların çokluluğu ile ilgili görüşüyle de paralellik arz etmektedir. Bu oyunda uzam ve yer kavramlarının yanı sıra Friel manzara (landscape) kavramını da ön plana çıkarmıştır. Fakat bu kavram tek boyutlu bir görüntü anlamına gelmemekte, çevre ve doğa gibi daha kapsamlı anlamları da taşımaktadır. Diğer bir deyişle, Massey'nin ilişkisel uzam kuramında manzara, uzam ve yer tanımlamalarıyla aynı doğrultuda yorumlanmıştır. Bu kavramlar birbirinden ayrı gibi görünse de aslında iç içe geçmiştir ve ilintilidir. Bu sebeple Massey'nin manzara kavramı yalnızca fiziki bir

olguya deęil iinde eřzamanlı birok y barındıran ve uzamın ok ihtimalli yapısına dikkat eken bir “oluř” ařamasını ifade etmektedir.

Bu alıřmada analiz edilen son oyun Friel’in Harika Tennessee’den bir yıl sonra, 1994 yılında, yazmıř olduęu Molly Sweeney’dir. Oyun gzleri grmeyen bir masaj terapisti olan Molly’nin tıbbi ysn, geirmıř olduęu birkaç katarakt ameliyatı sonucundaki deęiřimini incelemektedir. Oyun boyunca dikkat ekilmek istenen nokta Molly’nin etrafında bulunan  karakterin, (babası, eři ve gz doktoru), srekli olarak Molly’nin durumunu anormal olarak nitelendirmesi ve onun bedeni zerinde sz sahibi olarak kararlar almaya alıřmasıdır. Mesela, babası kken Molly’yi hibir zaman grme engelliler okuluna gndermemiř eęitimini kendisi stlenmiřtir. Eři Frank Sweeney ise kendi kendine kararlar alıp, ıkarcı bir gz doktoru olan Mr. Rice ile anlařarak Molly’yi katarakt ameliyatı olmaya ikna etmiřtir. Oysa Molly iinde bulunduęu durumdan řikayeti deęildir ve bu haliyle hep mutlu olduęunu dřnmřtir. Btn bu abalar Molly’nin zbenlięinin ve uzamının srekli bařkaları tarafından řekillendirilmeye alıřıldıęı gereęini ortaya koymaktadır. Ne var ki oyunun sonunda Molly kendini standart olanın sınırları iinde deęil de bunun dıřında bir dzlemde tanımlar. Ameliyat olmuřtur ama grme ile grememe arasında bir yerdedir, kr grřne sahiptir ve mutludur. Sonunda ‘ev’ olarak nitelendirebileceęi bir yer bulmuřtur. Bu blmde Molly’nin iinde bulunduęu durumun uzamsal aıdan nemini vurgulamak iin bařlangı olarak Friel’in krlk zerine Antik Yunan’dan Aydınlanma Çaęına kadar birok metine ve felsefi tartıřmalara gnderme yaparak kaleme aldıęı bu oyunun yazma srecine deęinilmiřtir. Aynı zamanda krlk temasının edebiyattaki yeri ve neminden bahsedilmiř ve krlęn gemiřten gnmze deęiřen anlamları incelenmiřtir. Bu baęlamsal erevenin ardından, Friel’in oyunda grmenin hegemonyasını devirip, g/bilgi binerini yıkarak krlę nasıl uzam ile birlikte kavramsallařtırdıęı aıklanmıřtır. Friel arařtırmaları gz nnde bulundurulduęunda Molly’nin deneyimini daha nceki edebi rneklere ve eřitli klinik vakalara dayandırarak okumak her zaman uygun bir strateji olmuřtur denilebilir; fakat bu alıřmada ncelikli olarak Molly’nin grme eyleminin tařıdıęı uzamsal nitelięin incelenmesi amalanmıřtır. Bu baęlamda řu sorulara cevap aranmıřtır: Molly kr bir kadın olarak

toplumsal alanı nasıl deneyimlemektedir? Çeşitli mekânlar, yönler ve yollar; söylemler ve çekişmeler, en önemlisi de etrafındaki baba figürleri onun kimliğini ve uzamı nasıl şekillendirmektedir? Bu soruların yanıtlarının irdelendiği bu bölümde varılan sonuç şu olmuştur: Molly oyunun sonunda hem görmeyi hem de körlüğü reddederek, kendini kör görüşün eşik alanında konumlandırır. Sağlık/hastalık yetkin olma/yetememe, Benlik/Öteki gibi ikili kavramlarını yıkıp, bu tarz güç mekanizmalarının anlatı kalıplarına karşı kendini yeniden tanımlar. Görme eyleminin anlamlarıyla oynar, görme ve körlük kavramlarının içini boşaltarak kendini kör görüşte gerçekleştirmeye çalışır. Böylelikle görme ve görememe eylemlerinin sınırlarını yeniden tanımlar. Bu bölümde vurgulanan bir diğer önemli nokta da Friel'in Molly'nin körlükten, görüşe ve daha sonra da kör görüşe olan yolculuğunu; körlük ile görme arasındaki eşik durumunu benimseme biçimini İrlanda'nın sosyo-politik atmosferine paralel olarak sunmasıdır. İrlanda'nın küreselleşen dünyadaki arada kalmış olan siyasi duruşu ve statüsü, Molly'nin seçimleriyle ve kendi benliğini kucaklamasıyla paralellik arz etmektedir. Nasıl ki Molly kendine merkezi olmayan bir noktayı referans olarak alıyorsa, Friel de İrlanda coğrafyasını haritalanamayan, kartografik yorumlara açık olmayan, psişik bir uzam olarak temsil eder. Bu sayede, bu ucu açık olan alanda çözülen, değişen ve sürekli yeni anlamlara bürünen ulusal kimliği ve ulusal mekânı yeniden tanımlamış olur. Bu kavramlar tekil anlamlara gelmeyen, doğrusal bir çizgide tanımlanamayan ve sürekli yeniden yorumlanmaya açık olan kavramlar haline gelir.

Bu bölümlerde yapılan tahliller sonucunda Friel'in Lughnasa'da Dans, Harika Tennessee ve Molly Sweeney adlı oyunlarında uzamsal devinim açıklanmaya çalışılmıştır. Bunu yaparken de bu üç oyunun geçtiği ortak yer olan Ballybeg kasabasının öneminin altı çizilmiştir. Oyunların buluşma noktası olarak Ballybeg'in öneminin yanı sıra oyunlar arasında konu olarak ve biçim olarak da bir bütünlüğün olduğu gösterilmeye çalışılmıştır. Bu çalışmadaki üç oyunda da Friel hatıralardan, hikaye-anlatma geleneğinden, İrlanda'ya özgü mitolojik hikayelerden ve ritüellerden yararlanmaktadır. Fakat önemli bir nokta vardır ki, Friel her ne kadar İrlanda'ya ait mitlere ve dini ritüellere oyunlarında göndermeler yapsa da hiçbir zaman Katolik dinini özelleştirmek ya da ötekileştirmek istememiştir. Aksine Katolik dininin

özelliklerini Kelt paganizmi, mitleri, ve ritüelleriyle birlikte vermek istemiş ve bütün hepsinin alternatif uzamlar yaratmadaki eşit rolünü vurgulamıştır.

Mitler ve ritüellerin yanı sıra Friel'in kullanmış olduğu bir diğer teatral araç da dans ve müziktir. Bu çalışmada incelenen üç oyunda da müzik ve dans oyunların özünü oluşturmaktadır. Müzik ve dans, dil-dışı göstergeler olarak, Friel'in oyunlarında karakterlere yeni anlamlar ve uzamlar yaratma şansı sunmuştur. Her oyunda bir dans sahnesi vardır ve alternatif hareketler, yollar ve hikayeler yaratarak karakterlere yeni bir anlamlandırma alanı açmaktadır. Örneğin, Lughnasa'da Dans oyununda Mundy kardeşlerin köy evlerinin mutfaklarında radyoda çalan geleneksel İrlanda dansı (céili dance) müziğine kulak vererek birdenbire tutuştukları dans içinde bulundukları duruma bir başkaldırı niteliğindedir. Dans sayesinde benliklerinin ve toplumsal uzamın duvarlarını aşarak kendilerini daha iyi ifade edebildikleri yeni bir alana varırlar. Aynı şekilde Harika Tennessee oyununda da karakterler açıklayamadıkları ve ifade edemedikleri düşüncelerini Ballybeg iskelesinde müzik ve ritüel gösterisi yoluyla ortaya çıkarırlar. Bu iki oyundan farklı olarak Molly Sweeney oyununda ise tek kişilik bir dans vardır. Molly katarakt ameliyatı olacağı gecenin öncesinde kendisi için verilen partide birden çılgınca heyecanlanmış bir biçimde dans etmeye başlar. Bu dans Molly'e içinde bulunduğu durumu yeniden değerlendirme sansını verir. Molly görme ile ilgili hegomonik söylemlerin ötesine geçerek körlüğü yeniden tanımlar. Sonuç olarak bu çalışmada her üç oyunda da karşımıza çıkan dans sahnelerinin öneminin altı çizilerek Friel'in dile karşı dans ve müzik gibi dil-dışı söylemlerin gücüne dikkat çekmek istediği ve gerçek kavramının hâlihazırda bulunan tekil ifade yöntemlerini yıkmak istediği vurgulanmıştır.

Bütün bunlara ilaveten bu oyunlarda Friel anlatı teknikleriyle sürekli olarak oynamış, değişik yöntemler denemiş ve totaliter yapılara karşı çıkmak istemiştir. Örnek verecek olursak, bu oyunlarda diyalog teatral bir araç olarak farklı yollarda işlemektedir. Karakterler çok fazla konuşurlar, genellikle hikâye anlatırlar, hatıralarından bahsederler ve en çok da Lughansa'da Dans ve Harika Tennessee'de gördüğümüz gibi şarkılar yoluyla duygularını ifade ederler. Çoğu zaman da konuşmalar birbirini keser ve anlamsız hale gelir. Mesela Molly Sweeney'de birbiriyle örtüşen monologlar vardır ve üç farklı karakter tarafından söylenir. Bu

yöntemle Friel, bir bakıma, anlatıcının otoritesini yıkarak yetkiyi birden fazla özne arasında paylaştırır ve diğer karakterlerin sesine de yer verir. Bu da oyunları birden fazla yoruma ve kuramsal okumaya açık hale getirir. Bu düşünce de Friel'in İrlanda uzamını değişmez ve otantik bir yer olmaktan çok açıklık ile sembolize edilen alternatif bir alan olarak temsil etmek istemesiyle denk düşmektedir.

Bu çalışmanın Brian Friel araştırmalarına ana katkısı Friel'in sözü geçen üç oyununun coğrafi bir perspektiften analizi sunulurken aynı zamanda tarih olgusunun da vurgulanmasıdır. Friel'in oyunlarını teleolojik bir çerçeve içinde inceleyen, Kelt mitolojisine ve İrlanda siyasi tarihine dikkat çekerek yapılan oyun çözümlemelerinin aksine bu çalışma çok disiplinli bir yaklaşım benimsemektedir. Bu Soja'nın Üçüncü Uzam kavramında olduğu gibi tarih/coğrafya ilişkisini aşan, uzamı ve sosyal ilişkileri yorumlamada uzamsal, toplumsal ve tarihsel olanın bütünleşik doğasını vurgulayan bir yaklaşımdır. Bu sayede Friel'in oyunları uzamın soyut tanımlamalarından uzaklaşarak toplumsal ilişkiler bağlamında yorumlanmıştır.

Bu çalışmada Brian Friel'in 1990'li yıllarda yazmış olduğu ve aynı yıllarda sergilenen üç oyunu yirminci yüzyılda beşerî bilimler ve sosyal bilimler alanında yaşanan uzamsal evrilme çerçevesinde ve Doreen Massey'nin ilişkisel uzam anlayışı bağlamında analiz edilmiştir. Bu kuramsal çerçeveye İrlanda sosyo-politik tarihi de dahil edilmiş, oyunların geçtiği dönemin koşullarının uzama olan yansımaları açıklanmıştır. Çalışmada Friel'in uzam ve yer ile ilgili görüşlerinin İrlanda bağlamında giderek nasıl değiştiğini, daha deneysel ve daha incelikli, her şeyden önemlisi daha coğrafya odaklı bir hale geldiği vurgulanmıştır. Bu değişim süreci tezde seçilen oyunların sırası ile de bir bakıma kendini göstermektedir. Lughnasa'da Dans oyununda uzam farklı biçimlerde karşımıza çıkar: Ballybeg kasabasının kısıtlayıcı kamusal alanı, Mundy kardeşlerin yaşamakta olduğu evin eşik alanları ve Lughnasa ateşlerinin yakıldığı arka tepelerin çok ihtimalli esrarengiz uzamı. Bütün bu farklı uzamlar Harika Tennessee oyununda yerini hayali coğrafyalara bırakır. Uzam, yer, ve manzara nosyonları iç içe geçerek daha kapsamlı bir olgu haline gelir. Son olarak, Molly Sweeney'de yer kavramı tamamen silinmiştir. Kör görüş yörüngesi olmayan bir kavramdır ve Molly ancak burada kendine ait bir alanı olduğunu anlar. Sonunda evini bulmuştur. Yer kavramının giderek zayıflayıp çözülmesi şüphesiz ki

Friel'in yazınının incelikleri hakkında ipucu vermektedir. Bu çalışmada da gösterilmek istendiği gibi tıpkı çözülen yer kavramı gibi ulus ve ulusal kimlik olguları da açık ve çoğulcu bir yaklaşımla yeniden tanımlanmalıdır. Bu anlamda, çalışmayı yer ve uzamın iç içe geçtiği bir oyun olan Lughnasa'da Dans ile açıp, yer kavramının içinin boşaltılmış olduğu bir oyun olan Molly Sweeney ile kapatarak, Friel'in İrlanda ile ilgili ulus ve ulusal kimlik tanımlamalarına nasıl karşı çıktığı gösterilmeye çalışılmıştır. Bu oyunlarda yekpare bir ulus ve kimlik anlayışı, kişisel, ulusal ya da yer kimliği olması farketmeksizin, zayıflar veya parçalanır. Bu dağılma da aslında alternatif tanımlamalara ve çoğulcu bir bakış açısına yer açar. Bu nedenle, Ballybeg / İrlanda kaotik bir gelgit içinde sıkışıp kalmış sabit bir kimlik olarak görülmek yerine, belirli ilişkiler, karşılaşmalar ve buluşmalardan ortaya çıkmış olan çok boyutlu bir uzam olarak görülmelidir. Bir yer ancak hem onun dışında hem de bir şekilde ötesine ulaşan koşullar ve etkiler bağlamında tanımlanır. İşte bu çalışmada öne çıkarılan Friel'in çizmiş olduğu Ballybeg / İrlanda, uzamın olanaklarını kendi içinde barındıran, dönüşüme hazır ve dönüştürme potansiyeline sahip bir yer, en önemlisi de, Varlık'tan Oluş'a doğru bir yolculuğun önünü açan çok boyutlu bir uzamdır.

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UZAMIN YENİDEN OLUŞUMU/  
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