LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY IN POST-1800 IRISH DRAMA

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the

University of North Texas in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Dawn E. Duncan, B.A., M.Ed.

Denton, Texas

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Using a sociolinguistic and post-colonial approach, I analyze Irish dramas that speak about language and its connection to national identity. In order to provide a systematic and wide-ranging study, I have selected plays written at approximately fifty-year intervals and performed before Irish audiences contemporary to their writing. The writers selected represent various aspects of Irish society--religiously, economically, and geographically--and arguably may be considered the outstanding theatrical Irish voices of their respective generations. Examining works by Alicia LeFanu, Dion Boucicault, W.B. Yeats, and Brian Friel, I argue that the way each of these playwrights deals with language and identity demonstrates successful resistance to the destruction of Irish identity by the dominant language power.

The work of J. A. Laponce and Ronald Wardhaugh informs my language dominance theory. Briefly, when one language pushes aside another language, the cultural identity begins to shift. The literature of a nation provides evidence of the shifting perception. Drama, because of its performance qualities, provides the most complex and complete literary evidence. The effect of the performed text upon the audience validates a cultural reception beyond what would be possible with isolated readers.

Following a theoretical introduction, I analyze the plays in chronological order. Alicia LeFanu's The Sons of Erin; or, Modern Sentiment (1812) gently pleads for equal treatment in a united Britain. Dion Boucicault's three Irish plays, especially The Colleen Bawn (1860) but also Arrah-na-Pogue (1864) and The Shaughraun (1875), satirically conceal rebellious nationalist tendencies under the cloak of melodrama. W. B. Yeats's

The Countess Cathleen (1899) reveals his romantic hope for healing the national identity through the powers of language. However, The Only Jealousy of Emer (1919) and The Death of Cuchulain (1939) reveal an increasing distrust of language to mythically heal Ireland. Brian Friel's Translations (1980), supported by The Communication Cord (1982) and Making History (1988), demonstrates a post-colonial move to manipulate history in order to tell the Irish side of a British story, constructing in the process an Irish identity that is postnational.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO STUDY

Literary scholars of my generation realize that the object of their studies may not have changed from those of generations past--we are all still engaged in analyzing literature; however, we now attempt to rationalize the experience of literature by providing an appropriate theoretical base. I say appropriate because I firmly believe that those in the scholarly community who lock themselves into one theory privilege that theory at the risk of missing many other textual meanings and effects. Given that I myself practice an eclectic approach to literary theory, I carefully consider which theory seems most applicable to any text or set of texts. Where Irish literature is concerned, I have found two critical approaches inextricably bound and highly valuable in opening up the meaning and social significance of a text. These two cooperative interests are sociolinguistics and post-colonialism. Using sociolinguistic and post-colonial theories, I analyze Irish dramas that speak about language and its connection to national/cultural identity. Drama, as both a literate art and an oral performance, reveals the political ramifications of issues of orality and literacy at work in colonial and post-colonial Ireland. I have selected Irish plays written at approximately fifty year intervals since the Act of Union, the point by which English language dominance had succeeded, so that shifts in perception may be examined from 1800 up to the present. Specifically, I analyze works by Alicia LeFanu, Dion Boucicault, W.B. Yeats, and Brian Friel. Plays written by these playwrights in English for Irish audiences show both the impact of Irish culture on the writer and the impact of the individual artist on the changing Irish identity. I argue that the particular way each of these playwrights deals with language

and its correlation to identity demonstrates a strategic pattern for successful resistance to the destruction of Irish identity by the dominant language power.

Certainly I am not the first to explore the problem of language and identity as evidenced in Irish literature. A. C. Partridge in Language and Society in Anglo-Irish Literature (1984) provides an overview of the social role of language in Irish culture and literature. While this study may serve as a starting point in the discussion, it is by no means exhaustive nor does Partridge delve deeply into any one text in the course of the survey. A linguistic overview is provided by Loreto Todd in The Language of Irish Literature (1989). A valuable tool because of its simplified technical discussion of language usage in Irish literature, Todd's study is a broad view of usage patterns with little discussion of cultural identity. In addition, there are numerous historical studies of Irish literature that touch upon the conflict and cooperation between languages involved in the body of national literature that is written in both Irish and Irish-English. One of the most helpful of this type is Roger McHugh and Maurice Harmon's A Short History of Anglo-Irish Literature, From Its Origins to the Present Day (1982). Though each of these scholars has contributed to a better understanding of the role of language in Irish literature, and therefore to an understanding of the effect of language use on the Irish identity, a systematic study of dramatic literature representative of generational perspectives would illuminate the issue of language and identity and the shifting Irish perception of what it means to be Irish. To provide this dual illumination--how the cultural context shapes the text, and how the text shapes/reflects cultural identity--I provide exhaustive readings of dramatic texts that treat the language/identity issue. From the early nineteenth century, I bring to light a lost play by an important Irish woman. From the latter nineteenth century, I provide a re-reading of Irish melodrama, a reading that demands a reconsideration of the author and his works. For the early twentieth century example, I turn to Yeats's plays, providing new insight into their meaning based upon his structural and thematic concern with the uses of language.

Finally, in my choice of a contemporary Irish playwright and his work, I enjoin the post-colonial critics to accept Irish writers into their consciousness as full members of the debate with a right to speak their part against colonialism and to attempt a reconstruction of their story and identity.

Since the development of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis in the early 1970s, numerous scholars have studied the link between language and cultural identity. According to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, our perception of the world is shaped by the language that we speak. Though sociolinguistics has arisen as a field of study only during the last twenty-five years, linguists have become increasingly aware of the ramifications of social setting on language. As Edward Sapir points out, "The importance of language as a whole for the definition, expression, and transmission of culture is undoubted" ("Language" 62). In Harry Hoijer's analysis of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, he makes much of the concept that different languages speak different world views rather than merely providing different labels for the same world (120). Though the idea of nationhood is a relatively recent concept historically, language has become "a symbol of [national] identity" (Sapir 65).

Recently sociolinguists have combined their research into shifts in national language trends with an analysis of political and social conditions that privilege particular languages. The work of scholars such as J. A. Laponce in Languages and Their Territories (1987), Ronald Wardhaugh in Languages in Competition (1987), and R. D. Grillo in Dominant Languages: Language and Hierarchy in Britain and France (1989) contributes enough evidence to develop what might be termed "language dominance theory." J. A. Laponce claims that each language must have its own territory as a means of survival (3); thus, territorial borders that are both geographically and linguistically created, or the establishment of nation and national language, are inextricably bound in Laponce's notion of language dominance. Laponce's statement on the territorial need of a language implies the political conflict that must arise where more than one language is

spoken and the boundaries of statehood shift. Cultural conflicts in which language become both subject (a weapon with which to gain dominance) and object (a victim of the dominating force) arise from political maneuvers often tied to the establishment of state power. As the concept of state is politically established, a language establishes itself as the dominant means of communication, pushing other languages within its territory to the brink of extinction.

Certainly there are some social dangers connected to the establishment of nations and national languages. As Jacques Derrida points out, "there's no racism without a language. . . . It institutes, declares, writes, inscribes, prescribes. A system of marks, it outlines space in order to assign forced residence or to close off borders. It does not discern, it discriminates" (331). However, as Derrida also has written extensively, language is difference; and unless all difference is lost, a homogenization not to be desired, language will always be a discriminating marker, sometimes defining race though not of necessity racist.

Unfortunately, the English did use language against the Irish as a negative racial marker during the course of constructing the British Empire. Ronald Wardhaugh provides information on the process of language dominance in Ireland. Once a flourishing language that rivaled Latin from the sixth through ninth centuries as the language of education and artistic expression and that gaelicized those tribes who settled in Ireland (not only the Picts, Anglo-Saxons, Norse and Danes, but also later English colonists), Irish came under fire by the English government beginning in 1366 with the passing of the Statues of Kilkenny (Wardhaugh 90-91). These laws were intended to discourage English settlers from adopting the Irish language, with penalties ranging from loss of land and title to perhaps death. This concerted effort on the part of the English government against the Irish language continued for several hundred years, with the Irish beginning to abandon their own language only during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Grillo 47-9, 84-90; Wardhaugh 91). How pervasive was the shift from Irish to

English on the part of Irish natives during these two centuries is arguable. Richard W. Bailey claims that English became "firmly and finally established in Ireland" after the northern settlements were established by James I during the seventeenth century (29). Certainly these settlements provided the first lasting chokehold, but I argue that the English would not be ready to let up on legislated and educational efforts to strangle Irish until the nineteenth century, after the Act of Union had won them a tremendous psychological and political victory.

Both Wardhaugh and Reg Hindley identify 1800 as the turning point for the Irish language. Therefore, according to the social implications of language dominance, the Irish perception of identity would begin to dramatically shift at the same time. Wardhaugh acknowledges that, "Irish did hold its own for a while but after about 1800 began the precipitous decline from which it has never been able to recover" (91). Reg Hindley in The Death of the Irish Language: A Qualified Obituary (1990) provides a valuable sociolinguistic guide for Irish literature scholars in his analysis of the dominance of Irish by English. While Hindley notes that the language was not extinct by 1800, it did start "to fall into disuse in native homes" about 1750 (8). From that point forward, the spread of English seems to have happened fairly rapidly, though the picture is somewhat unclear. According to Hindley, "all that can be said with certainty is that by 1800 the gentry throughout the country were entirely anglicized in their first-language preferences and in most eastern and central Ireland spoke no Irish at all" (8). Though there has been an ongoing attempt to revive the Irish language since the end of the nineteenth century, the data supports the fact that Irish is an endangered language in serious decline. In 1956 the Gaeltacht, that area of Ireland on the west coast designated by the Republic as something of a protected reserve for the Irish language, numbered 85,703 (or 3%) of the total population of the Free State. According to the 1960 census, only one quarter of the national population indicated that they were able to speak Irish. During the visits Grillo made to Ireland in the 1960s and 70s, he heard Irish spoken

outside of the Gaeltacht (not including special government radio or television programs) only once. Some estimates suggest that currently there are only 70,000 fluent Irish speakers. Grillo observes, "Despite its status as an official language and support through the educational system, Irish is less widely used now in ordinary discourse than it was at the founding of the state. 'Decline' is certainly not too strong a word" (49).

The work of each of these sociolinguists helps to identify the causes of language dominance by a secondary language that displaces the native language. However, effects of such dominance are not as easily documented by sociolinguists as the causes, even though each critic touches upon the effect on the speaker who is forced to change languages for political and social reasons. Given the ability of literature to both reflect and shape cultural identity, I propose that one group of documents which may provide evidence of the effect of language shift on national/cultural identity is the literature of a nation. As Jussawalla and Dasenbrock point out in Interviews with Writers of the Post-Colonial World (1992), though the British empire may no longer exist, the empire of the English language still maintains its hold, lending "political connotations and implications" to writing that is done in English (4). In his introduction to Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature (1990), Seamus Deane asserts that, "All nationalisms have a metaphysical dimension, for they are all driven by an ambition to realize their intrinsic existence in some specific and tangible form. The form may be a political structure or a literary tradition" (8). Gayatri Spivak also emphasizes the relationship between literature and culture, insisting that "[the] role of literature in the production of cultural representation should not be ignored" (243).

While literature cannot provide an objective account of the effects of language shift on identity, there is no reason that literature cannot shed new light on the problem and even help shape a solution. As Arac and Ritvo argue in Macropolitics of Nineteenth-Century Literature: Nationalism, Exoticism, Imperialism (1991), though literature is not innocent or free of societal influence, it may still address social problems

and even effect social change. As they describe it, language is both "socially formed" and "socially formative" (Arac and Ritvo 1-2); thus, literature becomes a tool for exploring the process of social formation. Specifically, in my study I am concerned with the formation of Irish identity and the effect on that identity of the language shift from Irish to English as evidenced in the dramatic literature of the nation from the point of completed English language dominance by 1800, the Act of Union, up to the present date. Clearly a sociolinguistic theory of language dominance is necessary to my study.

Though literary scholars have been slow to recognize the contribution of sociolinguistics to the realm of literary study, a number of critics, such as Terry Eagleton and Walter Benjamin, urge the removal of barriers between disciplines and the establishment of a literary approach which accounts for the socio-political aspects of literature. One of the current literary theories that lends itself to a socio-political approach and that recognizes the importance of sociolinguistics to its own study is post-colonial theory. From critics such as Edward Said and Linda Hutcheon to post-colonial writers such as Salman Rushdie and Chinua Achebe, post-colonial theorists examine the power of language to create political and cultural dominance. Some post-colonial writers and critics nervously, and with reason, guard their area of interest from being appropriated allegorically by other critics who would combine a critique of colonialism with more pressing interests in Marxism, feminism, or postmodernism. Benita Parry suggests several tendencies that might flaw post-colonial criticism, including the tendency to allegorize colonialism. Parry describes the allegorization flaw as "'a notion applicable to all situations of structural domination' in which Self is constituted through and against an Other" (qtd. in Chrisman 39). I do not intend to fall victim to this flaw, though I concede it is the flaw with which I might be charged. The chief defense that I make is that the state of present-day Northern Ireland and the history of the whole of Ireland are not allegory, though allegory may be used in the literary treatment of the colonizing of

this land, as allegory is used by writers from within other colonized countries to examine the state of the culture (e.g. Achebe and Rushdie).

While post-colonial critics are performing a social role in insisting upon the centrality of the once-colonized rather than a merely peripheral role in literary studies, at times the vision of these critics can be too limited. Some critics, such as Helen Tiffin, define the post-colonial project as "writing and reading practices grounded in some form of colonial experience occurring outside Europe but as a consequence of European expansion into and exploitation of 'the other' worlds" (170). This definition implies an unhealthy racism; victims must be dark-skinned and natives of non-European countries, while oppressors are necessarily light-skinned Europeans. While I recognize the accuracy of the statement regarding European imperialism, I question the limitations Tiffin and others like her have established. Are Europeans the only ones who have colonized? What about the United States? What about Asian or African cultures that subsume other Asian or African cultures? And, what about Europeans who colonize other European cultures? Specifically, what about England's colonizing of Ireland?

The dangerous narrowness of vision among those involved in the post-colonial debate is more widespread than might be imagined among writers arguing for global openness to formerly marginalized voices. However, a number of critics who forget, ignore, or downplay the Irish post-colonial situation do provide a place in the debate for writers from Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (the Indians of Central and Latin America seem to suffer a similar fate as the Irish oftentimes). Tiffin speaks about understanding "the way in which language and power operate in the world" (171). In her emphasis on "the world," Tiffin includes Australia, Canada and New Zealand among the colonized countries struggling to assert their identities in the post-colonial crisis. Significantly, these countries, like India, African countries, and the South Pacific and Caribbean countries, lie outside Europe. Once again Ireland does not appear to be considered. Lying within accepted imaginings of geographic Europe, Ireland is more

than peripheralized; it is ignored, left without voice or identity separate from the colonizing power. In their Interviews with Writers of the Post-Colonial World, Jussawalla and Dasenbrock have included writers who represent a wide range of post-colonial places: the Caribbean islands, India, Kenya, Pakistan, New Zealand, Nigeria, and Somalia. Also included are Chicano writers speaking from a minority position in the United States. However, the omission of a writer from Ireland is glaring, especially given the claim that the editors have included voices from each continent (14). Clearly a victimized voice from the European continent is missing. Admitting that they "have not aimed at an inclusive survey of writing in English from around the world, for we have included no writers from Canada and Australia" (5), the editors pay heed to non-Eastern victims but once again neglect the Irish post-colonial position. They rightly note the difference in experience between dominions such as Canada and Australia, where the majority population consists of descendants of English settlers, and colonies where the majority population are natives of that place. Unfortunately, again Jussawalla and Dasenbrock neglect Ireland, a country that has contained both forms of colonization. The omission of Irish writers from the post-colonial grouping continues as the editors make much of the fact that recent winners of the Booker Prize, England's highest literary honor, have been writers "from Australia, New Zealand, India, Trinidad, and South Africa" (3), failing to mention Ireland, a post-colonial country that has not only produced several Booker winners but has produced the most recent winner, Roddy Doyle.

Linda Hutcheon, like Tiffin, Jussawalla, and Dasenbrock, writes of two forms of colonialism: on the one hand, the colonizers practiced "cultural imposition" on a firmly established indigenous population; on the other, the colonizers simply "annihilated or marginalized the natives" (155). Each of these critics identifies Africa and India as experiencing the former type of colonization, while Canada, Australia, and New Zealand natives fell victim to the latter. Where does this leave Ireland? Ireland, the homeground of the Irish, was colonized by the English while rebel Irish were often branded traitors

and shipped to the penal colony of Australia. Northern Ireland is still under imperial British rule. It would seem that Ireland shares a closer association with post-colonial India and Africa according to the two types of colonialism identified by Hutcheon than with Canada or Australia, predominant skin-color of natives aside. The Irish do still exist in large numbers. However, the Irish also experienced many of the troubles that contributed to a near annihilation of some native cultures. Hutcheon declares that "it is one thing to impose one culture upon another; it is another thing practically to wipe out what existed when the colonizers appeared on the scene. . . . To relegate a culture to secondary status is not the same as making it illegal" (156). Significantly, Ireland has experienced all of the above ills of colonization. Ireland's landscape is filled with the silhouettes of ruins (homes, halls, castles, and churches) left by the violence of Cromwell's purgations of Irish Catholicism. The people of Ireland were forbidden at various times and by various English governments to worship as they chose and to use Irish Gaelic in business, education, law, and politics. Looked upon as secondary citizens of the British Empire, the governing power took steps to shape the native culture into a reflection of dominant England.

In fairness to Jussawalla and Dasenbrock, though they do not include an Irish voice among their interviews with current post-colonial writers, they do recognize the right of Ireland to a place in the debate. Their myopia is not based so much on continent or color as on genre. Jussawalla and Dasenbrock argue that "the novel is the site of the most complex cultural encounter in the new literatures" (5), but I disagree with this conclusion. Drama, given its textual possibilities and its theatrical performance, is certainly a more "complex cultural encounter" than the novel. Perhaps the genre limitation these editors chose partially explains the omission of an Irish voice among their interviews, since the most provocative work by Irish post-colonial writers continues to be drama. Having designated the novel as the field of post-colonial activity, Jussawalla and Dasenbrock credit the novels of James Joyce and Flann O'Brien with providing a model

for future post-colonial writers. Were Joyce and O'Brien alive today, the editors admit that they most certainly would have included them among the interviewees (7). Jussawalla and Dasenbrock even go so far as to say that "Ireland is surely the first of the colonies" and that the Irish Literary Revival provided the "prototype" for post-colonial writers (6). However, the two editors excuse the absence of a contemporary Irish writer among their interviewees by simply noting "Irish literature today is at a different moment of its historical evolution" (6). While the assessment of Ireland as the first colony may somewhat assuage critics who demand a place for Irish post-colonial writers, the assessment is completely unsatisfactory as an explanation for the omission of an Irish voice among these interviews. Certainly the editors neglect to take into account the continued colonial situation of Northern Ireland, implying that the Irish have moved ahead of the post-colonial pack, which, though this notion may or may not be true of the Republic, certainly is not true of the northern counties. Even with the genre limitation set by the editors, the omission is unacceptable.

As long as omissions like the ones I have indicated continue, the discussion of Ireland's post-colonial place remains an in-house discussion. Irish scholars do not question the validity of Ireland's place in the debate, and Irish groups such as Field Day have attempted to insert themselves into the global consciousness. But in most extra-Irish post-colonial forums, seminars, special issues, and such, the light-skinned European as victim of colonization is still denied the foreground. I am not the only post-colonial critic who sees danger in the myopic vision of some scholars, a vision ironically based on particular color or continental biases. Laura Chrisman criticizes Spivak for privileging the Indian perspective by setting up "an Oriental/Occidental binarism" (40). I agree with Chrisman that such binary constructions are falsely limiting the post-colonial discussion. Once again the colonized others who do not fit into the binary structures implied by Spivak are left voiceless, unrepresented. In the process of exploring the power of language to affect the Irish identity, I intend to demonstrate Ireland's right to a central

voice in the post-colonial debate rather than a muted or marginal position based on false notions of color or continental origin for determining a post-colonial position.

Though some post-colonial scholars fail to include Ireland in the debate, as I have already indicated, a debate on the post-colonial position of Ireland has ensued for years among Irish scholars. While these scholars may differ greatly in their approaches and conclusions, each cannot deny that Ireland is situated in a post-colonial position. Conor Cruise O'Brien places equal, if not more, blame on Ireland than on England for Ireland's post-colonial condition. Calling into question the truthfulness of Ireland and England in regard to their previous relationship, O'Brien's portrait of his homeland is the harsher of the two with his metaphorical description of Ireland as "an ignorant woman" who is an "incompetent and extravagant" housekeeper and the type of mother from whom children run away. He grants that perhaps the neighbor, whom mother insists beat her during a tempestuous affair, is not quite telling the whole truth when he insists he barely knows the woman but that she has a reputation for "brawling and untruthfulness"; however, O'Brien's places his emphasis on the bad mother's doubtful veracity, a mother, whom, nevertheless, he insists that he loves (14–15). Declan Kiberd's stance presents the antithesis to O'Brien. In his lecture, "Multiculturalism: Some Irish and Indian Comparisons," given at the 1993 Yeats Summer School in Sligo, Kiberd left no doubt about his position. Saying that, "Ireland is, for me, a supreme post-colonial instance," Kiberd implicates the English strangulation of the Irish with regard to education, language, and the literary canon--a canon that until recently, according to Kiberd, had been constructed by the colonial authorities to establish the particular national culture that they wanted to define, thus acting as "self-estranging" for the Irish student.

Perhaps the most widely recognized Irish voice as post-colonial critic is that of Seamus Deane, a founding member of Field Day. According to Deane, the goal of Field Day is "to reverse the effects of the colonialism that has wrought such devastating as well as subtle effects in Ireland and in the consciousness of its people" (Nationalism 10). For

Deane and his group, language and its power to shape and control lies at the heart of their post-colonial project. Knowing the difficult task that faced them, the Field Day writers set out "to trace within the rhetorics of political and literary discourses, the forms and varieties of incrimination, subjection, insurgency, evasion, and stereotyping that determine or are determined by our past and present interpretations" (Deane, Nationalism 10). Certainly the Field Day group has brought such concerns to the forefront, especially with such recognized names as Terry Eagleton, Frederic Jameson, and Edward Said writing essays for Field Day on Ireland's post-colonial context.

The Field Day writers are not alone in their focus on language and its literary expression as a way through the post-colonial crisis. Sociologists, critics, and writers throughout Ireland seem caught up in an obsession with language and identity. But when it comes to language, the problem of which language expresses the Irish identity still remains a concern for many. In his overview of Why Irish?: Irish Identity and the Irish Language (1989), Patrick Commins, summarizing the concern of the authors, explains, "a basic task facing the Irish people is that of reconstructing their national identity" and while the authors insist that process "should be neither assertive nor defensive, neither isolationist nor assimilationist" (iii), they do take a strong position with regard to the Irish language. While the authors see the Irish use of English as distinctively Irish, they are not content to leave the Irish identity to be verbalized in Irish-English solely. Tovey, Hannan, and Abramson make a strong argument for the revitalization of the Irish language as a means of achieving a positive Irish identity. These sociologists develop four points that they consider important to understanding the establishment of identity. As Commins summarizes these points: First, ethnicity is "not based on physical or natural features" but on "the *perceptions* of the differences thought to typify given groups"; second, "differentiating feature[s] . . . symbolize distinctiveness," and language is "a particularly salient and consistent element in what constitutes our identity"; third, dominant groups attempt to label others as ethnic, implying otherness as

opposed to their own hegemonic identity; and fourth, ethnicity is "a basic feature of human society" so that one may be "anti-ethnic" but never "non-ethnic" (ii-iii). To put their claims concisely, ethnicity, based on social perceptions of cultural difference, is impossible to escape given human nature; and one of the chief markers of difference is language, which is therefore a building block of identity. Tovey, Hannan, and Abramson recognize that the Irish problem with identity and language is a problem commonly shared "with many other post-colonial societies" (1). As they explain the link between language and identity,

> we are concerned to revitalise the issue of language and identity, and to argue that the survival of the Irish language is much more fundamentally involved in developing a strong, positive and confident Irish identity than is widely recognised today. . . . Above all, our aim is to stimulate and contribute to a debate among Irish people about what we are, what we want to be and what we can make of ourselves. (1)

Recognizing that "reformulations of the question of identity" are typical of the "self-estrangement" the Irish experience as post-colonial people (2), David Lloyd warns that there is no easy answer because the question itself is far from simple. In Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-colonial Moment (1993), Lloyd points out the danger of attempting to define an Irish identity when he argues "one principal and consistent dynamic of identity formation has been the negation of recalcitrant or inassimilable elements in Irish society" (5). While I recognize that I cannot cover all the disparate personalities, or even "types," that compose Irish culture, I have tried to allow for voices that come from portions of society that have historically appeared to oppose one another. Therefore, I look at plays by an Anglo-Irish woman of the Ascendancy, a Catholic sympathizer of low-income and doubtful parentage, a romantic intellectual springing from the Protestant middle class but eschewing tradition, and finally a northern

Irishman who encourages individual Irish dignity and global understanding while questioning nationalism in a postmodern, post-colonial world.

Perhaps inextricably bound to the questions of identity and language is the confusion over identifying and labeling literature emanating from or reflecting Irish culture even though written in English. In The Language of Irish Literature, Loreto Todd objects to the use of "Anglo-Irish" to describe Irish literature written in English. As Todd points out, "Chinua Achebe does not stop being Nigerian when he uses English rather than Igbo," and no one describes Achebe's writing as "Anglo-African," nor does an Irish writer cease to be Irish when writing in the English language, a language that the Irish have also successfully shaped to their own uses (4-5). While Tovey, Hannan, and Abramson might prefer to see an analysis of Irish drama written in Irish, they too would agree that Irish dramas written in English are nonetheless Irish. Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge describe post-colonial writers as engaged in "a politics of opposition," writing texts that "destabilize the barriers around 'English literature' that protected the primacy of the canon" (399). According to their description, which seems to uphold Todd's argument, literature emanating from Irish writers no longer must lose itself inside the British canon. Irish literature is *Irish* literature, not English literature and not Anglo-Irish literature.

One problem remains with freeing the Irish to pursue their exploration of national identity in language and, therefore, in literature. The process of giving utterance to the suppressed voices of particular cultures, when the process includes the identification of those voices in terms of national identity, may well be a European construct or, at the least, the cultural residue of European colonization. When Derrida writes of "state racism," he calls it a function of "homo politicus europaeus," pointing out that though "all racisms have their basis in culture and institutions, not all of them give rise to state-controlled structures" (333). Whether or not Derrida is correct, Ireland is a part of Europe and therefore a eurocentric notion of nationhood might be valid for this

particular post-colonial state. However, a significant irony is the fact that Anglo-Irish Protestants in Northern Ireland make the argument against a unified nation based on tribal settlements long ago established by England in the north of Ireland, a pre-condition of nationhood and an operative of empire at the same time. Certainly racial bias has allowed the domination of Ireland by the English, a domination that resulted in turning the Irish against the Irish under the trump card of religion as instituted by the British state. English imperialists saw the Irish as a racial Other, inferior in every way, including morally. Thus, the English empire builders granted themselves the privilege of conquering, colonizing, and controlling the barbarian Irish, the ramifications of which are still making themselves felt on all sides of the issue in Northern Ireland most clearly, but also in the Republic. Given the fact of its European location, speaking of Irish identity in national terms, rather than exacerbating racial bias, raises the Irish position to equality with its European oppressor, the English, while resisting the destructive homogenization of the term "British." And given the ongoing struggle regarding the state of Ireland, in every sense of the word "state," it seems only right that Irish writers should be included as equal partners with all other post-colonial victims and survivors.

Now I must elaborate on two points briefly mentioned earlier: why drama as the genre of exploration, and why Irish drama written in the English language to illuminate the issues of language and identity. Loreto Todd describes the aspects of drama that make it the most interesting literary genre from a sociological standpoint. As Todd notes, "Drama is the most social of all the genres in that it normally involves the interaction of a number of people in the recreation of a story. In addition, whereas poetry and the novel are often read by an individual, drama is traditionally received by an audience" (64). In The National Stage: Theatre and Cultural Legitimation in England, France, and America (1992), Loren Kruger also stresses the difference between reading on an individual level and that of "a collective, if not necessarily unified audience response" to a dramatic production (11). I would like to add one other significant

element with regard to a theatrical experience with the dramatic text. The dramatic production ceases to be merely a literary text and gains the power of oral folk tale in its active telling before an audience. This oral folk tradition takes on additional importance when the subject for exploration is national identity and its link to language.

Kruger emphasizes the occasion of production in another way important to this study, focusing on investing the occasion of theatrical production with significance for "the articulation and contestation of national prestige" (11). Kruger notes that the legitimation of dramatic texts can be problematic because of the "greater strain" that they experience as compared to other genres. The strain Kruger mentions results from the drama's conflict between "autonomous object [the text] and social even [the performance]" (17). Kruger then asks several important questions about the role of the audience: "Is the audience spectator or participant? incoherent crowd or mature nation? And conversely, does mature nationhood call for participation or simply assent?" (4). While I confess that I do not know what would signify a "mature nation," I do recognize the intent of the questions Kruger raises. Caution must be exercised whenever a critic deals with the troubling role of audience as participant or witness and with the degree of cultural, theatrical, and self awareness that the audience exercises. However, part of the excitement and validity of a study of language and identity that involves not only the written text but a communal response is the greater opportunity to test the identity being represented in the text as one that is socially correlative on a broader scale than merely the author's concept.

Noting that the idea of representing nationhood theatrically arose "only in the course of the nineteenth century with the rise of mass national politics," Kruger finds the concept of national theatre "a compelling if ambiguous image of national unity," resulting in images of national identity that should not be accepted as "indisputable fact" but certainly are worthy as "an object of speculation" (3). In considering why theatre became the arena for the literary expression of a national identity, Kruger draws a

connection between the dramatic stage of social experience and "the demand of the people for legitimate representation as protagonist on the political stage" (3). Though Kruger's description alone does not legitimize my study, my study certainly fits the notion of creating a theatrical nationhood, beginning at the time and for the reason, described by Kruger. While Yeats, and with a variation Friel, may be the only playwrights included herein who sought to speak a national/cultural identity through a formally constituted theatrical plan, LeFanu and Boucicault also certainly sought center stage for the Irish question/problem of identity and dignity. Given its "intersection of political, economic and aesthetic spheres," as well as the ambiguity brought about by the varied reception of multiple audience members, Kruger argues that theatre is "an exemplary site for investigating the complex and contradictory relationships among the discourses and practices sustaining cultural hegemony" (13). Certainly there cannot be a much more "complex and contradictory" relationship than that of the Irish to themselves (in their various factions), and the theatrical texts and performances that I examine both support and clarify the complexity of the Irish cultural identity. To summarize the appropriateness of the dramatic genre to a study of Irish identity and its relationship to language, I have selected drama as the genre to explore because of its unique performance qualities that combine the power of orality and literacy, its use by the author, and its effect upon the audience--a communal listener/reader experience that validates a cultural reception beyond what would be possible with isolated readers.

While Kruger makes the claim that "theatre is invoked as the appropriate site for nation building, as a legitimate public sphere" in Britain, France, and the United States (6), I would like to separate Ireland out from Britain and allow the Irish nation, in the voices of these Irish playwrights and their audiences, to create its own particular sense of identity. My approach to the Irish national theatre is in keeping with a post-colonial concern for the legitimation of the once-colonized culture as a people separate and apart from, though historically connected to, the colonizer. Certainly, this seems to be the

attitude of those playwrights with whom I deal. As Kruger points out, national theatres "attempt to assert the validity of national popular representation and so to address or redress the legitimation crisis of the current ruling bloc provoked by the mobilization of a subaltern majority" (3). Each of the plays which I examine not only present a potentially healing Irish identity, no matter the harm detailed, but are also plays which played to Irish audiences and won popular acclaim, despite some canonical critical readings.

The question of why Irish dramas written in English to express the Irish national identity remains. As Loreto Todd argues, "The story of 'Irish drama' is essentially . . . the story of drama in English" (65). Historically, differing from poetry and prose, Irish drama has almost always been a drama written in English. Until the Irish Renaissance and the attempt to revive the Irish language, Irish drama in Irish seems not to have existed. With the Gaelic revival came writers like Douglas Hyde, who could and did produce texts in their native language. However, for many Irish the native language had ceased to be Irish and was and is, in fact, English. This stress between marking out a national identity and speaking that identity in the language that had belonged to the conqueror while turning the language into a language distinctly different and indicative of the national personality to whom it now belongs is far more provocative from both a sociolinguistic and post-colonial viewpoint. And it is from these two theoretical bases that I proceed.

To provide a systematic study of the changing Irish perspective on identity and its link to language, I chose dramas that fit specific criteria established to ensure both a broad and deep analysis of the shifting perceptions. I chose plays written at approximately fifty-year intervals so that several generations of Irish would find a voice in the study. In so doing, I have been able to represent an equal number of viewpoints from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I have also attempted to provide voices that account for various aspects of Irish society, as previously mentioned. Therefore, in regard to religion, there are two voices each from the traditionally opposed Catholic and

Protestant groupings. In regard to class, the voices run the gamut from illegitimate and impoverished, through the middle class of the merchant and the teacher, to the upper class ascendancy. If I am to propose a national identity based upon the exploration of the language problem in these dramas, then I must account for differences before I can arrive at any commonalities. Also, the voices I have chosen should be voices of significant social impact. Accordingly, with the exception of the first playwright, who was working at a rather dark time for Irish theatre but who comes from an important family culturally, the other three voices belong to the playwrights who arguably may legitimately be considered the outstanding theatrical Irish voice of their respective generations. Additionally, each play had to have been performed contemporary to its writing so that audience perceptions as well as the author's view might be analyzed in order to ascertain a more certain cultural view of identity at the time. Each play also had to deal with the connection between language and identity either directly or implicitly as thematic content. A play that employs dialect as a means of marking identity, such as those by John Millington Synge, would not meet the criteria unless language and identity are also strong thematic issues in the play. While I recognize that studies of dialect or language structure in the plays of Hyde, Synge, Gregory, O'Casey, and others are connected to the concerns that I share both sociolinguistically and post-colonially, there are plenty of these studies already available. If we are to advance our understanding of shifting Irish perceptions and the identity conflict connected to language, the thematic study that I undertake goes beyond structure to the heart of the problem and possible solutions. Indeed, the playwrights with whom I deal seem to have found successful ways to write and speak their Irish identities within their particular cultural context, regardless of current canonical evaluations of their work.

Following this introduction of the study and its sociolinguistic and post-colonial theoretical basis, I divide the dissertation into four chapters chronologically ordered. In the first chapter, I analyze Alicia LeFanu's The Sons of Erin; or, Modern Sentiment

(1812). As a member of the first generation to be successfully dominated by the English language and cultural identity, LeFanu, being both Irish and a woman, had to approach her subject with a deft gentleness if she were to find an audience for her message. While directly admitting that her aim is to change the attitude of the English toward the Irish, and implying a like change in attitude of men toward women, LeFanu writes a gentle romantic comedy that makes much of language acts in the process of changing perceptions--the Irish hero acts as an amanuensis to an English woman. In her case, LeFanu crosses no class barriers because she keeps her romantic comedy among the upper class. The writer herself, sister of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, belonged to the Anglo-Irish ascendancy class. Her focus is on dignity for her national identity, an identity that she insists is not so different from the English upper class to whom she addresses herself. The Irish drama of LeFanu's time tended to be written for the drawingroom, as a few other examples similar to LeFanu's work indicate, such as James Kenney's False Alarms; or, My Cousin (1807) and Michael Bryant's Florence Macarthy; or, Life in Ireland (1823). The stretch of time between this first gentle nudging of the language/identity problem and the next dramatic evolution in the Irish ability to deal with their conflicted language and identity logically contains very few examples of speaking back to the empire, though LeFanu's is significant, because of the still-looming empire and the recently completed sense of domination.

Almost fifty years would pass from the time of LeFanu's deferential comedy with its light and gentle plea and a new breed of dramatic comedy with a more rollicking and confrontational wit. The melodramas written around the mid-nineteenth century brought lower-class characters of Catholic birth to the stage to overturn upper-class Anglo snobbery. In the second chapter, I deal with the most important Irish playwright of this mid-century generation, Dion Boucicault. Though Boucicault made his mark world-wide--in England, France, Australia, and the U.S.A., as well as Ireland--, I concern myself with his three Irish plays, focusing especially on The Colleen Bawn (1860) but also

including an analysis of his continued concern with language and identity in Arrah-na-Pogue (1864) and The Shaughraun (1875). I argue that Boucicault, rather than deferring to his English masters, cleverly conceals his rebellious nationalist tendencies in the guise of the Irish peasant clown. This clown, along with female characters who occupy approximately the same societal level as the male peasant, outwits characters of higher social status--the English and Anglo-Irish--thus, proving an innate nobility of mind and soul far greater than the traditionally accepted notions of nobility in Great Britain. Boucicault's characters and thematic concerns may be cloaked by exaggeration and spectacle, but they are nonetheless radically rebellious. Concentrating on the public success of Boucicault's melodramas, prior critics have often failed to take into account his successful speaking back to the empire and shifting of perceptions about his national identity.

Perhaps critics have such difficulty with the Irish melodramas of Boucicault because the next generation of Irish writers reacted strongly and negatively to the clown image that Boucicault had successfully manipulated. In the third chapter, I turn to W. B. Yeats, a leader in the Irish literary renaissance and a founder of the Irish National Theatre. Yeats, like other writers during the Irish Renaissance, looked back to a pre-colonial time for inspiration and subject matter arising from Celtic mythology. Unlike Synge, Yeats would never master the old Gaelic tongue; and in this deficiency, he is perhaps more representative of his time. Finding himself doomed to think and speak in the tongue of the dominating power, Yeats determined that he would find a way to turn English into a distinctive Irish-english capable of voicing the thoughts, feelings, the essential soul of his own people. Accordingly, Yeats weaves a blend of Celtic myth with his concerns for his contemporary society and his artistic hints about how the Irish might be harmed or healed through the power of language. I focus my attention on Yeats's first play for his new national theatre, The Countess Cathleen (1899) and his romantic hope for healing the national identity through the powers of language. I then look at a

play from the middle of his creative life, The Only Jealousy of Emer (1919), and his last play, The Death of Cuchulain (1939), to ascertain how Yeats's own notions about his Irish identity may have shifted over the course of his long productive life, a time which also encompassed the Easter 1916 Rebellion and the formation of the Republic of Ireland (1921). Because the hopes of the Irish nation were in some ways realized and in other ways dashed, the political climate necessarily affected this playwright who abhorred yet became inextricably involved in politics. The dissolution of his own hope for a new Ireland with a newly solidified identity is evidenced in the increasingly dark tone Yeats adopts as he deals with the effect of language on his central Irish character image, the hero Cuchulain.

Another fifty years after Yeats' final say on the romantic Celtic image as a possible basis for a new Irish identity, Brian Friel began his reign as foremost Irish playwright. If there is to be any hope of a healed or new Irish identity, the deference of the early years following domination, the clowning satire of the mid-nineteenth century, or the romantic notions of the Irish Renaissance that ended in modern despair do not provide such hope for today's Irish writers. Yet hope is noticeable, as is another shift, in the latest attempt to deal with the language and identity problem. In the final chapter, I explore the ways in which Brian Friel meets the question of language and identity by plunging headlong into historical images and aiming the light of his genius into areas formerly kept in the shadows in his predecessors' plays. Focusing on Friel's Translations (1980), and touching on the same language/identity theme apparent in his The Communication Cord (1982) and Making History (1988), I discuss how Friel manipulates the archives of history to tell the Irish side of British story. While recreating an Irish image, Friel is not satisfied with old romantic images any more than he is with images provided by the colonizer. Friel's image is of the post-colonial Irish people, a people in conflict yet almost magically still coping and struggling to create and maintain an identity that speaks a self, an Irish self to be sure, but not a nationalist extreme, rather a

complex composite of all that has come before with a fervent hope--not expectation--of what might come to be. This shift, confronting the identity conflicts brought about by colonization and loss of such important identity makers as language, seems both the most realistic perception and the most hopeful if the Irish are to heal themselves of old harms, if they are to learn how to speak of themselves and with one another. Though I do not pretend to be able to predict the next shift in Irish identity, the progressively changing perception noted through analysis of these plays, plays that span several generations, provide insight into not only the reasons for the shifts in perception but the effects of each shift on the following generation. For an analysis of the effect of writers like Friel and the national identity that they reflect and shape, we must wait for another generation.

CHAPTER TWO

ALICIA LEFANU: A PLEA FOR EQUALITY AFTER THE ACT OF UNION

With the Act of Union in 1800, a tenuous political union between Ireland and England was achieved. The Irish Parliament, made up of Anglo-Irish gentry who continually denied rights to Irish Catholics, was dissolved in favor of Irish representation in the British Parliament. However, the simple description of the political union does not tell the whole story. On the one hand, the Irish were still woefully under represented in the British Parliament. On the other hand, not all members of the old Irish Parliament had been hostile or even indifferent to Irish Catholics. Grattan had made an impassioned appeal to vote down the Union in hopes of establishing an independent Ireland with full representation provided in its own government.[1] But, once the Act of Union narrowly passed, the Irish, whether Anglo-Irish Protestants or Irish Catholics, found themselves united with their former colonizer in a difficult marriage. It is this state of affairs that Alicia LeFanu in Sons of Erin; or, Modern Sentiment (1812) allegorizes, voicing her hope for Irish equality and attempting to reshape English perceptions--and perhaps Irish perceptions--of the Irish identity.

Based upon the sociolinguistic evidence by numerous scholars such as Grillo, Laponce, and Wardhaugh, there is little cultural resistance immediately after the effective domination of a native language by a second language identified with the colonizer. United by one language, those who have been forced to forget their native tongue are working hard to gain equal access to power through employing the new language. Understandably, there is little time for artistic language luxuries and little use for rebellion so close to the capitulation. Certainly we find a weakened literary scene in

Ireland at the beginning of the nineteenth century. However, there were some playwrights at work; and some of them were even making cultural contributions to the reshaping of an Irish identity in the English language.[2] If my theory of the effect of language dominance is correct, as the texts seem to support, the first generation of writers following completed language dominance would have to exercise caution in any attempt to regain a voice for the native identity. Accordingly, the first move of these writers is in the form of a cautious request for acceptance of their national identity on an equal level with the nationality of the dominant speakers. At this point in their cultural assimilation, these writers do not seek separation from the other power; rather, they display a hope for unity without a loss of identity. They may have lost their language, but they refuse to lose the dignity of their national identity. Given the caution with which such a generation must proceed, one suitable dramatic mode would be gentle comedy. A comedy of manners, bent on touching the intellect, laced with romance, enjoining the emotions, might be the most successful style in such a situation. And it was to a romantic comedy of manners that LeFanu turned her hand, succeeding in turning her audiences to her position toward national identity.

At this point, before proceeding with an analysis of the content of LeFanu's play, I must provide the cultural/historical context a bit more clearly. Although political union had been achieved, the people of the two nations were not unified, nor were the people within Ireland unified. As Seamus Deane warns in his introduction to Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature,

> Irish nationalism is, in its foundational moments, a derivative of its British counterpart. Almost all nationalist movements have been derived as provincial, actually or potentially racist, given to exclusivist and doctrinaire positions and rhetoric. These descriptions fit British nationalism perfectly. . . . The point about Irish nationalism, the features within it that have prevented it from being a movement toward liberation, is that it is, *mutatis*

> *mutandis*, a copy of that by which it felt itself to be oppressed. . . . [The] competing nationalisms have always defined themselves in relation to either Protestantism or Catholicism. (7–8)

While Deane is certainly accurate in his appraisal of the perceptions surrounding Irish national identity, not all Irish ever have limited themselves to such bifocal vision. Even if the majority of documents and events would lead us to believe that Irish nationalism has been, and perhaps always will be, split down the middle by religious affiliation, such a view is, in many ways, another legacy of the colonizing power in its efforts to subdue and remake the colonized in its own image. Turning to LeFanu's play, however, we find evidence of an Anglo-Irish[3] Protestant who saw herself first and foremost as Irish and who defended her land and its people, regardless of religious affiliation. In fact, in the only religious aspect apparent in the play, LeFanu sides with Catholic Ireland against Protestant England, though she herself was Protestant.

In addition to disproving the absolute duality of Irish identity immediately following the Act of Union, LeFanu also troubles the perception of Irish attitudes toward the English. Whether the argument goes that the Anglo-Irish felt a closer connection to their English ties than their Irish, or that the Anglo-Irish had the most to lose by the Act of Union and so were hostile to the English, neither describes LeFanu's attitude as demonstrated in her play. In "Being Irish Together," Denis Donoghue insists,

> The real trouble in Ireland is that our national experience has been too limited to be true. Since the Plantation of Ulster there has been one story and one story only in Irish feeling: the English, how to get rid of them, or, failing that, to circumvent them, cajole them, twist their tales. (131)

Perhaps Donoghue's description is "too limited to be true." LeFanu provides another telling of the tale, though she certainly works to twist the English tale around to tell her Irish story. LeFanu wants equality and dignity for all Irish; but she indicates by the end

of the play that she may be satisfied with union with England, as were many Irish (Anglo or otherwise), provided such equality and dignity were afforded.

As she makes clear in her prologue, LeFanu's intention is to write a play that will shape a new reality. In Ascendancy and Tradition in Anglo-Irish Literary History From 1789 to 1939 (1985), W.J. McCormack asserts,

> In the Irish experience, art does not exploit reality; it completes, perhaps, concludes it. The dealings between these hypostasized values, art and reality, are prominent and complex in Anglo-Irish literature; each is at times evidently obliged to masquerade as the other. (4)

McCormack is accurately describing the experience scripted by LeFanu, an attempt to reshape reality to provide the conclusion she wants. However, McCormack's further description of what occurs in Anglo-Irish literature does not always match what LeFanu writes. I agree with McCormack when he observes that

> In Ireland, where literature is pre-eminent among forms of cultural production and where literature has been long attuned to a so-called national psyche, the demarcation lines and discontinuities can be conveniently traced in psychological terms. (240)

However, I question his generalization that "One of the central experiences of Anglo-Irish literature is embarrassment" (240). While this is true enough in some cases, it does not fit LeFanu. She shows no signs of embarrassment about being Irish, Anglo-Irish, or about her fondness for both Irish and English individuals. This lack of embarrassment on her part is probably directly related to her clear perception of self-dignity and worth regardless of national origin. Her positive sense of self also enables her to have an equally positive response to cultural diversity, and she encourages the dignity of diversity as well as racial and gender equality in her writing.

Granted, LeFanu may have been more well adjusted than some of her peers. McCormack's observation that the Anglo-Irish demonstrate a sense of embarrassment

holds true at times, as evidenced by some of LeFanu's family and friends. This embarrassment, however, has more to do with their English connections than with their Irish homeland. And in some cases, this embarrassment leads to positive and productive acts meant to help unite all the Irish in their struggle for a dignified life. In a letter dated 17 February 1811 to Joseph LeFanu,[4] Alicia's husband, Mary Leadbeater of Ballitore writes of efforts to help the local countryfolk. She and her circle of friends, under the leadership of one Margaret Bonham, a "woman of consequence," have started a school and a linen-making group interested in producing goods for market. Leadbeater writes that she and her friends

> would be willing to cooperate with any plan for the good of our poor country folk without considering who proposed it. The remarks I hear make me look back to the Rebellion; I recollect the discrimination the poor misguided people made in the midst of their rage between those who had opprest and despised them and those who had a different conduct.

Leadbeater's remarks indicate an awareness of two types of people who belonged to the Anglo-Irish ascendancy class. One type was guilty of oppressing Irish countryfolk, but the others were actively engaged in joining forces with the country folk to help them overcome their problems--a difference in attitude and action discernable by any Irish person of any class. Leadbeater closes the letter to Joseph with the phrase "my love to thy amiable cousin," meaning Alicia, his wife and cousin. Like Mary Leadbeater, the LeFanus fit the latter ascendancy type; and like the women Leadbeater mentions, Alicia LeFanu will seek her own method for coming to the aid of her fellow Irish. The more real problem of embarrassment where LeFanu was concerned seems to be the embarrassment the English expect the Irish to have about being Irish. In response, LeFanu refuses to admit any embarrassment at all--not about her own identity nor about any of her countryfolk.

The need to establish an identity that is respected and treated with equality by the colonizer is a reflex of the colonized. As Tiffin describes this identity struggle:

> Post-colonial writers have from the outset been attempting to establish or rehabilitate self against either European appropriation or rejection. Because post-colonial and colonial perspectives are necessarily informed by the imperial vision with which they are always in various ways and to varying degrees implicated, such establishing or rehabilitation of an independent identity involves the radical interrogation and fracturing of these imposed European perspectives, and their 'systematic' replacement by an alternative vision, or the attack on or erosion of the very notion of system and hegemonic control itself. (172)

LeFanu and her generation were not ready for a radical rebellion against the colonizers, but they were in need of questioning perceptions about their Irishness, of changing the English perception of Irishness--and, thus, their own and the world's, and of providing an "alternative vision." In observing the post-colonial condition, Deane writes, "we need a new discourse for a new relationship between our idea of the human subject and our idea of human communities" (Nationalism 3). Post-colonial critics and sociolinguists, especially when their work combines, are now attempting to provide that new discourse. Close to the moment of language dominance and still within the colonial situation, LeFanu attempted an alternative vision of the Irish individual which would lead to a new human community made up of equally respected Irish and English friends.

The Sheridan family, whence Alicia LeFanu came, were not new to the English or Irish audiences. LeFanu's personal context is important if I am to support my claim that this playwright may be considered a significant, if not quite dominant, voice from her time. Alicia Sheridan LeFanu, daughter of Thomas Sheridan and Frances Chamberlain, sister of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, was born January 1753 in Dublin. Her father was in theatre, as her brother would be. Her mother was a poet and novelist. Like her brother,

she drew upon her family influences and her own talents to produce delightful dramas. Unlike her brother, she would concentrate on Irish subjects and would never gain the lasting fame earned him by his English-style comedies. However, according to T.P. LeFanu's Memoir of the LeFanu Family, Alicia's play Sons of Erin might be considered the first major literary work of the family (51). Alicia Sheridan married her cousin, Joseph LeFanu, on 11 October 1781 with some objection from her father and her brother. She was Joseph's second wife. Alicia would use her love for her cousin and her position as the second wife to an older husband in her creation of romance. T.P. LeFanu records evidence supporting Alicia's positive personal and social life:

> The marriage seems to have been a happy one. Alicia took a leading place in literary society in Dublin and particularly in private theatricals which were then much in vogue. She was the author of a comedy, "The Sons of Erin" (sic), performed at the Lyceum Theatre in 1812. (51)

Alicia is also known to have written poems, some of which were printed in Whyte's poems in Dublin, 1795. Alicia Sheridan LeFanu died 5 September 1817, only five years after her successful comedy played in Dublin.

Within the LeFanu Papers lies evidence of a theatrical career more promising than one successful play might be considered, though one such success at that time in Ireland, and about Ireland, is significant. In a curious letter included in the LeFanu Papers is commentary on Alicia's amiability and playwriting ability. The manuscript, signed "Lady Morgan by William John Fitzpatrick, London 1860," seems to be a recollection of events in 1801, the date given at the beginning of the letter. Lady Morgan, a novelist, evidently had written a preface to her Wild Irish Girl in which she spoke of Alicia LeFanu as "the accomplished sister of R.B. Sheridan . . . [and] her earliest and dearest friend." The recollection about Alicia LeFanu continues with the note

> From a paper of the day we cull the following impromptu on a sparkling comedy of which Mrs. LeFanu was the author.
>
> Dame comedy so dull has grown
> She made the town in sadness moan
> Now to her native spirit . . . [illegible]
> She treats us to a laugh anew.
>
> But Mrs. LeFanu could also draw tears by her tragic powers.

To what play this memory alludes is uncertain, but Alicia LeFanu, always active in the literary and theatrical scenes of Dublin, seems to have contributed pieces for drawingroom entertainment prior to her published Sons of Erin. And, she seems to have fastened on her ability with comedy and romance quite early. In an undated letter to Alicia, Thomas Sheridan, her father, discusses Alicia's playwriting. From contextual evidence, including a follow-up letter that is dated 25 March 1783, the undated letter seems to have been written early in 1783. The commentary on Alicia's playwriting supports Lady Morgan's memory of Alicia's success as a comic playwright by 1801. For his "dear daughter," Thomas Sheridan provides the following advice in the early years of her career:

> I am much afraid it will be difficult to alter your comedy as to insure its success; however if you send it to me I will do the best I can with it. If it gets into your brother's hands, you may rely on it it will be put on the shelf. I wish you could light upon some good story upon which you might form a substantial plot. When the ground work is right it is easy to give it colouring.

Sheridan goes on to say that he will check with some "much read" friends to see if they know of a foreign story "not yet done into English" which would suit Alicia's purposes. He also makes a point of heaping praise on a Mrs. Siddons, a playwright of some popularity whom he claims to have assisted in some undesignated way. Sheridan's letter

to his daughter indicates a willingness, even an eagerness, on his part to support women writers.

A picture of Thomas Sheridan's relationship with his children begins to emerge from the LeFanu Papers. In another letter to Alicia dated 3 October 1783, Sheridan writes of Richard Brinsley's "infamous behavior" and of son Charles's "total neglect and utter disappointment of all my hopes." According to previous letters, Thomas Sheridan felt that Charles was given to heartless ambition, a condition that led him to ignore his father. The "infamous behavior" that Thomas Sheridan attributes to Richard Brinsley goes unexplained. One thing, however, is clear; Thomas Sheridan disapproved of his sons' behavior and relied upon his two daughters, Betsey, who lived with him and cared for him, and Alicia, who seemed to be making of herself a playwright of whom he could be proud.

Having established the cultural context of the first generation of Irish writers after the Act of Union and the personal significance of LeFanu as a voice arising from her context, I turn now to the text to analyze how LeFanu reshapes perceptions of Irishness through her particularly Irish use of the English language. In this play, language and identity are inextricably linked from the prologue, through various ironic language acts, to dealing with identity confusions and providing revelations.

In her published advertisement for Sons of Erin; or, Modern Sentiment, Alicia LeFanu explains what one critic will refer to as her object and means:

> The principal object of the Author in the following Comedy, was to do away any lingering prejudice that may still exist in England against the people of Ireland: this she has endeavored to effect, by drawing a character she believes to be new to the Stage, that of an *Irish Gentleman*, such as he now exists in society. (Sons iii)

From the first, LeFanu is direct about her desire to destroy English prejudice against Ireland. Rather than employ an Irish peasant as the traditional clown, LeFanu

determined to show the English that there were Irishmen equal in class and nobility to any Englishman. LeFanu knew of what she wrote. She understood the politics and social issues of her day, and she had carefully considered how to shift social and political perceptions.

Making light of her politics, for clever political reasons, in the second paragraph of her advertisement, LeFanu elaborates on what she considers her position of expertise. She speaks of herself in third person, giving the sense of objectivity:

> That she has not been unfitted for the task by a blind national partiality, will be allowed, when it is remembered, that although a native of Ireland, and for many years past a resident in that country, yet all her early habits and connexions were formed in England; and therefore all her impressions are highly favourable to a country which she must ever regard with sincere esteem and fond affection; nor did she visit Ireland from her infancy, to a period of life when judgment is sufficiently ripe to correct any groundless predilection she may be supposed to have contracted for the place of her birth, merely as such. (Sons iii)

LeFanu's explanation of her fitness for the task of creating a portrait of an Irish gentleman to destroy English prejudices is a particularly fine example of rhetoric aimed successfully at the targeted audience. By emphasizing her upbringing in England and clarifying that her notion of Ireland was established after she reached an age of reason and maturity as an adult, LeFanu thwarts those who might attribute a narrow nationalism to her. Though some may read this portion of LeFanu's advertisement as self-deprecation on the part of an Irish woman, I interpret her explanation, which follows quickly on the heels of her firm declaration, as not only an honest account of her own historical connections but also a shrewd move to breach any natural English barriers.

LeFanu continues along this line of clever self-deprecation with regard to removing psychological barriers to her gender. She insists, "All considerations of a

political nature respecting the Irish nation have been carefully avoided, as such are neither agreeable to the Author's habits of thinking as a woman, nor, in her opinion, suitable to this species of composition" (Sons iii). A letter from her father supports the idea that LeFanu found politics disagreeable. On 15 November 1783, Thomas Sheridan sent a revealing note to his daughter. Living at the time in England, Sheridan wanted an inside Irish look at the situation in his native land. He comments to Alicia, "I know you are not much delighted in politics, but perhaps at this very critical time your curiosity may also be excited, and in that case you are no woman if you can not worm the secret out of the closet of the conclave." What the secret might have been is not clear, but it probably referred to what move the Anglo-Irish Parliament might make to help settle rising rage on the part of the native Irish. Having heard of Grattan's ill-health, Thomas Sheridan worried over Ireland's future. His sexist comment aside, Sheridan believed that his daughter socialized in a circle of people who might privilege her with information about future governmental moves. Whether LeFanu believed that women should not involve themselves in politics might be questioned, but she certainly realized that men of her age felt women should not involve themselves in politics, especially given the fact that women had not received the right to vote. The gender issue of greatest significance here is the way in which LeFanu turns her supposedly unpoliticized female nature to use. In her cleverly constructed assertion that as a woman she is a non-political being, she has diminished any possibility for critics to accuse the playwright of a political agenda, just as she attempted to remove the notion that she might have a national bias. The last portion of her statement indicates that perhaps her natural dislike of politics has more to do with her artistry than her gender. She has no intention of allowing overt politics a place in her play. Sheridan's description of Alicia LeFanu as "not much delighted in politics" supports the notion that she did, indeed, have an aversion to political posturing. Like Yeats later, LeFanu did not think creative writing, or at the least playwriting, was the place for politics. However, also like Yeats, dislike politics as she may, in the act of

redefining the Irish identity, LeFanu's writing takes positive political action. The description of LeFanu as "not much delighted in politics" could be as easily applied to each of the playwrights in this study, each of whom took up pen to defend and shape an Irish identity, a truly political act intended to affect the polis.

While considering the Irish reception to the play, a reception that was overwhelmingly positive, we must remember that LeFanu wanted to influence the English attitude as well as defend the Irish proudly. Prior to the Dublin performances, Sons of Erin; or, Modern Sentiment was performed in London under the guidance of her nephew, Richard Brinsley Sheridan's son. The published version of the play also originates in London, and it was for this publication that LeFanu wrote her advertisement explaining her object, means, and suitability for writing such a work. Also in her advertisement, she expresses her gratitude to her nephew:

> To her nephew, Mr. T. SHERIDAN, the Author is indebted, among many acts of attention and kindness, with regard to the Play, for the Epilogue, and for some judicious curtailments and alterations in the piece itself while in preparation for representation, which her absence from the spot incapacitated her from making. (Sons iv)

From this statement and a following remark about not having seen the performance, it is clear that LeFanu did not go to London for the show but remained in Ireland. The publication, which presumably followed production in England, may have been available prior to the Irish performances because the actual date given on the advertisement is 5 May 1812; and the Irish production would not open until 27 June. With this information regarding dates as well as the comments that LeFanu makes about the contributions of T. Sheridan, one may conclude that LeFanu probably knew any and all changes that had been made during production and approved the final script for publication. Therefore, with the exception of the epilogue penned by her nephew, we can be relatively certain

that the body of the script remains the work of Alicia LeFanu. LeFanu's choice of the descriptor "judicidious" indicates that she did, indeed, approve the changes made.

In a final preparatory note for the play itself, LeFanu's advertisement ends with the following gentle words of appreciation and hope:

> The Author cannot conclude without expressing how much she is gratified by the flattering reception which the piece has met with; and *that* not merely from the feelings natural to a writer, but from her real and warm attachment to the country which gave her birth, and to that to which she owes her education, and her first impressions of whatsoever is amiable and good; for how creditable is it to both nations to reflect, that a piece whose principal object is to place in the most favourable point of view the character of the sister-country, should have been received by so many successive English audiences with universal and marked approbation!
>
> The Author has only to add her sincere hope, that the publication of this Comedy may not prove injurious to the interests of true taste and sound morals; and that The Sons of Erin may be received by their friends on the other side of the water, as cordially by the fireside, and in the domestic circle, as they have been already on the public scene. (Sons v)

The concluding paragraphs of LeFanu's advertisement are full of clever innuendo. First she aligns herself emotionally with Ireland, her attachment described as "real and warm"; then she indicates that because she has such a high regard for Ireland, and England being credited with having taught her "whatsoever is amiable and good," England too should naturally recognize the goodness of Ireland and its people. LeFanu also lifts Ireland from the position of a subordinate colony to the position of a "sister-country," related but of equal status. Having established that her concern is for Ireland and the perception of the Irish, her last paragraph furthers that commentary of concern. It is Ireland she does not wish to injure. Thus, it is Ireland which represents "true taste

and sound morals." LeFanu furthers her goal as writer with a particularly packed closing line. One interpretation of the line indicates that LeFanu, not content to have authored a play successful in performance, desires that the text also be widely read in English homes. However, the title of the play, Sons of Erin, creates a neat subtext, doubling as verbal symbol of the actual Irishmen it represents. Taken in this manner, LeFanu declares her desire to see Irishmen welcomed "cordially" into English homes, not merely gazed at on stages for the amusement of English audiences. Thus, LeFanu's final word in the advertisement brings her discussion of the perception and place of the Irish full circle. Her perception of the Irish, of herself as an Irish woman, is one of equality to any other peoples of any other nation. And her urging is that the Irish be accepted on equal terms with the full respect and affection due individuals of worth and dignity. The content of LeFanu's advertisement is powerfully persuasive, even though--or because --it is gently and elegantly worded. The gentle words of this Irish woman erode traditional power structures and social perceptions.

In her prologue to the play, LeFanu provides an explanation of her choice of comedy for dramatic style. After talking about the genius of early comic writers, LeFanu indicates that such comedic genius was once a hallmark of Irish writers but has recently gone unvoiced. She implies that Irish writers of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century find it difficult to write with piercing wit. Deploring the way in which the Irish stage has been demoralized by what she refers to as "puppet shows" about raging witches and fairies, LeFanu gives an interesting and significant defense for the use of comedy and common folk rather than the old myths to display the genius and nature of Ireland. She bravely declares her position,

> Yet unappall'd The Sons of Erin rise,
> And dare to-night to tempt the bold emprise
> Of bringing truth and nature to your view,
> The thoughts unborrow'd and the story new;

With sentiments not wove in Fancy's loom,
But what each generous bosom finds at home:
To those emotions Erin's Sons appeal,
And rest their future fate on what you feel;
Their ardent wishes conquer every fear,
They trust, they know, they are no strangers here. (6)

With these words, LeFanu becomes the forerunner and her lines the apologia for Boucicault, O'Casey, Behan, Keane, and a host of other Irish writers of social comedy. Here is her answer that precedes the accusations of the serious W.B. Yeats and the other writers of the Irish Renaissance who would denigrate stylish comedies and would turn back to myth for the source of their plays.

Nowhere is the trick of comedy to subvert oppression and prejudice more clear than in the gently pleading and still contemporarily significant actor's prologue spoken by Marshall. The address to the audience begins with an appeal for a fair and open hearing:

Who through the world has passed, and never felt
The dire effects stern Prejudice has dealt?
Through every rank its influence extends;
Friends it makes foes, and foes converts to friends.
To poets' sorrow, critics feel its sway;
And oft, with minds preform'd, prejudge the play. (7)

Again, LeFanu has moved to defuse difficult problems before they can arise. Her narrative introduction brings up the possibility of preconceived notions and prejudices so that such self-awareness on the part of the audience might enable, even persuade, them to set aside preconceptions. Her plea in these lines is hopeful but realistic in its assessment of what usually occurs when an audience encounters a play. But merely using the dark terms "prejudice," "foes," and "sorrow" could have a positive countering effect

in that most people would prefer to believe that they are not prejudiced, nor do they long to be foes or bring sorrow in most social settings.

As the second prologue continues, LeFanu's words suggest that she is aware of the negative turn that nationalism can take:

> Of freedom, politicians loud exclaim,
> And give to Prejudice a patriot name.
> Nations hate nations for no other crime
> But breathing air beneath another clime. (7)

LeFanu's dislike of politics now has a context in the content of these lines. According to her, the role of a politician is to foster the kind of patriotism that encourages prejudice and leads to hatred of other nations. LeFanu is wise enough to see what that effect has had on Ireland and obviously does not desire a reversal of fortunes in which Ireland becomes a falsely proud nation full of hateful patriots who disdain England or other countries. She is also clever enough to treat the gravity of the situation with comedy:

> To banish feelings which we ever find
> The constant emblems of a narrow mind;
> To open wide the avenues to peace,
> And bid a nation's prejudices cease;
> To make us greet the Sons of ERIN's land,
> The SISTER kingdom, with a BROTHER's hand,
> Our Bard stands forth--array'd in comic dress,
> And trusts a BRITISH audience for success. (7)

LeFanu stresses equality with her balance of terms, a balance of both gender and nations. While there may still be some indication of subordination in the selection of "sister" for Ireland, given social realities of the time, there may be other reasons for LeFanu's word choice here. Assuredly, she may be continuing her persuasive form of self-deprecation and selecting the feminine gender for her allegorization of Ireland

accordingly. Or, given that she is a woman herself and successful at maneuvering herself to a position of leadership in society, LeFanu may be aligning herself with her nation by employing the feminine gender as a term of national and self-empowerment. Last, of course, is the long tradition of allegorizing Ireland as female. The best interpretation would probably suggest a combination of all of these possibilities.

The prologue ends with a final strong plea made sweetly, but again packed with multiple meanings:

> Let then each lip, unprejudic'd impart
> The generous smile which Nature gives the heart;
> Believing still, in every line exprest,
> The truest feelings of the Poet's breast.
> Be yours the pride, unprejudic'd to raise
> Hands to support another nation's praise.
> *Our* PREJUDICE depends on your decrees:--
> *Our* MODERN SENTIMENTS--"The wish to please!" (7)

The first four lines of this section could refer to the actors or to the audience. If the actors are intended, the lines continue to support LeFanu's defense of comedy as a means to impart her message. If the audience is intended, the lines encourage an enthusiastic reception which results in the audience's departing the theatre convinced by the message and happy with their new-found generosity toward the Irish, a generosity which is only natural once politics are put aside. The last line displays the self-deprecating tendency used to throw the dominator off-balance with a bow that deflects any blow. The last would probably be appalling to many a nationalist or liberal audience today, but it was necessary given the climate of the time if the message were to be received at all. Also, we must not ignore the two lines that come between the layered plea and the self-deprecation. Embedded in these lines can be heard a nationalist voice calling for Ireland's independence. LeFanu is asking an English audience to lift their

hands in support of Ireland as a nation, and I do not think she is asking merely for their applause at the end of her play.

With regard to the play proper, LeFanu allegorizes the union of Ireland and England through the marriage of Irish FitzEdward and English Emily Rivers, a nice gender reversal of the power situation. In addition, she attacks the identity problem through a series of twisting language situations: confusion of identity based upon names as identity markers, snobbery against the Irish mocked through the Irishman's superior handling of English in his disguise as an English amanuensis, and the inability of the Irish servant to lose his brogue any more than he could forget his beloved land. The language tools that LeFanu employs are those recognized as being most useful to the victim of colonization--irony, double entendre, significant pauses, and silences. Moving through the play and listening to the clever use of language to speak to the identity issue, an audience is forced to confront without pain prejudices perhaps long held; and, thus, they are asked to reevaluate what are surely false perceptions.

At the center of the comedy plot lies the serious issue of a marriage of mixed race, at least in the minds of English who consider the Irish an inferior race. Sharpe describes E. M. Forster's A Passage to India as reenacting "the fears and fantasies of an imperial nation over the intermingling of two races, the colonizer and the colonized" (25). The comment could just as well describe LeFanu's Sons of Erin. Act One opens at the Rivers home in England. Mr. Rivers, whose first wife died, has recently remarried. Mr. Oddley, the brother of Rivers's first wife, arrives to find that all has changed in the home since the new marriage. Oddley comments negatively on the marrying fad to his nephew, Captain Rivers. Then Oddley observes, "your sister Emily, forsooth, must run off with an Irishman, possessed of a modest assurance, an estate in the moon" (10). To Oddley's way of thinking, Emily has made a childish investment in a man who may as well live on the moon, considering the man is from Ireland. When Captain Rivers insists that Emily is still his sister, despite Oddley's declaration that she has now been disinherited, Oddley

defends the disinheritance, "has she not renounced her whole family?" (12) However, the captain turns the remark, "They, indeed, have renounced her" (12). The captain goes on to say, "I am told FitzEdward, notwithstanding your prejudices against his country, is a man of sense, spirit, generosity, a warm heart; in short, that he has no fault but a disregard for money" (12).

At this point, we might stop to examine the opposing English portraits LeFanu has provided from the opening of her play. The prejudiced Englishman is slightly outside the nuclear English family presented in the play. He is a merchant who places family wealth above familial affection. But he is to be regarded as the abnormal Englishman, the attitude that stems from the periphery rather than the center. Even his name, Oddley, indicates the abnormality in his position (not quite related since his sister's death) and in his attitude. LeFanu is subtly pointing out that this Englishman's behavior is not only unacceptable, it is downright odd when all the facts are considered.

And with what facts does LeFanu provide us? According to a noble Englishman, a captain no less, Irish FitzEdward is sensible, spirited, generous, and warm-hearted--in short, a man anyone without prejudice would love. LeFanu has controlled the psychology of character construction admirably. Through young, strong, noble Captain Rivers, she suggests the kind of Englishman she hopes will not only be tolerant of her Irish countryman, but will willingly embrace him as a brother. From the outset, Captain Rivers is more appealing than Mr. Oddley. In these two character constructions, she manipulates the audience into siding with the more sympathetic, attractive captain. Thus, the English audience is placed in the position of considering a positive attitude toward the Irish; and the Irish audience would find themselves siding with an English officer. This construction is an interesting move on LeFanu's part to achieve both equality and peace by dignifying both the English and the Irish.

LeFanu's tendency toward playing to the upper class should not be ignored. She was, in fact, part of that class; and she knew where the soft spots were. To make young

Rivers an officer and a gentleman was a logical choice, but to make Oddley a money-grubbing merchant was inspired. In so doing, she would solidify the aristocracy and the peasantry against the threatening money middle-men and would, at the same time, deflate the impact of FitzEdward's weakness with finance. FitzEdward's name also indicates a noble Norman heritage that places him among the Anglo-Irish ascendancy, a group notorious for losing their estates to the money-men. But the emphasis is not placed on FitzEdward's recklessness with money, rather on the greed of the merchant.

The picture of Oddley's greed when faced with natural Irish nobility is emphasized as the argument continues following Rivers' small admission of FitzEdward's one weakness:

> Odd. And what greater fault can he have, Sir? Money is independence, money is power, nay, is health: but he has a greater fault, one that I never can overlook--that he's an Irishman.
>
> Capt. R. Sir, I must own that I have not imbibed your prejudices and my father's against a country that has produced so many men of acknowledged genius and merit. (12)

Using the word "imbibed" to describe prejudice provides another negative connotation. Only a a drunk would exercise such an attitude, someone under an unnatural influence. Anyone who is thinking clearly would not have the same prejudice. LeFanu reinforces the unnaturalness of prejudice against the Irish by having the captain refer not only to FitzEdward's fine qualities, but the worth of multitudes of Irish--"men of acknowledged genius and merit." Additionally, in the following response from Oddley, LeFanu reinforces both the ridiculousness and greed of the English merchant.

> Genius and merit! Oons! Irishmen have been our family plague, and descended, like the gout, from generation to generation! Was not your great aunt, Barbara, kidnapped in her dotage by an hunchbacked counsellor from Connaught? And is not a moiety of the family acres

> gone for ever among the O'Rourkes and Malony's--and the lord knows what heathenish tribes besides? . . . Prejudice! Zounds, Sir, . . . I'm an Englishman--I've a right to my prejudices, and will indulge them. (12-13)

The last line of this outburst is the most ironically telling. Oddley thinks he has not only a right to his prejudice but also to land in Ireland that had perhaps been given to his family by the English government and had now, somehow, fallen back into the hands of the rightful Irish owners. In addition, the use of "indulge" to round out the speech that had begun by describing the Irish as a "gout" that had passed from generation to generation through the English family completes the subtle suggestion of Oddley's greed and absurdity. Gout, after all, may be brought about by overindulgence. The suggestion here is that Oddley's family had indulged themselves by displacing the Irish from their own lands, and now the Oddley's are suffering repercussions for that indulgence of their unnatural prejudice. LeFanu also weaves into Oddley's remarks a suggestion of a feminine stance. The women of the family seem drawn to Irish men. Given the sympathy of noble Captain Rivers for the Irish and given the silliness of Oddley's prejudice, the resulting picture of the women in the Oddley family is one of sensibility. Perhaps they indulge their passion for the Irishmen, but sensibly so given the choice between Irish men and Oddley men.

At this point in the first act, Mr. Rivers enters and takes Oddley to meet his (Rivers') young wife, who has been entertaining Sir Frederick, a friend and rather forward admirer. Oddley quickly makes it known that he has no use for modern ladies or their artistic or scholarly diversions, implying, based on another of his prejudices, that he believes the new Mrs. Rivers to be the sort of woman for whom he will have no use. Mr. Rivers replies to his surly ex-brother-in-law, "I wish Miss Ruth were here to vindicate the cause of female literature; and I protest I hear her voice, and in no very good humour" (23). Ruth, a scholarly woman and lover of science, is Mr. Rivers' sister. One might also question whether she acts as a sort of mask for LeFanu in some respects.

Though off-stage at this point, Rivers can imagine how she would mount a defense for literary women; and he also imagines that he can hear her speaking to Oddley's remark in a not overly delighted tone. Rivers is right; Ruth enters in high form, ready to defend the right of equality for women. Neither Oddley nor her brother are any match for this outspoken woman. When Oddley repeats his opinions, with assent from Rivers, about a woman's place, Ruth exclaims to Mrs. Rivers, "Fy, what gross conceptions!--You see, Mrs. Rivers, they would degrade us into mere domestic animals; we that are capable of the highest attainments, who can become astronomers, metaphysicians, logicians, chemists, alchymists, botanists--" (25). Her outburst is stopped by her brother's whine, "Where will she stop?--Oh dear, Madam, my poor head would be perfectly unequal to such a profusion of knowledge" (25).

From the opening two encounters, we can deduce not only that LeFanu's object might be more than she has fully disclosed in her advertisement, but also that her means is somewhat duplicitous. Yes, the first concern she portrays is with the English portrait of the Irish identity; but following quickly is a concern with the role of women. And actually these two concerns are not at all unrelated. Both the Irish and women have suffered degradation at the hands of Englishmen; both are treated as lesser human beings. LeFanu's identity as an Irish woman is at stake doubly. The opening encounters establish the message and means which LeFanu will continue to work throughout the play. The message is that all people deserve equal respect, treatment and opportunity for fulfillment. The means she uses to get this message across is not only the Irish gentleman whom she has promised in her advertisement, but also the female characters created as misunderstood mirrors of the Irishman, capable, as he is, "of the highest attainments." Had LeFanu not gently and subtly supported her views in this light-hearted comedy, she might have made Englishmen's heads really spin until they cried, "Where will she stop?" But in her ironic twisting of roles and duplicitous language, the English male audience was probably barely aware of what she had begun to effect.

Having introduced in Act One her marriage union allegory and her concern for English perceptions of the Irish, LeFanu now brings language to the forefront of her identity message. Act Two opens with a scene shift to an apartment in the boarding house of a Mrs. Furbish. In another word-play, LeFanu fittingly describes the character by her name. Mrs. Furbish provides the living quarters for several characters. As the scene opens, she is complaining about her current lodgers, whom she would like to replace with Lady Ann Lovel. Mrs. Furbish complains,

> and then that impudent, noisy Irish servant of his, eats me out of house and home, and pays for nothing. They talk a great deal about Irish gallantry to the ladies, but I'm sure this fellow never said a civil thing to me.
>
> Enter PATRICK
>
> It does not signify talking; your master must provide himself immediately with another lodging. (26)

In this short piece of dialogue, much is said about language acts. Patrick, the Irish servant, is described as noisy. However, a vague "they" have evidently spoken frequently about "Irish gallantry to ladies," a notion that her recent experience has taught Mrs. Furbish may be another untrue generalization. Here LeFanu takes an unusual step in that she has attacked a stereotype of Irishmen to be sure, but it is a positive stereotypical attribute. At the same time, she indicates a negative noisiness in Patrick. True to her word, LeFanu seems to be trying to play fair by breaking down all stereotypes and attempting a seeming objectivity by allowing negative as well as positive attributes to be part of the makeup of her Irish characters. Significantly, Mrs. Furbish seems a bit wary of Patrick's speaking talents, defending herself against his talk before he even opens his mouth. Her defense is of little use, however, because Patrick will not be hushed.

Patrick does talk, turning Mrs. Furbish's ideas of social standards upside down in the process. He suggests that if the lady whom Mrs. Furbish expects arrives then she

might share the lodging with his master. This bold suggestion sets off a comically furious exchange:

> Mrs. Fur. Marry come up! My Lady will look a little higher, I believe, when she chooses her company, than a poor Irish gentleman.
>
> Pat. Higher! lower you mean--for there is no better blood in the three kingdoms than runs in the veins of Arthur FitzEdward, of Ballyna, in the county of Roscommon, my master.
>
> Mrs. Fur. Fiddle faddle of his blood! Fine grandeur without a guinea in their purses! (27)

Patrick's account of his master's lineage is constructed to place FitzEdward among the greatest of royal blood. Like a true Irishman, Patrick does not ever consider that his own country is not a kingdom unto itself; as far as he is concerned, Ireland is equal to the separate kingdoms of England and Scotland--another strike for a fellow Celtic country. He spells out his master's heritage in terms of place, the noble township, and the county which had probably long been the realm of the FitzEdwards.

Though LeFanu has given her Irish gentleman a Norman surname that places him among the Anglo-Irish gentry, she chooses a Celtic mythical connection of great importance to balance out his identity. Arthur is the name of the king, or tribal chieftain, of probable Celtic origin for whom all of Britain waits. Thus, in the careful choosing of a name for her Irish gentleman (in keeping with her knack for meaningful names throughout the play), LeFanu embodies the heritage and hope of all the British Isles in one person whose presence speaks for individual dignity and harmonic peace. This obsession LeFanu has for naming that signifies identity is typical of a victim of colonization. The power to name is the power to control. In the writing of her play, LeFanu can inscribe the minds of the reader/audience with whatever character perceptions she desires. It is within her power to create and control identity through the

right and use of naming. That she does not speak about what she is doing but subtly does it all the same is also typical for a writer in her still colonized position. Subtlety and wit are the name of the game if she is to change the colonizers' perceptions.

As the scene between the two working class individuals of opposing national identities continues, LeFanu plays with the prejudices they embody in their ignorance and lack of appreciation, each for the other's land and way of life. Mrs. Furbish and Patrick continue arguing about a number of topics, including the rent and the quality of English food, which Patrick claims never satisfies his Irish belly. His disdain for English food gets a rise out of the landlady: "Hold your Irish impertinence! You never fared so well in your own country: buttermilk, your prime dainty; potatoes and a bit of salt herring to season them, your daily food" (27). Patrick takes Furbish's comments on seasoning and turns the phrase to work his will in defense of the goodness of Irish people. His twisting of the phrase is a clever ploy often used by the victim of colonization to get round the dominator.

> Pat. Oh, faith, Mrs. Furbish, I had better seasoning than that! One you never use--a good-humored, sweet countenance opposite to me. My poor Nora! I wish I was back with you, away from these *Philistines*. But what signifies thinking of misfortunes? They only serve to make one melancholy, and that's not the way to be cheerful: but you need not fear that my master will go off in your debt, whatever I might do to borrow a trifle of you in the way of friendship.
>
> Mrs. Fur. I promise you I am not used to have friendship with one of your sort, Mr. Shee.
>
> Pat. *O'Shee*, if you please, Madam. I had the O in my family before your first ancestor was born. And let me tell you that the friendship of an honest Irish lad wouldn't disgrace one of your

> sort, though you kept a house as broad as St. Giles's and as high as the Monument. (27-8)

Patrick's dialogue provides more matter for a post-colonial analysis. As already mentioned, he twists the word "seasoning" to take on a meaning suited to his own rhetorical desires, to bring the discussion away from domestic issues of food and back to the issue of national identity. Secondly, LeFanu has her character effect this shift at a pause, the space that signifies a new language use for the term "seasoning" when used by the Irishman rather than the English woman. Pauses and silences are also effective tools for the colonized voice that resists the English sense of language and identity. Then when Patrick, a bit of a trickster, suggests that he and his English landlady might be friends, because he thinks it may get him something, the landlady's response provides another opportunity for a lesson about the nobility of Irish place and people via the symbol and connection of a name. Patrick is now claiming for himself a long distinguished family line, one that pre-exists the origin of the landlady's family. Probably what is most significant about the entire exchange between Patrick and Mrs. Furbish is the way in which they both come across to the audience as similar characters. Both are working class people who exercise national pride and national prejudice, though Patrick's prejudice seems almost justified as aggression that has stemmed from a desire to defend his national identity.

Following the tension between Mrs. Furbish and Patrick, a tension that originates from the landlady's expectation about a lady's arrival, Lady Ann enters. The irony in this situation is that, in contrast to Mrs. Furbish's declarations about the lady's type of chosen companion, Lady Ann knows and is friendly with FitzEdward. In fact, it quickly becomes clear that Lady Ann and FitzEdward had been romantically involved four years earlier. Though FitzEdward has married Emily of the Rivers family, Lady Ann is still single. FitzEdward and Ann discuss the reason that the young groom has returned to England and left his bride at his home in Ireland. FitzEdward has come to make money

because his father's bequest has been of little help and his wife has no money of her own. As he explains,

> Not to weary you with a history of thoughtless extravagance, three years almost completed my ruin; my estate is mortgaged--I left Ireland, where Emily remains to collect our little wreck of fortune, and came here to try mine in the lottery of great men's promises. (31)

Though FitzEdward has accepted responsibility for his family's losses, losses to which he may have contributed but most likely inherited, and has suggested that he is going to try to raise money from Englishmen he knows, Lady Ann realizes that FitzEdward cannot really do as he says because his pride will not allow it. She kindly suggests, "my heroic cousin, though your Hibernian spirit might induce you to starve rather than bend; yet, for the sake of your Emily, I think you ought to try to accommodate matters. Let me interfere; I will speak to your father-in-law" (31). Now, here is an interesting proposal that supports my earlier assertion about LeFanu's double intent. Here is an English lady of the aristocracy who clearly knows, appreciates, and sympathizes with an Irishman. She offers to become the mediator for the Irish gentleman and his English upper-class father-in-law. Lady Ann, for LeFanu's purposes, is the perfect mediator, being English and thus a compatriot to Rivers and yet a woman and thus linked to the subordinate position of Irish FitzEdward. Despite the perfect possibility Lady Ann presents, FitzEdward protests the unacceptability of such a plan and adds, "Besides, he detests the very name of *Irishman*, and I glory in it" (32). And, of course, in the emphasis on name and identity lies the language/identity problem, when one calls oneself Irish in a time and place when the English control the discussion of value.

Because LeFanu recognizes that the English have a singular sense of value, meaning they value being English above all else while believing that all other nationalities are somehow less valuable people, she plays up the Irish connections to English families.

Not only does she have her Irish hero marry the English Emily Rivers, but she has him previously involved with the aristocratic English Lady Ann Lovel. To break down the national barriers even more and strengthen the argument for genetic equality, nations aside, LeFanu creates a blood connection between Lady Ann and FitzEdward. They, like Alicia Sheridan and Joseph LeFanu, are cousins. The Irish hero and English heroine are part of the same family. While Ruth Rivers seems to have spoken LeFanu's mind for her early in the play with regard to the rightful role of women, Lady Ann seems to embody the author's purpose as a woman who will come to the aid of the wronged Irish gentleman. Aside from the connection as cousins, there is another notable connection between the English heroine who does the author's bidding and the author. Knowing how carefully LeFanu has chosen her characters' names to provide support for the sense of who they each are, readers might infer that there must be significance in Lady Ann Lovel's name. The initials match those of the female playwright who has positioned herself to defend the Irish through the creation of this wise, warm, and witty lady.

Though Ann sympathizes with FitzEdward, she calls him to account for his current state of affairs. Her questioning allows for FitzEdward to move the message of the play forward another step. He begins by answering that love was the motivation and origin of the current problematic state in which he lives. As he elaborates, the answer becomes packed with layers of meaning. FitzEdward does not speak only of his marriage to Emily and the results. He is speaking the Irish situation: "in my country, men are very apt to do a thing first, and think of its effects after. And now I am grieved, like the thief in Prior's ballad, not for the deed, but for its *consequences*" (32). Not only did FitzEdward not realize what a rift would be created when he married Emily, but centuries ago another Irishman did not realize what consequences and conflict would arise from a political marriage with the English. When Dermot MacMurrough, tribal king in Leinster, appealed to Henry II of England for assistance, having been driven out of Ireland by a group of tribal kings led by Rory O'Connor, he probably had no concept of the dire

consequences his alliance with the English would bring. As historian Donnchadh O Corrain notes, MacMurrough's action

> changed the course of Irish history. . . . The invitation inevitably became an invasion. Like most great changes in history, it was an accident, unforeseen and unplanned, which opened up Ireland politically to expansive Anglo-French feudalism--as England and Scotland had been. (52)

O Corrain's explanation is especially in fitting with LeFanu's own perception of what happened to Ireland. In noting that the same expansion occurred in England and Scotland under the reign of the Norman kings, O Corrain echoes Patrick's earlier identification of three kingdoms--Ireland, England, and Scotland. Also, the explanation aligns the English and Irish rather than dividing them. This concept of colonialism is given full treatment in works on the history of the British throne, such as chapter two, "The Norman Invasion and the Gaelic Recovery," of The Oxford Illustrated History of Ireland. The significance of the explanation of FitzEdward to Ann, and in the explanation of O Corrain about the Irish-English affiliation, is in the total surprise of the dire consequences for the Irish individual.

Though love does not have the same hold on Ann that it seems to have on FitzEdward--she says she will be free of that weapon that changes a lover into a lord (in marriage), she places a high and binding value on friendship. She insists to FitzEdward, "[I] will not rest till I have done something to save you" (32). The something that LeFanu provides as a tool for Ann's salvation of FitzEdward involves two pieces of language exchange: the exchange of notes and the act of writing notes in the guise of someone other than oneself for someone else. When a note arrives announcing the presence of newlywed Mrs. Rivers, Lady Ann begins to plot. When FitzEdward once again protests that he will not allow his honor to bow "to [Emily's] insolent family," Ann emphasizes her family connections to the Irishman, replying, "Believe me, I have the

honour of *our* family too much at heart, to wish you to do any thing that would degrade you" (33). She then lays out her proposal that FitzEdward change his name to Milton and act as amanuensis to Ruth Rivers, a job that characterizes its holder as "the man of sense, of sentiment, of literature. . . .a scholar of course, but no pedant, a gentleman, a man of the world" (33-4). Ann believes that FitzEdward fills the bill. FitzEdward agrees to conceal his personal identity by changing his name to Milton, and he agrees to becoming Ruth Rivers's secretary, responsible for the literate and scholarly framing of all Ruth's learning and correspondence. These concessions are made in order to find a way into the Rivers home so that the family can be persuaded to change their perception of him by growing to like and admire him under another name, a change over which he takes control.

However, FitzEdward balks at disguising his nationality. His national identity means more to his sense of self than the name FitzEdward or his social position. Overcome with sadness at the realization that he has no choice but to disguise his nationality because that is the source of prejudice against him, FitzEdward says,

> Ah, my poor country! must I follow the example of some of your unnatural children, and renounce you too? Well, for a short time, be it so: like parted lovers, to press you more closely to my heart, when acknowledging my claim to the name of Irishman will bring no disgrace upon the dearly valued title! (34)

The only title FitzEdward values, the one he holds as close to his heart as his love for his wife, is that of "Irishman." While Shakespeare may have been right that the content of a person does not change no matter the name he is called, LeFanu realizes that the change in name, both personally and nationally, may change the minds of the English about the content of this particular character. Though LeFanu has written here a comedy-romance about two nations in conflict, the conflict has taken on, in the representative members of the English and Irish families who love one another, the same central issue as Romeo

and Juliet, a play most English audiences would probably recognize--hatred based upon foolish prejudice against a group-held identity. The Montagues and Capulets are here transformed into the Irish and the English with corresponding young lovers from each group. The real potential for tragedy if attitudes do not change is certainly one of the suggestions LeFanu intends to make in her subtly soft manner. Choosing to treat this issue in a comedy-romance accomplishes two things: The play speaks of LeFanu's hope that the Irish and English will not continue to operate under false notions of what each is based on prejudice that brings about death. In speaking her hope in such a creatively convincing and acceptable form, LeFanu may be able to reshape perceptions and, thus, shape the ultimate happy ending for which she holds out hope.

With the arrival of Captain Rivers, Ann springs into action with her devised intrigue. But before she can solidly convince the captain of FitzEdward's adopted identity, the truth almost emerges as the two men discover a common sympathy. Ann initiates the conversation that almost twists out of control:

> This gentleman has preferred being [Ruth's] amanuensis to a lucrative situation under Government in Ireland.
>
> Fitz. Though I have no objection to going to Ireland; which, after all, I believe to be a tolerable country; yet at present I certainly should prefer a situation in your family, Sir.
>
> Capt. R. Tolerable! it is a beautiful country, Sir, and worthy of its brave, its hospitable inhabitants.
>
> Fitz. You have seen it, Sir?
>
> Capt. R. Yes, Sir; and some day or other mean to revisit its green hills.
>
> Fitz. Captain Rivers, I shall be very glad to--. (36)

At this point, Lady Ann interrupts before FitzEdward can give himself away. Obviously, FitzEdward will do all he can to continue to speak well of his country; and Captain

Rivers' enthusiasm generates a spark of pleasure that almost forces from his lips the secret of his identity. Some secrets are better held in silence until ears are willing to listen to the truth. FitzEdward's question to the captain underscores the significance of experience versus blind prejudice. Since the captain has been to Ireland and finds the inhabitants "brave" and "hospitable," he is speaking what he knows rather than what he has been taught to believe.

As Act Two ends, FitzEdward departs for the Rivers home, Lady Ann fends off Captain Rivers' admiration, and Oddley arrives to take rooms from his old friend, the equally narrow-minded Mrs. Furbish. Now two characters who both claim a disdain for marriage, though not for the same reasons, are under the same roof, and the Irish gentleman who has caused such upheaval in an English family is about to take up residence under another guise with that same family. All is almost in place for the heightening of comedic conflict and the eventual conquest(s) that the playwright seems to promise.

Act Three begins with an ironically hilarious language act based upon the hidden identity of the Irish hero. Having accepted Lady Ann Lovel's introduction of "Milton," Ruth Rivers sets her prospective employee only one test. Having decided that she needs to have her new amanuensis write a letter of rejection for her to her niece, Ruth begins with an explanation: "It is necessary to premise, Sir, that though we are esteemed by the world a fortunate family, a very serious calamity befell us a short time ago; a niece of mine--" (43). At this juncture FitzEdward realizes early in the game that he will have to muster all his charming trickster nature and mastery of language to pull off the identity shift. The ignorance of Ruth to the truth and the cleverness of FitzEdward creates a wonderfully ironic comedy scene as the discussion of the assignment continues:

> Fitz. [Aside.] Now for it.
>
> Miss R. Married, I blush to think--I can hardly bring myself to

mention it;--such a perversion of taste;--such a degrading connexion;--she married--

Fitz. Perhaps a man of colour; and, Desdemona-like, "saw his visage in his mind."

Miss R. Oh dear, no, Sir; she--but not to keep you in suspense, she married an Irishman. (43)

Calling up another Shakespearian tragedy to confirm the earlier allusion about prejudice, love and wrongful death, LeFanu continues to play upon English sensibilities. In addition, the character speaking so haltingly and horrified with regard to one of her kin's marrying an Irishman is the same bright woman who earlier defended the rights of her gender to an equal place in the world's perception. Though many English audience members might not want to identify with Oddley, perhaps intelligent, upper class, progressive women would be gently nudged toward taking a look at themselves in the silly behavior of Miss Ruth Rivers.

As the dialogue continues, FitzEdward manipulates Ruth into voicing her self-pride and proving her cultural blindness:

Fitz. [Aside.] Poor me!--Is it possible?--But surely, Madam, that country is more civilized than you imagine?

Miss R. No, no, no; they can no more change their manners than divest themselves of the brogue; a yes, or a no--any monosyllable would suffice to discover to me an Hibernian.

Fitz. Certainly, Madam, it would be as difficult to deceive Miss Rivers's delicate sense of hearing as to elude her penetration:--no man could successfully impose upon either.

Miss R. I defy them;--but to the point. (43)

Of course, the exchange that has just occurred makes the point--the point LeFanu makes in her play, and the point that I am making in this analysis. Language and

identity are inextricably linked to perceptions of national identity. Ruth Rivers is certain that she can tell "an Hibernian" after the utterance of "any monosyllable," and the suggestion is that Irish utterances, in English markedly different from an Englishman's utterance, are as deplorable as Ruth seems (or suspects) to find Irish manners. That she is wrong about bias against Irish speakers suggests a wrongness of attitude toward not only Irish utterances, but also Irish behavior--in short, a wrongness in attitude toward the Irish. The Irishman who stands before her, passing for a highly educated Englishman, makes a fool of the prejudiced English woman. She is in no way superior to him, not in her speech, not in her hearing, and certainly not in her attitude.

Following the pointed exchange about language as an identity marker, Miss Rivers returns to what she thinks is the point of the conversation, the assignment for her new amanuensis. The irony of her ignorance becomes doubly thick as she lays out her charge:

> This poor deluded kinswoman of mine has written very humbly to me, to intercede with her father, and of course concludes that I will myself forgive her. Now, Sir, write in such a way as to cut her off from all hope; tell her she has as little chance of entering these doors as her Irishman; and that her father will not hear her name mentioned. (43-4)

Of course, the truth is that Miss Rivers is the deluded woman. And the hope that LeFanu builds into her play, the same one she holds for British society, is that the Irishman is in the house and in the presence of the English lady--physically, emotionally, and mentally because she has shared with him her feelings and thoughts without hesitation. At this moment, though prospective employer and employee, the two stand as equal human beings. With regard to post-colonial writing, Hutcheon notes, "On the level of language, irony becomes one of the chief characteristics. . . . Irony is thus one way of creatively modifying or even twisting the language so as to signal the `foreignness' of both the user and her/his experience" (163). Interestingly, LeFanu is employing irony

with a twist meant to reduce the sense of foreignness between Irish and English by providing experiential knowledge of one another minus the barrier of national knowledge and prejudice. The Irish gentleman keeps his silence about his identity only as long as is necessary to successfully destroy the false perceptions, but he delights in how well the plan is working. After Miss Rivers departs, FitzEdward begins to write, gleefully noting, "Upon my word, a very promising beginning--'To cut off all hope; no more, my sweet Emily, to be admitted into this house than your Irish husband.'--Well; be it so! Success to the shamrock, which will flourish even in an ungenial soil" (44).

A short but interesting scene ensues in which another case of mistaken perceptions is played out. Lady Ann uses her Irish cousin to teach Captain Rivers, her adoring admirer, a lesson in love. Disliking the captain's possessive tendencies and attitude about ladies, Ann employs the disguised FitzEdward to "conquer the disease" of jealousy in her otherwise promising beau (47). She refuses the captain's idea that she is a "lady," insisting that his meaning implies a nervous silliness of which she will claim no part. Instead, she coolly notes that she prefers to be rightly considered "the most rational woman of your acquaintance" (48), a fact that FitzEdward nobly supports to the chagrin and chastisement of the jealous captain. Because of the captain's misconception about FitzEdward's identity and because of his jealousy, the Irishman now seems to be rising above the English nobleman in the affections of Lady Ann, at least as the captain interprets the evidence of the scene. But appearances, and words, can be deceiving.

Soon the Irish gentleman finds himself involved in more deception for another lady's sake. He walks in upon a flirtatious moment between the wickedly playful Sir Frederick and young Mrs. Rivers. As Mr. Rivers enters, Sir Frederick slips into hiding. FitzEdward saves Mrs. Rivers' honor by keeping silent about the lothario and concocting a story about Mrs. Rivers' feeling faint when he came upon her. This story causes Mr. Rivers to join with FitzEdward in leading the lady to another room where she can get fresh air by an open window. And this opening allows Sir Frederick to make good his

escape. The significance of the scene is that it reinforces the idea that the true gentleman is Irish FitzEdward while English Sir Frederick is no gentleman at all, but an immoral and unfeeling cad.

When the scene changes to Emily's sudden arrival at Mrs. Furbish's, Patrick's comments provide another interesting opportunity for a post-colonial reading. After being told that her husband is not in residence, Emily requires an explanation from Patrick but becomes increasingly frustrated by his narrative mode. Patrick, recognizing her agitation, responds, "I crave your pardon, my lady; but I must tell my story in my own way, or, when I come to the middle, I shan't know the beginning from the end of it" (55). While the moment is humorous, the suggestion is serious. If the Irishman is not allowed to narrate his own experience in his own way, how will he understand the life that he lives? Patrick's remark is an appropriate comment on "his-story" from a colonized subject to a colonizer. Patrick's identification with his native country is undeniable and passionate. As he continues his story to Emily, he declares, "I would rather live in Ireland, if I was to die the day before I landed, than spend the remainder of my life in England" (56). He then informs his mistress that FitzEdward has gone off with "Lady--Lady--I never can remember them English names,--they have no sense in them" (57). The English manner of naming lacks significance for Patrick, as does the way in which an English lady would like an explanation given, as does England itself. Patrick's heart, his whole-being, cries out for Ireland and an Irish way of living. Based upon Patrick's rendering of the tale of her missing husband, an Irish telling that makes a mystery of the event, Emily decides to take a room at Mrs. Furbish's under the assumed name of "Belmont" until she can decipher what has occurred by calling upon the assistance of her brother, Captain Rivers.

Upon hearing what his mistress plans, Patrick provides another significant commentary that both uplifts the Irish and shames the English in a gentle comedic turn:

> Ah, do, Madam! A brother is a relation that sticks by one all one's life. There is a fashion in this country of marrying and unmarrying: I hope it will never come round to Ireland. Here a gentleman is your husband today, and to-morrow he is no relation at all to you. But your father's--that is, your mother's son, by your father--by my troth, he'll be a relation to you all your days.
>
> Mrs. F. Well, Patrick, inform yourself whether my brother be in London, and where I may find him. But be cautious; don't let it be suspected who you come from: and speak as little as possible, as the whole family have a prejudice against your country.
>
> Pat. More shame for them!--But how are they to know by my speech that I am an Irishman, now that I have lost my brogue? (59)

When conditions in Ireland forced many Irish to migrate to England, the English dialect they spoke was considered "a debased variety" (Bailey 29). However, in this dialogue, LeFanu has implied several points of shame that should strike home with the English and elevate the Irish, though the wound under cover of comedy is bearable. Not only should the English be ashamed of their national prejudice, they should also take note of their social weaknesses. Though most members of the Rivers family bemoan Emily's marriage to an Irishman as a fate worse than death, and indeed have allowed her to die out of the family for all practical purposes through silence and disinheritance, the English are the guilty ones when it comes to making bad marriages. The earlier scene of flirtation between Mrs. Rivers and Sir Frederick witnessed by FitzEdward and the audience, but not by Patrick, supports Patrick's notion. In Ireland marriage is for life; there is no divorce. The commitment is taken seriously, and the vows are sacred. Of course, the Catholic Church so abhorrent to the English is responsible for the state of Irish marriage. But in England, a past king set a precedent not only for papal disdain but also for dissolving marriages quickly. Thus, in the Irishman's eyes, the English have no sense of

commitment in love and marriage. This idea of English infidelity is also supported by Patrick's comment upon the parentage of a brother. The emphasis is placed upon recognizing a brother as one's brother because he is born of the same mother. No such confidence can be placed in the identity of an English father. Patrick's pauses and restructuring of the parentage issue--"that is, your mother's son, by your father," shows his doubt about English morality. No wonder he finds English prejudice against his country difficult to fathom.

Patrick must wonder by what right the English consider themselves superior? By accent alone? The implication that language has power over perceptions of identity again appears in Patrick's protestation and insistence that he, too, can pass for English. Of course, Patrick cannot be taken seriously on this point because his brogue is as much a part of him as his beloved country is a part of his living memory. In fact, Patrick's Irish brogue is likely so natural to him that he does not notice it any more than the English take note of their own accent. For both Patrick and some English, their own tongues are the normal pattern and everyone else speaks with an accent.

In the closing scene of Act III, Oddley's prejudices and proclamations of disinheritance come to naught as he is confused by a set of coincidences founded on shifting identities. Oddley inquires of Mrs. Furbish whether she knows of anyone of merit to whom he could give money, money he once would have given to his niece. With this move, LeFanu begins her redemption of even the English merchant, providing a balance of philanthropy to his greed. Mrs. Furbish tells Oddley of a young widow, Mrs. Belmont, who has just taken a room. Not wishing the receiver to know of his generosity, he allows Mrs. Furbish to make the gift for him. The secrecy that he advocates results in Emily, his niece, coming into the money that he thinks he has denied her. A short time later when Lady Ann enters the boarding house, Oddley sees her and mistakenly thinks she is the widow whom he has obliged. He is quite taken with her and completely ignorant of her true identity. Ann is the reason Oddley has threatened to disinherit his

nephew, the captain, should he be so foolish as to marry a modern woman. Imagine what Oddley would do if he knew Ann is an Englishwoman stained with Irish blood. Poor ignorant Oddley is outsmarted all the way round for the good of all.

Act IV opens with a muddle of messages. Patrick arrives at the Rivers' house and leaves a cryptic message with a servant named Jonquil. The written message, enclosed in an unsealed envelope, directs Captain Rivers to come see a certain young lady (meaning Emily) at Mrs. Furbish's. When Jonquil hears that Patrick is on his way to the post office, he asks the Irish servant to mail a letter addressed to Mrs. FitzEdward in Dublin. When Patrick departs, Jonquil is on the verge of inspecting the unsealed note intended for the captain when Mr. Rivers enters, catches him, and takes the note himself. Without the identity markers of names in the message, Mr. Rivers wrongly assumes that the message arranges a meeting between his wife and Sir Frederick, of whom he has grown somewhat suspicious despite earlier efforts on the part of FitzEdward to protect Mrs. Rivers' honor. Taking FitzEdward for sensible Melville[6] the amanuensis, Rivers decides to confide in and consult with the wise young gentleman. Upon hearing Rivers's concern, FitzEdward gains permission to talk with Mrs. Rivers on Mr. Rivers's behalf. Mr. Rivers declares to his disguised Irish son-in-law, "If you succeed in awakening her to the sense of her duties, you will secure my eternal gratitude--Gratitude!--my affection. My son will scarce be dearer to me" (70). Therefore, in this strange turn of events based on mysterious and misleading messages, the Irishman becomes spokesman for and son to Mr. Rivers, his English father-in-law. FitzEdward is on the verge of making himself indispensable to the older Englishman, as well as having become a person for whom Rivers holds real affection based on personality and performance, quite a shift from the prejudice against FitzEdward based on nationality minus personal experience.

Having won over his unsuspecting father-in-law, FitzEdward now works his wiles on his wife's aunt. Ruth enters and a scene proceeds in which FitzEdward so charms her and plays to her intellectual pose that she is ready to settle her fortune upon him rather

than her niece, who has made an "indiscreet match with that Irishman" (72). Along with her fortune goes Ruth's hand in marriage. FitzEdward holds off Ruth's amorous intent by insisting that she does not know enough about him--a clever truth--and that an explanation "may deprive me of your regard--nay, even your protection" (73). When Ruth responds, "Impossible, Sir!", FitzEdward springs a verbal trap into which the English woman easily falls:

> Fitz. Would Miss Rivers condescend only to bestow upon me a written avowal that she consider me worthy the honor of being connected with her family, would she deign to bless me with so precious a pledge of her approbation, she would confer upon me the only consolation, valuable in my eyes, should circumstances hereafter induce her to think her present kind intention impracticable.
>
> Miss R. I will do it instantly--but rest assured your fears are in vain--of any degrading action I am sure you are incapable, and the accidental disadvantages that may perhaps attend your birth or fortune can have no weight with me, when opposed to that nobility of soul--to that innate urbanity which so pre-eminently distinguish Mr. Melville from the degenerate race of modern days. (73)

By her own admission, never guessing FitzEdward's Irish identity, Ruth has erased any question of exercising prejudice. She has come to value the man according to his nature rather than his nationality, but now nationality cannot stand in the way if she is to trust her own experience.

After Ruth exits, Lady Ann enters and learns of FitzEdward's successes with the Rivers family. However, the captain enters in time to see FitzEdward kiss Ann's hand in thanks, an action that Captain Rivers mistakes for another form of affection. Gallantly protesting in the face of the captain's obvious jealousy, FitzEdward exits. Lady Ann then makes a loaded comment to her adoring English suitor: "The *words* are pretty enough,

but I don't like the *tune*" (75-6). Meaning that the captain's jealousy hinders his love suit, Lady Ann phrases the idea in such a way that now the English accent is implicated as the one that fails to please. To further muddle Captain Rivers's mind, Ann informs him that his uncle, Oddley, has succumbed to her charms, an idea he can scarcely credit before she exits, leaving him still mumbling over the mysterious "Mr. Melville."

Misread messages and hidden identities continue to abound when the scene switches back to Mrs. Furbish's boarding house. Emily declines the financial aid offered her by a gentleman via Mrs. Furbish. Then Patrick arrives and gives her the note addressed for her but which FitzEdward had intended would go to Dublin, missing her because he knew she would already be enroute for England. The note is, of course, the one written at the request of Miss Rivers. When Emily reads the letter of rejection written in the recognizable hand of her husband, she faints, sending the household into an uproar. Oddley ends up cradling the unconscious veiled lady in his arms. When he lifts her veil to discover her identity, his heart softens. When she awakes and begs his forgiveness, he relents upon seeing and hearing of her misery.

Once the reconciliation of niece and uncle is affected, LeFanu brings our attention back to the issue of language and Irish identity. Patrick enters with a shot of Irish whiskey intended to put life back into Emily. He tells the weakened lady, "Oh, faith, Madam, this is what you may call the cordial, some rale Drogheda usquebaugh that I got from my friend Felix O'Shaughnessy--but I am rejoiced to find you come to life of your own accord" (80). Upon hearing Patrick's accent, Oddley wants an explanation as to his identity:

> Odd. Who is that Irish fellow?
>
> Pat. How the plague do they all find out that I am Irish?
>
> Mrs. Fitz. A faithful, honest creature, Sir, my servant. (80)

While Patrick's looks or actions may not give him away, his speech always will. Upon further questioning from her uncle, Emily says that, while her husband was always kind

and good, upon her arrival she discovered that he had gone off with some lady and now she has this shocking note in her husband's writing breaking all ties. Oddley lays up FitzEdward's seeming inconstancy to "the volatile nature of his country" (81). However, Emily defends the Irish, declaring with all her strength, "I, Sir, have lived among the Irish, and have experienced from them such disinterested acts of kindness, such hospitable goodness--" (81). Oddley hushes Emily, worried at this outburst after her fainting episode. However, though quieted, Emily has provided a defense and had a definite effect upon her uncle. The act closes with Oddley tenderly regarding his once again beloved niece.

Act V opens with the required scene between FitzEdward and Mrs. Rivers carried out on behalf of Mr. Rivers. FitzEdward begs an interview with Mrs. Rivers so that he can communicate "something of importance" (82). When she resists, he lets her know that his communication will be in behalf of Mr. Rivers. Mrs. Rivers accuses FitzEdward of spying. The exchange that follows once again emphasizes the Irishman's skillful way with words:

> Fitz. No, Madam--Mr. Rivers reserves to himself the inspection of your conduct--I wish only to prove myself your friend.
>
> Mrs. R. Very extraordinary language this. Well, Sir--go on. (83)

FitzEdward pleads with her to avoid the "villain" Sir Frederick; and when she resists in the name of friendship, he asks her to test Sir Frederick. She exits to "find protection from insult" (84). In this instance, because of the young woman's innocence and her loyalty to friendship, FitzEdward has not been successful against the oily words and actions of Sir Frederick.

Emphasizing the power of language to shape identity, the words of Sir Frederick and the words of FitzEdward shortly reveal the true nature of each man to Mrs. Rivers as she overhears an exchange between them. After Sir Frederick makes little of the lady in question compared to FitzEdward's genuine praise of her, the Irish gentleman asks the

English playboy not to "trifle with a woman's peace, whose too tender friendship for you, is after all, her only folly" (85). Though FitzEdward's warning would shame most honorable men, Sir Frederick is disdainful: "Trifle with her peace!--Tender friendship--Fine sounding words, but they have no meaning in them" (85). Declaring that he will seek out the lady of the house to pay homage to the only part of her he honors, her beauty, Sir Frederick exits. Not only does this Englishman not understand words of honor, he himself is not an honorable man.

Upon the departure of her false friend, Mrs. Rivers steps forward and reveals her presence. Admitting her shame, she asks FitzEdward how she can repay him for restoring her to her senses. The following exchange again emphasizes the words and worth of the Irishman:

> Fitz. By using them, Madam, to your own advantage; by empowering me to tell Mr. Rivers, that in future your first friend will be he who can best value as well as merit your affection.
>
> Mrs. R. Say to Mr. Rivers whatever you think most likely to efface his suspicions; and be assured whatever you promise in my name, my future conduct will justify.
>
> Fitz. You gratify me more than I can express; and you will one day know, Madam, that I act from no sordid views; that I prize, dearly prize, your fame, and peace of mind.
>
> Mrs. R. You are a very singular being--there is a mystery, a meaning in your words I cannot fathom--who are you? (86)

By a skillful weaving of words, FitzEdward has managed to keep his identity a secret while revealing his nature and bringing Mrs. Rivers to a sensible appreciation of his worth. He has completely won over this English woman who is his mother-in-law and his wife's new stepmother. And in recognizing his value, Mrs. Rivers also makes a

connection between his unique personality and his way with words--a connection she does not fully understand as yet.

In the next scene, Mrs. Rivers proves the truth of her own declaration to FitzEdward by dismissing a surprised Sir Frederick, again with an emphasis placed on the power of language. During this episode, Mr. Rivers remains secreted behind a statue while listening to his wife. The words she earlier overheard have helped her reach conclusions about Sir Frederick that lead her to her own powerful employment of language as she reads the English cad clearly now and to his face:

> Sir Frederick, I have too long allowed you to use a language unfit for me to hear. . . . No more of these unmeaning expressions, I beg, Sir, as distant from your own feelings as repugnant to mine;--and be pleased to consider this interview as our last, except in general society. (88)

At this juncture, Mr. Rivers reveals himself and encourages the vain man's departure. Then the husband and wife reconcile, though Mr. Rivers worries because he is old enough to be Mrs. Rivers' father.

At the mention of her husband's daughter, Mrs. Rivers pleads,

> Let me, Sir, as the pledge of your future kindness, obtain forgiveness for that unfortunate daughter. Her trespass was venial compared to mine--ah, Sir, be lenient to her error, or I shall hardly think you can forget my own. (89-90)

Mrs. Rivers recognizes that her dalliance with an Englishman who only seemed to be a gentleman is far worse than an English girl marrying an Irishman. In this recognition of her own mistake regarding the truth about people, Mrs. Rivers places the English Sir Frederick far below the Irishman whom she thinks she has never met.

LeFanu, having scripted two reconciliations--niece and uncle, husband and wife--prepares the audience for another. Mr. Rivers, not quite able to do all that his wife asks at this point, nevertheless praises her for coming to her senses soon enough to avoid a

terrible entanglement. The lady passes the praise to "Mr. Melville" as the one responsible for opening her ears to the truth. Mr. Rivers speaks his own praise of the worthy man in a wonderful ironic bit: "Aye, Melville is truly a man of worth--had my unfortunate girl made such a choice, she would not need an advocate; I should take pride in acknowledging such a relation" (90). With the emotional and intellectual confirmation of the disguised FitzEdward's worth and with the sympathetic appeal for softening toward Emily, the situation is ready for the central reconciliation. Oddley enters and asks the couple to receive poor Emily, which they readily agree to do. Oddley, pleased at this reception and at the change in Mrs. Rivers, accompanies the others to tell Ruth of all that has transpired and to seek the further assistance of the "very wise" Mr. Melville (91).

In the meantime another revelation has occurred regarding an earlier confused message. Lady Ann and Mrs. FitzEdward having been talking in another chamber of the house, Lady Ann having cleared up the matter of the letter delivered by Patrick to Mrs. FitzEdward. Emily is assured of the true love FitzEdward bears her. Patrick enters, still worried about the mistake, yet vowing his truthfulness "which I never will tell you again, Madam, as long as I live, if you will but forgive me this once" (93). Of course, they easily forgive the well-meaning, honest servant who has only made a blunder of the head, as he puts it, and not of the heart. In this description of Patrick lies also the implication of an Irish servant who is more to be trusted than the slippery and lazy Jonquil who works for the Rivers family.

In the last scene of the play, all is revealed as the principals finally come together in one place. Having been won over by the wisdom of the worthy Irishman, displayed through his witty way with words, the members of the Rivers family and Mr. Oddley all bless the union between Emily and FitzEdward. FitzEdward, in a gentle aside to Ruth, admits, "We Irishmen do sometimes rob ladies, but it is only of their hearts" (97). Then he saves Ruth's pride by restoring to her the glowing but embarrassing letter she has

written about him. The most telling shift in perceptions occurs in Oddley who, surprised at his own change of heart and mind, admits, "I little thought I should have taken an Irishman by the hand; but your character, Sir, is of so peculiar a description--" (97). At this point the Englishman seems at a loss for words. Lest the audience assume with Oddley that FitzEdward is a particular anomaly when it comes to being Irish, LeFanu clarifies the point she is making about the Irish in general, universalizing her message about national identity, in the remaining dialogue:

> Fitz. Mr. Oddley, I accept your offered hand; but it is given to an Irishman: in heart, in mind, and, (would I could add) in virtues; and I hope in that dear native country, cordial hospitality greeting you on the shore, to make you soon relinquish your prejudices against the *Land of Bards.*
>
> Odd. Well, Sir, I begin to think I have been wrong to indulge a prejudice against the sister country. For your sake I will in future cultivate a more liberal feeling; but now I recollect, that tho' you Irishmen do sometimes run away with our women, you were never known to run away from our *enemies.* (97-8)

In this encounter, LeFanu manages to break down the class-conscious conservatism of the merchant and to place the Irish and the English men on the same side against whatever common enemies they might encounter.

It is the ending dialogue of the play proper that betrays the Protestant ascendancy view of Irish LeFanu. Patrick runs into the room to see his master and to seek his forgiveness. In forgiving Patrick's earlier bungling of the message, FitzEdward says, "Yes, my good fellow, this is a day of general amnesty, of harmony, of union" (98). In the following responses of each class representative we hear the slightly differentiating Irish views toward union, at least as perceived and freely shaped by LeFanu.

Pat. If the *Union manes* kindness to poor Pat, longlife to it! and may we fancy ourselves among old friends, though we never saw any of their faces before!

Fitz. Yes, my best friends are *here.*

To them I trust my cause,

Lost by their frowns, or gained by their applause. (98)

In the voice of the servant are heard echoes of doubt, but LeFanu uses Patrick's doubt--"if," "fancy," "though"--to motivate the wished-for behavior of the English. Here FitzEdward also becomes a male mask for the author, making her plea for equality and friendship from behind his words of praise. In the course of the play, LeFanu has taken the Irish and English from a position of estranged relatives who act like enemies to a position of intimate equality between individuals who behave like the best of friends.

Recalling that Tom Sheridan, not LeFanu, penned the epilogue, we may still find an interesting closing note in Sheridan's construction for the ending of his aunt's play. Lady Ann speaks the epilogue, beginning but then deciding against entreating "favour for the play"; as she says, "Critics, avaunt!--fastidious carping elves! / The Sons of Erin shall protect themselves" (99). She goes on to profess that the method of protection will be found in the persons of women and poets. Sheridan's ending note is appropriate for a play penned by a female playwright, and the sentiment is even, perhaps, prophetic.

The final question that remains in regard to LeFanu's perception of the Irish identity and how language played a part in that perception is whether she spoke from an isolated, individual view. In other words, did the Irish audiences of her time share her view of being Irish or the perception she intended to shape? From the reviews of Sons of Erin in Dublin upon its opening, no question remains as to the reception given the play by its Irish audience and, therefore, the cultural validity of LeFanu's view. The English may have preferred the drawingroom comedies of her brother, but the Irish adored the portrait of themselves provided by Alicia LeFanu. Sons of Erin opened at the

Lyceum in Dublin on Saturday, 27 June 1812. On Monday, 30 June 1812, The Patriot published a review of the opening. The lead quotes LeFanu's intention as spelled out in her advertisement for the play. The reviewer then speaks of the difficulty of accomplishing the specified goal because of "the *object* proposed by the author, and the *means* she has adopted for its attainment." The reviewer explains that the object set by LeFanu, to change the attitude of the English toward the Irish, implies a principle of prejudice practiced by the audience which might hinder acceptance of the play. The means of shifting perceptions about the Irish by using a "gentleman," according to this reviewer's understanding, implies an individual devoid of distinctive national traits (at least the negative ones) so that none of the soil clings to him but all of the taste.

After setting up the difficulty of LeFanu's attaining her goal, given her troubled object and means, the reviewer begins analyzing the play to demonstrate whether LeFanu does or does not accomplish her almost impossible task. The reviewer concludes that the play "does equal honor to the author," high praise from one who started out extremely doubtful. This critic describes the end of the play

> as satisfactory to the *feelings* of the parties, as it certainly proved to the judgment of the audience, who bestowed upon the performance of the SONS OF ERIN, or MODERN SENTIMENT, as it is aptly called, all the applause, to which in our opinion, its intrinsic merit entitled it. (Patriot 30 June 1812)

With regard to the brilliance of the writing in the play, the critic goes on to note that he would

> not hesitate to place [Sons of Erin] in the list of the legitimate offspring of the English Drama. In this decision, we do not feel ourselves to be influenced, either by private partiality or national prejudice. The language is every way worthy of the texture of the piece, generally correct, without laboured terseness, and light without the appearance of flippancy. The

> dialogue is marked by a chasteness of composition, which forbids the introduction of false wit and miserable puns, that form the miserable recommendation of those monstrous farces, that pass under the name of modern comedy. . . . Upon the whole, in short, the Comedy appears to us every way worthy of the sister of the author of the School for Scandal. (Patriot 30 June 1812)

A number of elements stand out in this portion of the review. Clearly the writer is well acquainted with the theatrical scene in both Dublin and London. The Sheridan connection is noted as a mark of praise. The idea that School for Scandal and Sons of Erin are exemplary dramas in the English theatrical arena is a bit problematic. However, the phrase the reviewer uses is "legitimate offspring of the English Drama." While the English Drama may have parented these Irish dramas, they are not equated any more than an individual grown to maturity is the same as the parent or even under the parent's authority. The connection here may be more telling than even the reviewer recognized. Sheridan and LeFanu do indeed write in English and, Sheridan especially, style their plays in the manner of English Restoration comedies. However, Sheridan advances the style while LeFanu changes the location and object of interest. In the changes that LeFanu makes, she also employs the English language in a markedly sophisticated manner for the purpose of dignifying the Irish identity. Refusing to fall into "false wit," "miserable puns," "flippancy," or "laboured terseness"--all English stylistics for expressing Irishness, LeFanu takes her language and bends it to her Irish purpose with pride and proficiency.

While the critic for the Patriot had only praise for LeFanu's script, he was not so generous in regard to the performance. He comments, "Of the performance we cannot speak, in the same terms of unqualified praise; it was, for the most part, greatly unequal to the demands of the piece." He does praise the actor portraying FitzEdward but also cautions him not to play the part too broadly in his attempt to play to "national partiality" for the Dublin audience. Following this caution, the critic singles out the

performance given of Patrick, the servant, as "an accurate, minute, and discriminating observation of real life." Evidently, the actor playing Patrick avoided playing his role broadly for the sake of a partial audience; or, as the critic's earlier comments upon farce indicate, a broadly played Irish servant would have had a negative effect upon a Dublin audience and, therefore, did not tempt the actor into such a betrayal of the character. The critic for the Patriot closes his review of Sons of Erin by saying "we look forward to [continued performances] with feelings of interest" so that future casts' "efforts to do justice to [the script] will improve" since first performances are always difficult.

Joseph LeFanu, Alicia's husband, was also a bit unsatisfied because of what he considered a slight but significant injustice toward his wife that resulted from another review. In a letter from 1 July 1812 to "Dearest William," Joseph writes,

> You probably have seen . . . [illegible] of Saturday's performance in Monday's Freeman's Journal, which in general is unexceptional enough, but contains one mistaken . . .[illegible]; namely that in the Piece there is little originality of character. The fact is that FitzEdward, Lady Anne Lovel and Oddley, are strikingly new; so are Mrs. Rivers and Sir Frederick, being personages which, only twenty years ago did not exist in society under the form or with the colouring given to them in this comedy:--even Patrick, common as Irishmen are on stage, is exceedingly different from any that have yet been produced on it.--Now, as you will have full time between this and Saturday, I entreat of you to put something in Tyrell's Paper to do away that false and unpleasant idea.

Though Joseph LeFanu was not entirely pleased with the review of his wife's play in the Freeman's Journal, the critique, aside from the slight question Joseph felt it raised as to the originality of the characters, was overwhelmingly favorable. Noting the "distinguished" reception given by the audience at curtain, the critic agreed that the play "afforded us unqualified pleasure" and provided the "most meritorious and interesting

performance of the day." His highest praise was for LeFanu's script, which he described as full of "genuine wit" and "a fine expressive portraiture of the absurdity and injustice of English prejudice." Like his colleague at the Patriot, this critic was also struck by LeFanu's use of language. According to him, the play's "language is pure, appropriate, and when the occasion demands it, eloquent." Judging by both Dublin reviews, LeFanu's play received both popular and critical acclaim. The community's response to Sons of Erin seems to have been unadulterated enthusiasm for the Irish portrait provided by LeFanu.

Because the audience received Sons of Erin enthusiastically, LeFanu's play seems to have accomplished what she intended. The Irish audience, regardless of greater national affiliation with England or Ireland, was well pleased with the portrait of the Irish people, from the gentleman to the servant. LeFanu had successfully spoken her defense of the Irish as a people equal in worth and dignity to the English. Given the attitudes, dialogue, and actions of the characters, one might even walk away from the play with the distinct impression that the Irish are in some ways superior to the English--less prejudiced and more tolerant, wittier, and capable of greater love. However, in the person of the wise and helpful English lady, Ann Lovel, LeFanu's script does not allow for such national prejudice to arise on the part of the Irish and in opposition to the English. To do so would not only be dangerous but hypocritical. In an Ireland ruled jointly by the English, and with the greater authority still in the hands of the English, an Irish playwright could not get an audience that included Anglo-Irish and English members to sit still for such abuse of the English. Additionally, if LeFanu were to succeed with her message of equality, she could not bring one side of the equation down in value. Rather than negate the English, she succeeded in elevating the Irish to an equal status in her play, a dramatic accomplishment to which the politicians of her day were not equal.

Notes

1. See Landon, Michael de L. Erin and Britannia: The Historical Background to a Modern Tragedy. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1981. "Chapter 10: The Unhappy Union (1800-1922)" provides insight into the personalities and problems involved in forming this difficult alliance, with pages 225-227 speaking specifically to the initial formation.

2. In addition to the LeFanu play treated herein, two other plays that provide insight into the language/identity problem and which merit treatment are False Alarms; or, My Cousin (1807) by James Kenney and Florence Macarthy; or, Life in Ireland (1823) by Michael Bryant. Both had successful runs in London but evidence as to perceptions of Irish audiences remains hard to locate.

3. "Anglo-Irish" refers to descendants of Protestant English settlers from the time of Henry VIII forward rather than to the "Old English" Normans who were Catholic and merged into the Irish culture more easily and willingly.

4. All letters excerpted in this chapter are included among the LeFanu Papers, National Library of Ireland, Dublin.

5. LeFanu's script identifies FitzEdward in his role as amanuensis first as "Milton" then later as "Melville." Which name may have been used in performance or whether the mix up is intentional--his psuedonym unimportant to FitzEdward and the English family paying little attention--remains uncertain.

CHAPTER THREE

DION BOUCICAULT: A REBELLIOUS LAUGH AT SOCIAL BARRIERS

Moving forward from Alicia LeFanu's Sons of Erin written during the first generation under the Act of Union, we come to the midpoint of the Victorian era and the theatrical reign of Dion Boucicault. According to my theory, fifty years away from the defined point of language dominance, Irish writers should be evidencing an increasing frustration with the loss of language and the repression of identity. The historical context has not changed much in fifty years, another reason for growing frustration. Under English dominance, the Irish accent identifies a speaker as socially inferior. Though one might not be English, one should strive to sound English in order to achieve economic, political and social success. LeFanu's wishes for the Irish as voiced in her advocacy play have not come to pass; the Irish are feeling increasingly rebellious. Rebellion surfaces most dramatically in the Fenian Revolt of 1866, but rebellion can also be heard in the lines of Irish melodramas. The literary rebellion at this point is an unusual mix of nationalist sentiments and comically rendered caution, both born of cynicism about English response. During a European theatrical love affair with melodrama, Dion Boucicault masters the melodramatic form and makes it indigenously Irish with his comic touches. Laughter has long been a mechanism for coping with conflict, a solace in suffering. Based upon Boucicault's three most famous Irish plays, with a detailed look at The Colleen Bawn (1860), I argue that Boucicault, as the dominant Irish theatrical voice of his generation, cloaks rebellious nationalist sentiments

--sentiments which are marked by an increasing consciousness of class and religious divisions--in highly comic melodramas that effect a kind of double-speak typical of an occupied nation hostile to the occupiers.[1] The Irish audiences identify with the Irish characters and enthusiastically support the portrait of Irish life, one which was sure to spur their own nationalist sympathies. The English audiences seem oblivious to the nationalist tone, merely appreciating the entertainment value of the production.

Having established the historical context for Boucicault's writing, I would like to turn my attention to providing a theatrical, and thus cultural context, which will elucidate the why and how of Boucicault's stylistics. Unfortunately, until recently the works of Boucicault and other Victorian melodramatists had been dropped from the academic literary canon for reasons chiefly political. Peter Thomson asserts,"Our understanding of melodrama has been blurred by literary snobbery. It is not an inferior nineteenth-century form merely because it was a popular one. On the contrary, it supplied an essential (and acceptable) antidote to the drabber aspects of Victorian respectability" (6). With regard to the critical appraisal of such non-canonized works as the nineteenth-century melodrama, I agree with Loren Kruger's analysis that "the leisure habits of dominant classes tend to be universalized as taste, art, or theatre, while those of subordinate classes or groups are merely entertainment or potentially unruly behavior" (10). Therefore, Boucicault might hold the public's hearts but his works could not crawl over the barrier of class-conscious literary canon builders. As Kampf and Lauter point out in their introduction to The Politics of Literature (1972), "high culture propagates the values of those who rule and therefore helps to maintain current social arrangements" (8). When literary anthologies were being compiled and classroom canon established at the end of the nineteenth century, the English were still an imperial world power. I suspect that most English scholars involved in building those canons would not have been likely to turn to literary evidence of imperial oppression for a contributing critical voice. The reason for such an omission is not easily assessed, though omission may be the best

way to describe the absence rather than attributing the absence to an agressive decision to keep these voices out. Literature and literary criticism were, and are, reflections of the culture from which they spring, though they may help to provide a new cultural shape for the next generation. Or, as Kampf and Lauter note, "Criticism gave expression to and articulated the ideologies for those forces which determined what was culture, and what was not" (43). Melodrama spoke to and about the masses of people who had no power in the current cultural structure; therefore, dramatic literature with such popular appeal could not be considered high culture by any standards. In every way, melodrama seemed to belong in the margins with people of marginal influence. Of course, this elitist attitude in the age of marxist, multi-cultural, and post-colonial concerns and theories is being questioned and reevaluated with a resulting revitalized interest in melodrama.

The question that needs to be answered here, if we are to appreciate Boucicault's melodramas as significant literary and cultural contributions, is what is melodrama. John McCormick comments on the significance of melodrama, "To many people 'Melodrama' is simply bad drama. To the most historically minded, it is the most important dramatic form of the nineteenth century. There are two ways of looking at melodrama: on the one hand in the strictly historical sense and on the other in terms of its dramatic impact" (5). McCormick records that melodrama could be recognized as "a distinct genre" around 1800, evolving from "alternative theatre" in France and England (5). For a people on the margins of society where political power was concerned, the alternative theatre provided in melodrama seemed a natural expression of their social conflict. Irish theatres quickly turned to this alternative form, but not before French and English dramatists had already recognized the central place of the Irish in such a social play. In "Notes from the Exhibition" on Boucicault mounted by the Irish Theatre Archives, theatre historians point out,

> The "Irish" play was essentially a 19th century phenomenon, whether performed on the Dublin stage, the London one, or the American one.

> The Stage Irishman has a long tradition, with "Teague" as an object of ridicule in most cases, and always the "comic" character. A stock company in the early 19th century always included an actor to play Irish roles. (Burke 30)

Not all Irish would find the representation of themselves in European and American melodramas as positive, to say the least. However, the Irish dramatist who would become the ruling melodramatist of his age would change the nature of the Irish rogue, a character who would come to be identified with the writer/actor himself. In commenting on Dion Boucicault's first attempt at an Irish play, The Colleen Bawn, and his reworking of the Irish character, Burke says,

> Boucicault transformed Griffin's cardboard characters and, drawing on Samuel Lover's Rory O'More (1837--a role originally played by Tyrone Power, but also by Boucicault himself in his early days at Brighton), developed Myles into a character going well beyond the traditional stage Irishman. The heavy emphasis on the comic also changed the traditional balance of romantic melodrama and ultimately opened the way for a truly indigenous Irish drama. (Burke 34)

Historically then, Boucicault came from the right kind of place--a colonized country--to write melodrama; and he added his own historical bent to the form.

If the melodrama, and Boucicault's rendering of it, are to be considered historically important, then, as McCormick suggests, we should look at the dramatic impact of the form. Though popular with audiences, the melodrama is faulted by Raymond Chapman, author of The Victorian Debate, and others like him for being "trivial in content" (332). Boucicault, as the master of melodrama is, therefore, considered by many academics to be merely the master of mediocrity. However, neither the art of melodrama nor the work of Dion Boucicault is artistically inferior or socially empty.

A number of critics now recognize the importance of both melodrama and Boucicault's contribution to the form. As Frank Rahill asserts,

> Certainly the form is important enough to justify more attention than it has received. On the basis of sheer bulk it cannot be ignored. . . . It dominated our Western theatre for prolonged periods and throughout the [nineteenth] century virtually monopolized the spoken stage of the popular theatre. (xiii)

He goes on to insist, "Many excellent plays were written under its banner, plays which stand up today quite as well as anything done in more pretentious genres during the same era" (xiv). Even Chapman contradicts his earlier claim when he admits that though poetic drama could not seem to "interpret imaginatively the society from which its audience was drawn" (332), melodrama "was not lacking in social awareness or in the capacity for adaptation" (335). There was imaginative interpretation of society taking place in the theatre, and the form it took was melodrama. Of Boucicault, Chapman writes that he had "a liveliness of wit and dialogue together with the ability to look clearly at his own age" (339). Thus, Boucicault provided the theatre with the powerful social commentary that the poetic dramatists failed to produce. Melodrama has a great deal to say about the oppressed peoples of the Victorian Period, and in the hands of Boucicault the genre reached artistic levels which critics could not fail to recognize.

Given the social significance of melodrama, its ability to speak to and about its audience, why would melodrama be so neglected from the turn of the twentieth century, when literary canons were being constructed for classroom anthologies, until recent years? The real reason for repression of melodrama is hinted at by Chapman. "The theatre was said to be an excuse for unruly assemblies . . . it was full of worldliness; it showed things that might corrupt the young and inflame the passions of the mature" (335). Melodrama is inflammatory. If an audience listens to what lies beneath the laughter and sees past the surface sentimentality, it may grasp what Frank Rahill in The

World of Melodrama calls "the social implications of the genre, forged in the fires of revolution" (xvii-xviii). Rahill provides insight into the social impact of melodrama through his analysis of the form. He explains,

> Melodrama, in its dramaturgic apparatus of a villain-heroine conflict, a persecution plot with a happy end, and a raisonneur, inherited from the theatre of Diderot an almost perfect instrument for propaganda--an apparatus contrived indeed with that very end in view. During the nineteenth century this instrument was pressed into the service of innumerable crusades: national patriotism, anticlericalism, abolition of slavery, prohibition, and even tax and prison reform, to name only a few. (Rahill xvi)

Choosing such a literary document as a melodrama as a source of information on Irish notions of identity is not out of line, according to Rahill, who suggests that "melodrama gives us a fresh perspective on nineteenth-century life and affords an insight into popular feeling which cannot be had from any of the familiar source materials of history" (xvii). Rahill's extended commentary about why the melodrama is a culturally significant document with regard to marginalized voices supports my own reading of Boucicault's Irish plays. Rahill observes that melodramas

> are especially valuable for revealing the tastes and opinions of the inarticulate. . . . Cut off . . . from participation in the determination of their destinies and denied normal avenues for self-expression, they seem to have turned to theatre and adopted it as a sort of substitute franchise and a vehicle for the criticism of life. . . . In the plots of melodrama, its choice of heroes and villains, and its resounding tirades can be read resentment at the insolence of authority and the heartlessness of greedy wealth, . . . a sneaking admiration for a bold and hearty rogue, and a persistent taste for blood--and along with this a staunch fidelity to

> orthodox morality and an optimism which can only be described as incorrigible. . . . Melodrama, springing as it did from the people, speaks with their voice and is impressed with their image. . . . The little people, harried and hunted, despised and cast out, rise in their might and crush their oppressors to the earth. (xvii-xviii)

If Rahill is right, and I think he is, then the melodrama may have had a certain popular appeal based on entertainment value alone; but it also fired the imaginations of many in the audience with ideas of a social upheaval that would free them from the bonds of their oppressors. No wonder common people found melodramas so appealing.

One method of dampening revolutionary material is to claim it as part of the status quo. This is what Michael Kilgarriff, editor of The Golden Age of Melodrama, accomplishes. He claims that,

> Want, harsh working conditions and miserable wages, rapacious employers and extortionate landlords should have given the great British Unwashed a more healthily unsubmissive attitude to the ruling elite. . . . [The] melodrama conspired to keep us in thrall. . . . was rarely intentionally propagandist . . . and helped to perpetuate our British way of life with all its hypocrisies, its unction and its snobbery. (14)

Here, I wish to contradict Kilgarriff's treatment of Boucicault, showing that Boucicault was a playwright opposed to the very snobbery that Kilgariff claims melodramas uphold. Is Kilgariff perhaps accepting the English view of melodrama and missing the double-speak? Perhaps, but how does one account for Kilgarriff's awareness that "Boucicault's social conscience occasionally led him onto thin ice" (314)? Kilgariff also credits Boucicault with being "the one man who raised the genre almost to the level of an art form" (312); yet he admits, "I have deliberately chosen not to include . . . Boucicault's better pieces" in his anthology of melodrama (316). In his defense, Kilgarriff cites space as his reason for leaving out the best of Boucicault's melodrama. But can it be

acceptable scholarship to knowingly create an anthology of inferior works which will serve to uphold long-held prejudices? I cannot believe so, and thus I find myself in opposition to Kilgarriff's views while supporting the claims of Rahill that melodrama is a vehicle of propaganda for social revolution.

However, I am able to side with both detractors and admirers of melodrama when I single out Boucicault as the master of the genre. I will allow the criticism of Kilgarriff to make the case. Kilgarriff writes, "Boucicault was an absolute master-craftsman; his dialogue is taut and the construction of his myriad pieces shows a consummate flair. He was highly individual, stylish and inventive, despite the undeniable fact that hardly anything he wrote was entirely original" (315). Of whom is he speaking? Boucicault or Shakespeare? Kilgarriff continues,

> He was an instinctive writer whose comedy retains its effervescent sparkle and gaiety and whose plots are laid out with an unerring sureness of touch. Literature and fine writing did not attract him; he was fundamentally a man of the theatre and man of his time. In short, Dion Boucicault was a hack--but the very best hack that the melodrama ever produced. (315)

When I examine Kilgarriff's description, the case is clear. A writer who creates unerring plots, taut dialogue, and effervescent comedy in a highly inventive style does not deserve to be called a hack. Such literary snobbery repressed the melodramas of Boucicault, an Irishman who spoke for his people. However, since recent scholars are willing to reconsider the significant contribution of melodrama, then Boucicault's time may have come again. As Rahill asserts, "Boucicault was probably the greatest of the classical melodramatists, certainly in English, and he was nearly the last, passing in 1890 from the scene he had done so much to enliven" (192).

Who then is this incomparable Irish melodramatist? Born in 1820 or 1822 in Dublin to Anna Maria Darley, sister of poet George Darley, and wine merchant Samuel

Smith Boursiquot, Dion's parentage was always somewhat suspect. Anna Darley and her husband had separated the year before Dion's birth. Dr. Dionysius Lardner, graduate of Trinity and multi-faceted scholar, was boarding with Mrs. Boursiquot at the time and was certainly Anna's lover. Given that accessibility, and the fact that the child was named after him and received financial support from him up to adulthood, not to mention bearing a striking resemblance, Lardner was more than likely the father of Dion. Though Anna Darley Boursiquot came from a respectable family, and was even related to Arthur Guinness, she was viewed as tainted after the birth of her child. Not only had she given birth to a likely illegitimate child whose real father never married her, but also her estranged husband died under questionable circumstances, having fallen or jumped out of a hotel window when confronted by another jealous husband (Krause 14-17). Coming from such a merchant class family with such shady areas in his background could not have been easy for young Boucicault. Growing up amidst these shadows, Boucicault was well situated to feel himself caught in the middle of a melodramatic social struggle.

As quite a young man, Boucicault decided to strike out on his own. In 1836 while at school in Brentford, he had performed his first role. In 1838 he decided to make theatre his career, changing his name to Lee Moreton for a time in order to further his acting career. In 1841 Boucicault wrote his first theatrical hit, London Assurance, which played at Covent Garden, London. Having achieved fame and acclaim by the young age of 21 or 19, depending on which birth date is correct, the budding playwright took himself to France to learn more about his trade. When he returned to London, he had returned to using his own name but with a new spelling. From this point on, he would be known as Dion Boucicault (Thomson 356, Krause 19).

Thus it was that an Irish playwright named Dion Boucicault brought the house down at the Adelphi with his play The Colleen Bawn in 1860. For decades this play would hold the record as the biggest success in London. Even Queen Victoria noted in her journal that she had been thrilled by the "celebrated melodrama" (Fawkes 121-2).

In literary and theatrical circles everyone knew the name "Boucicault." A century later few scholars have heard of the prolific playwright whose career stretched from 1836 to 1890. Yet, as Rahill points out,

> No melodramatist at all comparable to Pixerecourt appeared in England until after the death of that French pioneer, and when one did appear he proved to be not an Englishman at all but an Irishman with the extraordinary Gallic name of Boucicault derived from a Huguenot ancestor. Dionysius Lardner Boucicault's plays, his ideas, and his projects were ubiquitous from the middle of the century onward; two continents felt his influence, often profound, as actor, adaptor, stage director, manager, and regisseur. He invented the first fireproof scenery; originated the terms "sensation scene" and "sensation drama" and brought to perfection the sort of thing they were used to describe. (182)

Though quantity is not necessarily an indicator of quality, the scope of Boucicault's work is indicative of an active artistic talent whose whole adult life focused upon the creation of vital drama. Boucicault has been identified as author, adaptor, translator, or play doctor for over 250 scripts. Over fifty of these seem to be original plays with Boucicault as the sole author (Thompson 358). Robert Hogan, Irish literary scholar and drama critic, in his Twayne series book on Boucicault tells us:

> Boucicault spent fifty active, arduous, and often brilliantly successful years in the theater. He was for much of this time one of the best-known and most out-spoken authors, actors, and managers in the English-speaking theater. His ideas, methods, and innovations were noted with respect . . . .Among the literary men, Mark Twain, Bret Harte, Charles Reade, and Oscar Wilde--to mention but a few--sought out his opinion or his aid. Indeed, there seems such an endless amount of testimony that one hardly knows where to begin or what to select from the seemingly endless number of often fascinating details (97).

One fascinating detail about Boucicault's work is his attitude toward the monied and non-monied classes. Having grown up with a working mother, having worked to acquire a certain degree of wealth yet quickly losing whatever he managed to gain, Boucicault understood money problems. His social sympathies lie with those who are the "have-nots." Politically, Boucicault was not concerned with delighting the Ascendancy class, rather his plays were for the pleasure of the working class (Brown 12). He wrote a highly successful play focused on "poor people in wretched slums" with a sensational climax featuring a tenement house going up in flames, the poor attempting to escape, and an actual fire engine rushing onto the stage (Krause 24). As the play toured Europe and the United States, he would change the title and make minor changes so that the drama would correspond with the city wherein it was playing. Though originally titled The Poor of. . .(insert place name), when the drama played in London and Dublin, Boucicault changed the title to The Streets of. . .(insert place name), to avoid offending the residents of those cities. Boucicault was well aware that this script was simply a money-making pot-boiler, yet it enjoyed revivals for many years (Krause 25).

Of course, for Boucicault, dealing with social and economic barriers means dealing with problems of nationality as well, for to be Irish in the English empire meant to be inferior and usually poor, unless the individual was a member of the landed Anglo-Irish gentry (and even they were losing their lands and money) or working in conjunction with the English (thus considered informers or traitors by the Irish). Indeed, Boucicault's best plays, in terms of literary merit, are three Irish plays that treat the problem of class. In these three plays--Colleen Bawn, Arrah - na - Pogue, and The Shaughraun--Boucicault draws literary sketches of the Irish peasants and their problems with the English ruling class, as represented by the military and the Anglo-Irish ascendancy. In these comedy-melodramas, Boucicault has been considered "most Victorian" in his treatment of hero and heroine while he seems "least Victorian" in his treatment of the peasants, especially the clown-rogue (Krause 36). These peasants were

not willing to waste away passively until their weary lives were ended; they fought back with what little they had--their wits and disregard for any authority outside of the individual, the clan or the church (usually in that order).

Nationalist themes and positive Irish characterization are central to Boucicault's dramatics. Shavian scholar Ivor Brown comments that Boucicault "wrote skillfully to satisfy Irish sentiment" and describes his theme as "the drama of native insurrection in which the English appeared as villainous oppressors" (12). Looking at the plays as the product of an illegitimate Irishman trying to become successful on the English stage, one might more easily see why Boucicault cloaked the seriousness of his subjects in rollicking comedy. Much like Anouilh when producing Antigone in Paris during the Nazi occupation, Boucicault had to get his message across without offending the ruling power. Both men succeeded by virtue of cleverness: one cloaked his message in the re-working of a classic; the other cloaked his in unassuming comedy-melodramas. Boucicault managed to illustrate the barriers that existed between social classes without condemning any of the groups. However, for those who wanted to protect the image of upper class English society, Boucicault's works might be a problem. Carl Wittke in The Irish in America claims that Boucicault deserves "a place in the history of the American theatre . . . [because his] plays pleaded the cause of the Irish nation and attempted to prove to the world 'that England lies when she brands Ireland as a nation of whiskey-drinking, fight-loving vagabonds'" (255). Loreto Todd credits Boucicault with being the forerunner to the founders of the Irish national theatre. He points out the poetry and peasantry combined in Boucicault's work, noting, "Dion Boucicault in The Colleen Bawn (1861), Arrah na Pogue (1864) and The Shaughraun (1874), had changed the stereotype of the stage Irishman from feckless rogue to courageous and charming hero" (70-71).

Dissatisfied with English characterizations and determined to give audiences a new view, Boucicault's plays call into question the authority of the English to shape the image of the Irish. Maureen Waters in The Comic Irishman tells us that

> authority in Ireland . . . was seldom a laughing matter. . . . There was an enormous gap between those in power and those who were powerless. Even in the nineteenth century the landlord could turn a tenant out of his home or raise the rent at whim; there was no recourse before the law. (7)

While authority may not have been a laughing matter, Boucicault made audiences laugh at those in authority. Waters writes, "Boucicault's rogues . . . have considerable contempt for civil law and are quite skillful in avoiding or manipulating most forms of authority" (8). Boucicault's rogues also take charge "when the conventional hero begins to falter" (40). Therefore, while the representative of English upper society appears inept in Boucicault's plays, the Irish rogue masters the situation.

Boucicault turns the tables on authority figures by dislodging old prejudices. One of his primary tools and targets is language. He turns the Irish brogue from a mark of "ignorance and poverty" into an asset (Waters 52). Waters praises Boucicault's use of the brogue but has difficulty understanding other aspects of his dialogue. She writes:

> In Boucicault's plays the values attached to standard English and to Irish English are curiously reversed. The speech of the peasants is not only comical, but witty and imaginative, while that of the upper classes . . . is devoid of resonance or feeling. Most of it is so bad that it reads like camp: "Do you know the place where these ruffians resort?" . . . . It is very likely that no conscious judgment was involved, that Boucicault simply failed to create plausible upper class characters (though he succeeded in London Assurance); the consequences nonetheless modified public attitudes toward the Irish countryman. (53)

I question Waters' conclusion that "no conscious judgment" was made by Boucicault with regard to the speech of the upper class in his Irish plays. As she points out, he is perfectly capable of creating accurate upper class characters and dialogue, and does so in his English comedy, London Assurance. Would he suddenly lose this ability? I do not

think so. Rather, a plausible alternative to Waters' view is that a conscious effort on the part of Boucicault makes the upper class English sound empty in his Irish plays because he is working to glorify the Irish sound.

According to renowned actor Cyril Cusack, "The style of acting required for Boucicault drama, by no means easy to analyse, may be sensed on the theatrical value of the dialogue" (3). Cusack speaks with some authority, having played the role of Conn in The Shaughraun at the Abbey in 1967. Cusack writes,

> Boucicault's central figures emerge from a fundamental recognisable reality. Furthermore, they inspired a brand of selfless patriotism, all but banished from our time, here and there, indeed, favouring the "felons of our land", the Fenian on the run, but flavoured with a twinkling of roguery to confound the oppressor, the informer and the "gombeen" man. (3)

As has been pointed out, the stage Irishman had long been a traditional character in the English theater, but Boucicault put a new twist on the old telling. In an article for the North American Review in April 1889, Boucicault set forth the following as a "test of a dramatist's merit":

> There is only one stern question and true test that can be applied to the dramatist or the actor, if we would determine the quality of his talents: what characters has he left as heirlooms to the stage and dramatic literature? He can materialize to the future in that way alone. (qtd. in Krause 38)

If this definition can be accepted as a criterion for determining the value of a playwright to literary history, then Boucicault passes his own test. For, as Krause tells us:

> It is in his creation of this distinctly Irish yet universal character--as Myles-na-Coppaleen, Shaun the Post, or Conn the Shaughraun--that Boucicault finally transcends the Victorian world. And it is part of this triumph that Irish drama as we know it today had its origins in Boucicault. (13)

While Boucicault was creating an Irish national hero on stage in the person of his witty and formidable Irish rebel rogue, Boucicault himself was performing some acts of roguish rebellion, not only in his dramas.

It is a wonder that critics miss the political implications of Boucicault's work, especially after a stunt he pulled prior to performances of The Colleen Bawn. Having written a pamphlet called "The Fireside Story of Ireland," Boucicault decided to hand out his version of history to a ready-made audience. Considering that The Colleen Bawn is the chief document upon which I base my analysis of Boucicault's encounter with language and identity as an Irishman, I consider the pamphlet a supplementary document, almost an addendum to the play, a detached prologue. Therefore, I offer an analysis of the pamphlet to set the stage, as indeed it must have when it was handed out prior to the performance, for our understanding of The Colleen Bawn.

In "Nationalism on the Dublin Stage," Molin and Goodefellowe record:

> Nothing he touches on would surprise anyone familiar with Irish history. The only surprising point is the energy of his denunciation of the English. If one knew nothing of Boucicault's success on the English stage, he would read the pamphlet as the straight-out work of an Irish patriot. . . . Boucicault distributed it at [an] English production of The Colleen Bawn . . . . A reviewer for The Illustrated London News "duly dismissed [it] as an advertising trick which must be condemned by all who believe that even in advertising good taste should be displayed by educated men". The remark seems typically English of the time, with its reference to good taste as a counter to Fenian interpretation of Irish history. (137)

Molin and Goodefellowe are right to question the English critic's evaluation of what is good taste. Much like the conventional attitude toward melodrama, this critic's social position might make suspect his analysis of the Irish playwright's action. What is not open to question is Boucicault's attitude toward England's involvement with Ireland.

However, before the reader could be shocked by the passion of Boucicault's historical version, the writer made some attempt to distinguish himself as objective and authoritative on the matter of Ireland. On the inside cover of Boucicault's political history of Ireland, a note reads:

> TO THE READER
>
> THE FIRESIDE STORY OF IRELAND pretends to be no more than a brief, perspicuous exhibit of leading events, compiled textually from the best authorities, in their own language, compressed to bring this little work within prescribed limits. These authorities are, the Journals of Parliament; Swift's works; Macaulay's "England;" Burke on "The Popery Laws;" Scully on "The Penal Laws;" Froude's "English in Ireland;" Lecky's "Eighteenth Century;" O'Connor's "History of the Irish Catholics;" Plowden's "History of Ireland;" Carte's "Ormond;" Spenser's "State of Ireland," and others.

By identifying his sources, Boucicault demonstrates the breadth of his reading and thoroughness of his research, evidence used to support his fiery conclusions. Also, Boucicault demonstrates an early appreciation for the test Gayatri Spivak says every post-colonial writer must pass in order to avoid nostalgia and be taken seriously (254); Boucicault has returned to the documents of the colonizer and the colonized to interpret history. In addition, from even this introductory note, can be heard Boucicault's appreciation for what it means to allow someone to write and speak their story in "their own language."

In "The Fireside Story of Ireland," Boucicault begins on a particularly interesting note for post-colonial critics who question how history is defined and who is doing the defining. Boucicault opens, "Let me tell you the story of Ireland. It is not a history" (1). He defines "history" as "biographies of . . . kings," whereas Ireland "has no such royal backbone" (1). Boucicault explains that pre-conquest Ireland consisted of "independent and frequently hostile tribes" loyal only to the chief and occasionally

forming a confederacy to defend against invasion. He also declares that the only way Ireland could be truly conquered is "by total occupation and subjection" (1). Because he claims "that was not done," we can assume that he considers himself to be writing about and from the viewpoint of an unconquered people. He goes on to say that the only way to tell the story of Ireland is to divide it by the "efforts of the Irish race to regain their country" through "bloodshed," a cycle of events to which he refers as "Reigns of Terror" (1). Perhaps like LeFanu before him and Yeats and Friel after, Boucicault thought resorting to the pen to take on the oppressors might be both preferable and more powerful than "Reigns of Terror." Certainly he makes no pretense of recording history, rather he knows he is telling a story; and the story he tells is Ireland's story, not England's.

Having designated the difference between royal England and tribal Ireland, in Section II Boucicault distinguishes between clan and citizen mentality, claiming the citizen mentality has a Latin rather than Celtic base and focusses "one great artificial value--the love of commonwealth" (2). He sees this as distinctly different from "our modern Gothic sentiment, patriotism, into which the love of the native land enters" (2). As Boucicault puts it, the Roman citizen did not have the Gothic attachment to native soil because Rome "overflowed into all countries, and confounded them all in one Roman citizenship" (2). In any case, Boucicault discounts the English claim to Ireland by leaving them out of the beginning of Ireland's story.

As Boucicault moves forward to bring England into the Irish story, he makes of England the perpetual cause of Ireland's inability to unite. According to this Irish writer, the horror of the resulting Ireland evolved from a struggle between the clan and citizen principles that was never allowed to play itself out to the creation of a mature state because of Britain. Here British Empire, led by England, takes a beating from the pen of Boucicault. He writes of Ireland, at once keening for his country and blasting the English power structure,

> Her story will show that she has been denied the education every other people has enjoyed; that she vainly besought leave to earn her own livelihood, but that was refused. She pleaded either to be governed, or to be allowed to govern herself: her prayer was rejected.
>
> Thus like an untutored, ragged Cinderella, she has been confined in the out-house of Great Britain. Her story will appear to you unparalleled in the history of the human race. (Fireside 2)

Boucicault's view that Ireland's situation is unparalleled is directly connected to his placement in the center of imperialism, a victim of tunnel vision because he himself felt trapped in the tunnel. In that position, one can hardly worry about who is trapped in other tunnels, being too busily involved in trying to dig oneself out.

Beginning on page one and continuing, Boucicault refers to the English invaders from the reign of Henry II in a term associated with a dominant language act coming from the mouth of lawmakers. He calls the English "filibusters." This seems to be a recognition of the power and manipulation of words yet the weakness of the English to totally conquer the Irish. The session will one day come to an end and the filibuster will be over. In addition to the legal/language act, might Boucicault choose this term because he knows what it means to occupy a stage, play a leading role and hold the audience captive in the confines of the theatre? I think his experience at holding the stage, and the lives of the audience, temporarily may well provide the fitting metaphor that he has chosen. Regardless, both aspects of the metaphor work well, another evidence of Boucicault's masterful way with words, especially in speaking of his own social masters.

Once Boucicault has established the ancient past of Ireland and England's villainous role in stopping her growth to maturity, he turns his attention to how the English effect their domination of the island. In Section III, Boucicault divides the story of Ireland into four parts:

1. pre-Henry II
2. Henry II-Tudor Reformation
3. Protestant Ascendancy to rebellion of 1798
4. 1800 Act of Union to present [1860s]

In one sense, my literary analysis of the Irish story of language and identity takes up where Boucicault leaves off, though in chronology only, not in manner. I am clearly writing about part four and part five (establishment of Republic/Northern Ireland to present).

As Boucicault begins his discussion of the English ploy for dominance, he brings up the issue of religion. He points out that until Henry II brought the Irish church under papal influence, the Irish Catholic Church had, for six centuries, remained independent of both Rome and politics and coexisted peacefully with clans, as well as contributing much to the advancement of civilization (not Roman) at home and abroad. Boucicault then recounts how between Henry VIII and William III the Irish people were ordered five times to change their religion according to the whim of the current British monarch. Because Ireland was not willing to change religions according to shifting political winds, as Boucicault writes, with each change England "put Ireland to the sword" and visited upon it "penalties so cruel as to be almost incredible" (4). In this section can be heard the increasing anger over social divisions based upon religion. In each case where religion is used to thwart the Irish, Boucicault sides with the Catholic Irish. In a particularly prophetic paragraph, Boucicault ends Section III with insinuations of the bloodshed to come:

> Modern historians seem to regard these proceedings as the natural and proper punishment inflicted on a turbulent race for ungrateful and undutiful conduct towards a benefactor. They seem to consider that England has received a divine mission to impose prosperity on such peoples as she chooses to bless with her government, her religion

> (whatever it may be), her laws, her habits and her institutions. She found her mistake in the United States a hundred years ago: she found it lately in South Africa. (4)

In Section IV Boucicault writes about a variety of "grabs" the English made in order to keep their hold on Ireland. The word "grab" designates an illicit hold. Boucicault explains,

> The spoilation of Ireland was effected in three grabs.
>
> There was *the church grab*, which transferred the property of the Irish Church to English proprietors.
>
> There was *the land grab*, that transferred the estates of the Irish chieftans [sic] and proprietors to English filibusters and favourites.
>
> There was *the office grab*, for, when there was no more land to divide, the revenue of the country, the civil and military offices, the whole patronage of the government, was divided amongst English adherents and adventurers. (5)

Boucicault goes on to say that the Normans who made the first land grab "adopted" the Irish ways so completely, even the name changes (De Berghs=Burkes, Le Boutiliers= Butlers), that they became "more Irish than the Irish" (5).

This complete immersion into the Irish culture on the part of the settlers leads to the first legislated attempt by England to squelch the Irish culture. That attempt is known as the Statutes of Kilkenny. As Boucicault explains, "To arrest this conquest of the conquerors a statute was passed in 1367, declaring it high treason for any Englishman to marry an Irishwoman or to put out an English child to nurse. It was forfeiture of life and lands to speak the Irish language, or to follow Irish manners or customs" (5). This law set the stage for the study that I am now undertaking. From 1367 on language and life are connected; language death then means something ominous for the Irish unless they are able to learn how to make the new language their own.

Boucicault plays up the violence of these acts by following with an explanation of the "Pale," a boundary that enclosed a space of land within four counties set aside for the English. Boucicault writes, "Within this fence no Irishman was allowed to enter: if found there, he was killed, and a reward was paid for killing him. At length it became a pastime to make forays beyond its lines into Irish Ireland, where they shot or strangled the wild natives" (5). Certainly, given his consistent tone, we can hear the satire dripping from Boucicault's "wild natives," especially when we turn to the commentary that immediately follows: "The records of the period relate how the young English lords went out to have a little killing for amusement, a day's shooting amongst the human game which infested the lands beyond the 'Pale'" (6). Boucicault drives home the point that the Irish were treated as animals worthy of slaughter, as a disease that had to be routed.

Following his description of these first legislated acts of violence against the Irish, Boucicault records how the English civil wars (York vs. Lancaster) caused the English who had not become Irish to return home, leaving the now "nationalized" forty Norman lords to completely avow their Irishry and take back the "Pale" in conjunction with Irish chieftains. The Lords of the Pale, however, calling themselves the Parliament of Ireland, gave Henry VII, when he turned his attention back to Ireland, the right to approval of all legislation through the English Privy Council in London. Boucicault declares, "This badge of slavery is the Magna Charta of Ireland. It was so regarded by England for four hundred years, and was held to be a sacred bond even until 1782, when it was repealed. It was replaced in 1800, by the Act of Union, which practically has effected the same results" (6). Obviously, for Ireland to be joined with England, at least to Boucicault, means slavery for Ireland beneath England's dominating hand.

In Section V, Boucicault turns his attention to the "second land grab," an "indiscriminate plunder" (6). Boucicault writes, "The English soldiers left unpaid were encouraged to help themselves; their leaders seized estates; half a million of acres so occupied were subsequently confirmed to the robbers" (6). His attitude toward these

English usurpers differs clearly from his recognition of the Norman lords as Irish who mistakenly surrendered power to Henry VII. Boucicault proceeds to detail "outrage" after outrage as he tells of England's attempt to destroy the Irish and make Ireland English. These outrages include betrayals by English guests of their Irish hosts, individual murders, and grisly massacres. When the killing took too long, Boucicault claims, the land was purposely "ravaged" to produce starvation (7). One overwhelming account puts the number of Irish dead from starvation at 30,000 in a six month period in Munster alone.

After a litany of gruesome accounts, and the added note that Irish could no longer own any land but only labor for the English, steal or die, Boucicault declares, "These were the features under which the Protestant religion first presented itself to the Irish people. No other attempt was made to convert the population. The sword and penal laws were the apostles of reformation" (8). Clearly, Boucicault equates English barbarism and oppression with Protestantism. His tone conveys violent anger toward Protestantism, which corresponds to deep sympathy for Irish Catholics. This is all the more notable in that his own background is Protestant, but, like with his position in the family, he seems doomed to feel himself a bastard. English Protestants filled both his theatres and his native country, but his heart filled for his Irish Catholic compatriots. His English success combined with his personal sympathies must have made for an interesting dilemma if not a moral conflict.

In Section VI, Boucicault records how Ireland first moved toward the current divisions of the southern Republic and Northern Ireland. During the reign of James I, "Six counties in Ulster were declared forfeited to the Crown, and a million and a half acres constituted the third land grab" (9). Boucicault details a non-stop move to take all land, an attempt politically justified after the rebellion against Charles I since Ireland had supported the Catholic king. Now all Irish lords also had to forfeit lands, an amount of two-and-a-half million acres. In effect, the whole of Ireland was "put up at public

auction" and bought by wealthy Englishmen. Rewards once again were employed for dead Irish, from every level of Irish society. So, the heads rolled off and into bags for English pay. And when the sword, the noose, and fire were not fast enough, "Famine was again employed in the cause of extermination" (10). Boucicault claims, "When the war ended, out of a population of one million and a half, six hundred and sixteen thousand had perished" (10). By any standards, the Irish loss was quite a holocaust. Boucicault ends this section of his pamphlet with a structure parallel to the ending of the preceding section, but with one addition:

> These were the features under which the Puritan form of the Protestant religion presented itself to the Irish people. During this period an important settlement of English Puritans and Scotch Presbyterians had been made in Ulster. Derry and Antrim were their strongholds.
>
> From this settlement dates the great disunion which still subsists between the North and South of Ireland. (10–11)

Associating the Ulster settlement with the land grab, Boucicault links the Protestant religion to the horrors of starvation and murder visited upon the Irish by the greedy English government. Thus, the nationalist/unionist conflict finds a historical place to lie down in the hotbed of religious difference. Boucicault's attitude toward nationality and religion are demonstrably different from the attitude voiced by Alicia LeFanu fifty years earlier.

Boucicault also has a somewhat different view of the Irish Parliament than LeFanu seems to have had, based on LeFanu's letters. In Section VII, Boucicault describes "the office grab" that took place once the lands were completely controlled by the English, William III having completed that feat. As Boucicault explains:

> The Irish government was to be wholly composed of English officials. The Irish parliament, consisting of three hundred members, was to be wholly composed of English Protestant settlers. The English House of

> Commons enacted that no Catholic could sit in the Irish parliament. . . . To secure a Protestant government in its ascendancy, and the entire subjection of a native people, the penal laws were passed. At this time it was estimated that the Protestant population, including the Presbyterians and the Puritans, was in the proportion of one to fifteen. (11)

Boucicault never considers that an English Protestant settler could be considered "Irish" or that any Irish could have accepted Protestantism. His Irish identity is clearly and completely Catholic. The Norman lords who practiced not only Irish ways but Catholicism were "Irish." Later settlers were English or Scottish Protestants with no mention of Irish Protestants.

Boucicault goes on to detail how all worth and means of livelihood were stripped from the Irish Catholics. The English demeaned the Irish in the following ways: they denied the Irish voting rights; excluded them from corporate, military, and legal systems; deprived them of the right to arms of any sort; and, of course, allowed the Irish to own no land. All Catholic clergy were banished under pain of death. At this point, Boucicault notes that any Irish converting to Protestantism gained rights. His final line of this section is self-revelatory with regard to his own playwrighting: "The servitude and abject subjection of the children of Erin to the British Pharaoh is so inborn, both domestically and politically, that the boldest statesman and philosopher of this day fears to approach English prejudice on this question" (13). Did Boucicault see himself as Moses, a child of unknown parentage and the beloved adopted son of the rulers who turns the situation upside down by becoming the spokesperson for his real people? Possibly, but regardless, the clever allusion does seem to work when we consider Boucicault's Irish plays and the voice they give the Irish especially in light of this political history he distributed at performances.

In Section VIII Boucicault digresses to give a sordid account of the financial practices of English kings. Though this portion does not have the power of the other

sections, Boucicault's concern for the economic situation--his own and his country's--clarifies the reason for his focus on this small piece of the Irish story. Boucicault gives details of pensions doled out by English kings from the time of James II to their mistresses, bastards, and special friends. According to Boucicault, the pensions provided to the mistresses and bastards alone "absorbed one-sixth of the Irish revenue" (13). He particularly condemns a scheme of one mistress, the Duchess of Munster, to coin money known as "Wood's pence," after the hired ironmaster. The scheme backfired in Ireland, and Boucicault faults "the extravagance of a prostitute, and, what was worse on this occasion it was an old and ugly one" (14).

In Section IX Boucicault continues his economic story. He details trade restrictions that England placed upon Ireland in an attempt to kill profitable European and colonial markets so that England alone would profit, all Irish goods being shipped via English ships to England, and all imports to Ireland having to come from England. Thus Ireland's sheep and agriculture trade was extinguished, and "Ireland was forbidden to own sea-going ships" (15). One can, of course, predict a rash of smuggling, as Boucicault's plays illustrate. In this ninth section, Boucicault also explains the uniting of Roman Catholics with Ulster Puritans and Presbyterians against the English oppression. According to Boucicault, penal laws directed against these dissenters created the first emigration to America, and "a fervent hatred of English oppression" caused many of these emigrants to become involved in the colonial rebellion that led to U.S. independence (17).

Section X begins as a summary of history, but fails to make clear the Act of Union. Boucicault explains that with England embroiled in war with the American colonies, Spain, France, and Holland, and fearing invasion via Ireland (some Irish ships sailed under American colors), England sought a partnership with Ireland. Irish patriots in Parliament, led by Grattan, pushed for legislative independence with the only bond being a common sovereign. England gave in and the Irish constitution of 1782 was

adopted. But eighteen years later, in peacetime, Boucicault claims England "provoked" a rebellion and the Parliament, with a majority of nominees tied to "5 great landowners" (19), gave the country back to England. Boucicault does not provide answers to questions that arise from his reading of this historical event: How did such a Parliament evolve after the 1782 victory? And, how did England provoke the conditions that led to capitulation?

As Boucicault's "Fireside History" draws to a close, he brings his discussion of Ireland right up to his own lifetime. In Section XI, Boucicault considers the Rebellion of 1798 and the five years of "the smoldering fires of rebellion" (19). He discusses O'Connell's attempts to reverse the Act of Union and the corresponding law enacted to make political discussion of Ireland in Britain's Parliament treasonous, the law under which O'Connell was imprisoned. He speaks of "unavoidable" concessions regarding religion, meaning Catholic emancipation and disestablishment of the Church of Ireland. In Section XII, he mentions contemporary Irish parliament members' attempts at obstruction. Then in Section XIII, Boucicault claims that, unlike in Queen Elizabeth I's time, Victoria's England, through famine and law, have successfully been able "to root out the Irish from the soil" (22), and that Ireland now exists in the U.S. This comment explains why Boucicault will finish out his own life in New York. In Section XIV, the final section, Boucicault writes, "my task is not to comment: it is simply to record. I lay the story of Ireland before the English people, as an indictment against the governing class. I do so in the spirit of the statesman" (23). The dramatic language Boucicault has used in writing of Irish history is both an indictment and a personal commentary.[2]

Having established what I hope is a helpful historical, theatrical, personal, and political context through which we may read Boucicault's plays, I turn now to the dramatic text to discover how Boucicault looked at the link between language and the Irish identity. Boucicault had a political agenda which flew in the face of English society, and his political overtones can be heard in the language of The Colleen Bawn.

Boucicault's The Colleen Bawn first saw production in London in 1860, a time when Irish was still an illegal language in the schools of Ireland. Growing up in an Ireland dominated by the English obsession with class, Boucicault could not escape the British "belief that we signal class by grammar, vocabulary and perhaps above all accent" (Grillo 151). That he would use his language limitations in an English dominated world to make comedy his tool of subversive revolt is not odd. As Krause puts it,

> People who live as slaves often fight back with their only weapons, ironic attitudes and loaded words; so it is not surprising that the Irish peasants, in literature as in life, displayed a mastery of guile and comic rhetoric as their only instruments of self-respect and self-preservation. (Dolmen 40)

As an Irishman trying to make a name for himself in the theatrical world, Boucicault took a risk in treating the question of language dominance in Ireland. However, his risk was a calculated one. He cloaked his message in comedy, trusting the English to laugh at the rude Irish, trusting the Irish to sense his true sentiments. To call The Colleen Bawn a simple melodrama is to dismiss the reason for its power and its popularity among English and Irish audiences. If we examine this play, we can see that Boucicault has constructed a play which resembles a Gothic Romance in atmosphere, character, and plot. However, blended into the Gothic Romance is a discussion of language in the form of a Byronic satire with a message for the Anglo-Irish society.

Gothic Romance was the perfect genre for Boucicault to choose in order to woo a mass audience. Gothic novels were popular with the reading public and easily adaptable to stage.

> Gothic novels have frequently been criticized for being sensational, theatrical and melodramatic . . . . these three words ought not to be taken only as adverse criticism, for they exactly describe the peculiar quality and the contemporary appeal of Gothic fiction. Gothic techniques are essentially visual in their emphasis on dramatic gesture and action and in

> their pictorial effects, giving the reader an experience comparable to that of a spectator at the theatre. (Howells 16)

The Gothic novel translated easily to the stage via melodrama. As Kilgariff notes, "Melodrama's essential melancholy and Gothic romanticism were exactly suited to the moods of that strangely dark and passionate age, the nineteenth century" (11). In fact, Boucicault was adapting a novel, The Collegians by Gerald Griffin. Griffin's 1829 work was based on a grisly murder he had covered as a reporter in Limerick in 1819. His version is "a serious, and rather tedious, attack on the current social conditions in rural Ireland . . . . Boucicault omitted the moral preaching . . . and instead concentrated on action and character" (Fawkes 116).

In Boucicault's written and stage version of The Colleen Bawn, he created the atmosphere of a Gothic Romance. The family castle threatened with ruin, the churchyard meeting place, the dangerous cliffs, the dark cave, the lightning-filled storm--all are there to elicit the correct feeling from the audience (Thompson 7, Howells 5). For the chilling murder scene, Boucicault had a set constructed with a lofty darkened cave and transparent stage "water" made of blue gauze. When Eily, the heroine, sank beneath the waves and Myles, the peasant rogue who loved her, "dived" from the cave's mouth to try and save her, it was a sensation (Walsh 80-81).

But it is not atmosphere alone which makes for a Gothic Romance; also needed is an "anxiety-ridden" love affair which leads to "flashes of passion and violence" (Howells 5). Here too Boucicault's play is in keeping with the genre. Hardress Cregan, a member of the gentry, has secretly married Eily O'Connor, a peasant girl. Responsible for saving the family castle from financial ruin, Hardress is publically bound to marry Anne Chute for her money. By night the guilt-ridden young man rows across the lake to visit his young bride, who is kept in the cottage of his man-servant's mother. A passion equal to the one felt by the lovers is that of the demented servant for his master. Desiring to save his master from ruin, the servant decides to kill Eily. Hardress is left

until the end to agonize over his responsibility for the horrors which have occurred. In keeping with Gothic fiction, Hardress must deal with

> problems of personal moral responsibility and judgment, questionings of restrictive convention, and a troubled awareness of irrational impulses which threatened to subvert orthodox notions of social and moral propriety. (Howells 7)

Hardress Cregan's character, rather than truly representing the husband involved in the Irish murder case, fits the pattern of a Gothic hero. "Romantic Gothic deals with the tormented condition of a creature suspended between the extremes of . . . love and hate--and anguished by an indefinable guilt for some crime it cannot remember having committed" (Thompson 3). Hardress loves Eily but hates her peasant background which is clearly evidenced in her manner of speaking. Not willing to make his marriage public and actually contemplating dissolving it, Hardress holds himself responsible when he mistakenly believes Eily has committed suicide. Of all the individuals that people the story, Hardress Cregan

> is the most complicated character. He is the character who most fully contains some real contradictions. He is torn between his West Briton, Anglo-Irish background and his love for the Irish-Irish Eily. . . . Hardress at times [feels], if not a contempt, at least a shame for Eily and her background. . . . Hardress has a dilemma which comes not from the finagling of the plot, but from contrary desires in himself; and, when a playwright draws such a character, he is heading in the direction of art. (Hogan 85)

Hardress works in a double way on nationality. In one respect, he is a resident of Ireland but not Irish in the way that Eily is; yet the English audience will not identify the almost-villain as English because in their minds he is Irish. On the other hand, to the "Irish-Irish," Hardress can be recognized as little more than English. His attitudes are

distinctly English. Or, are they? Is not Hardress the conflicted Gothic hero unsure of his identity? It is Hardress' ambiguous identity that creates his conflicted soul and the near tragedy.

The character who doubles for Hardress to act out his darkest unspoken desire is Danny Mann. Providing a combination of the monstrous Other and the slavish servant of Gothic tales,

> Danny is a really black role. . . . Boucicault [gives] a hint of dark psychology here, of the blighted being, the hunchback. A bald and pure melodrama would show such a character as a study in motiveless malignancy, but Boucicault's every touch is to humanize Danny. Like Hardress, Danny has his human contradictions; he is conscious of right and wrong, but his fidelity to his master overpowers his conscience fairly easily, and there is only something of a balance in his deathbed scene. There we get a kind of racking agony because of his awareness of the contradictions pulling at him. (Hogan 86)

The "hint of dark psychology" comes through in physical description and action. As Howells observes,

> Though [Gothic writers] always insist on the powers of feeling and imagination they tend to concentrate on external details of emotional display while leaving readers to deduce for themselves complex inner psychological movements from such evidence as a "certain wildness of aspect" or a "settled paleness of the countenance." (15)

Boucicault depends on external details to betray the psychological turmoil taking place in Danny. While looking for Eily, the hunchback meets his own mother. She worries, "Danny, you are as pale as milk, and your eye is full of blood . . . . Faith, it isn't yourself that's in it, Danny" (Boucicault, "Colleen" 79). When Danny arrives at an arranged meeting with Eily, she has no reason to suspect trouble; she believes he is coming to

bring her to Hardress. Yet she exclaims, "How pale you are!" (Boucicault, "Colleen" 81); and coming to the wrong conclusion, she insists, "Come, Danny, lean on me. I'm afraid you are not sober enough to sail." He responds, "Sober! The dhrunker I am the better I can do the work I've got to do" (Boucicault, "Colleen" 82). Danny does not want to do the monstrous deed he is going to do; rather, he is compelled by his warped feelings for his master. In this character portrait, Boucicault implies that slavish loyalty to the Anglo-Irish land holders is a madness that borders on criminality.

Everyone in the play feels strongly about Hardress, including the two heroines, Eily the peasant and Anne the heiress. These two females also fit the characters in a Gothic Romance:

> Clearly, idealization and repression go together in the heroine; to be angelic . . . is only the romantic side. . . . the other side of which is the condemnation of woman to a passive role in which she can be sacrificed by society for sexual and economic interests. As there was little if any initiative she could take, she was forced to be negative and out of her inhibitions to construct a convenient fictive world of fragile sensibility and self-deception. . . . the Gothic heroines glory in their sufferings as proof of their angelic natures and their "patient resignation to the will of Heaven." (Howells 11-12)

Both Eily and Anne allow themselves to be placed in sacrificial positions for Hardress' economic interests. Eily will keep their marriage a secret. Anne will marry her troubled friend to save him from financial disaster, despite the fact that she loves another man. Both deceive themselves into believing that Hardress is a good man worthy of such a sacrifice.

Luckily these two sacrificial lambs are characters in a Gothic Romance rather than a Gothic Tragedy, so they will survive right up to the "happy ending."

> Constantly threatened by emotional and physical assault, [the Gothic heroine] is so delicately elusive that she deprives aggression of its reality and her sufferings impinge on her no more than the events of nightmare. Her experiences in no way lead to the growth of her self-awareness or a modification of any of her attitudes; at the end she emerges with sensibility intact, even if on rare occasions physically violated. (Howells 9)

In Boucicault's The Colleen Bawn, Danny's attempted murder of Eily provides a nightmarish scene; and her disappearance makes Hardress' waking hours a nightmare. However, at the end of the play, Eily, having been saved by Myles, reappears at the critical moment. She clears Hardress of the murder charge and receives the love and admiration of both her husband and her mother-in-law. With the marriage of Hardress and Eily publically confirmed, Anne is now free to marry Kyrle. Neither woman has changed in attitude toward her true lover, nor does she change in any way personally; and both women emerge physically unscathed. At times faulted for giving the story a "happy ending," Boucicault was maintaining the tradition of the Gothic Romance.

However, in The Colleen Bawn Boucicault has created more than a romance full of horror and thrills. Hogan recognizes that

> There is a hint, just a hint, of a real theme in the dilemma facing Hardress and Eily. There were two classes of people living in Ireland -- the people of the Big House and those in the whitewashed hovel. Boucicault never honestly comes to grips with this theme, however; instead, he resolves his problem by a happy ending and a marriage. In other words the theme is romanticized as, indeed, the whole picture of Ireland in this play is. . . . A real-life marriage between an Eily O'Connor and a scion of the Big House, in which love conquers all and topples over the social barriers, is the most hopeless romanticism. (87)

I would argue that Hogan is asking the play to be something it is not--realistic. I believe that the hint of the theme is played out in the form of a Byronic satire. Richard Fawkes also mistakenly believes that Boucicault has removed the "social criticism" by adding levity and a happy ending (116). Townsend Walsh gives Boucicault a little more credit. "By comparing the novel with the play, we form a higher estimate of Boucicault's genius. Although inspired by Gerald Griffin, it showed considerable freedom of invention and a large fund of originality" (75). From the "Fireside" pamphlet and the play these critics still do not seem to get Boucicault's point.

Even the advertisement for the play should help steer a scholar of Irish literature toward an alternative reading. The announcement for the production hinted at why Boucicault imaginatively changed the source story.

A New Play By

DION BOUCICAULT

> Ireland, so rich in scenery, so full of romance and the warm touch of nature, has never until now been opened by the dramatist. Irish dramas have hitherto been exaggerated farces, representing low life or scenes of abject servitude and suffering. Such is not a true picture of Irish society. (qtd. in Walsh 74)

If Boucicault were going to get his message across and pack in the audiences, he could afford to offend neither the English nor the Irish. A realistic telling would have been too much for the English to stomach, and it would not have helped to lift the Irish in the eyes of either society. His best bet was to change the murder story into a romance with Gothic elements and layer the satire in such a way that a discerning audience would receive the entire message while being entertained.

By mixing satire and romance, Boucicault was following in the footsteps of Byron. Boucicault and Byron both dealt with similar stylistic problems. Beaty explains Byron's approach to satire:

> To succeed as a satirist Byron needed to resolve the conflict between romanticism and realism, . . . establish his own ethical norm, . . . and strike a balance between personal involvement with and detachment from the targets of his satire. . . . The determination to be truthful and realistic is opposed to an apparently natural inclination to be fantastic and romantic. . . . these two seemingly antithetical principles remained in unstable balance throughout his career, permitting satire and sentiment to exist side by side. . . . By the time of Beppo and Don Juan, satire and sentiment was [sic] so subtly blended that it is sometimes difficult to extricate one from the other. (3, 5-6)

Boucicault purposely blended satire and sentiment in The Colleen Bawn. In a letter to Marie Bancroft, he described his play as a "domestic drama, treated with broad, comic character. . . . A sentimental pathetic play, comically rendered" (qtd. in Hogan 79). Though sentiment is usually associated with melodrama, Boucicault raises it to the level of the Gothic with pathos. But as obvious from the author's own words, his focus was on the comedy he had created.

For both Byron and Boucicault there was method in this mixture of genres, but many would fail to grasp the intent. Bernard Blackstone confirms, "The wit was enjoyed, but the 'philosophy' was deprecated" (270). Blackstone also claims, "This translation of the tragic into the comic mode is indeed the major achievement of the [Byronic satire]" (278). Linda Hutcheon's comment on irony, the central tool of satire, provides additional insight into why Boucicault would find such a style useful. Hutcheon observes,

> irony becomes a popular rhetorical strategy for working within existing discourses and contesting them at the same time. Its inherent semantic and structural doubleness also makes it a most convenient trope for the paradoxical dualities of . . . post-colonial doubled identity and history.

> And indeed irony (like allegory . . .) has become a powerful subversive tool in the re-thinking and re-addressing of history by both post-modern and post-colonial artists. (154)

Frederick Garber defines satire as "a mode of censure whose purpose is not only to ridicule absurdity but to show the way to a better order" (294). Beaty writes, "Byron possessed the essential attributes that distinguish the satirist--a strong sense of the comic and a refusal to tolerate wrongs. . . . Moreover, some of his poetical comedy shows him to be a master of the purely ludicrous" (3-4). In constructing his satires, Byron exercised dual purposes:

> the desire to wreak vengeance for a real or imagined wrong done to him and the desire to improve society by exposing to public shame its follies and vices. . . . Byronic satire is indeed at its very best when personal and social motives bolster each other in blended equipoise. (Beaty 4-5)

Boucicault, like Byron, harbored a personal and social message in the midst of the romance, horror, and comedy. The satirical message in The Colleen Bawn is there to be heard by those who will hear, and the message lies within the language--literally. The problem of language is at the heart of Boucicault's personal vendetta and his social statement about what determines a person's status in society.

In his choice of satirical subject, Boucicault stays in line with Byronic satire, whether he associated the style with Byron or found simply that it suited his needs. In the Preface to cantos 6-8 of Don Juan, Byron equates the way one speaks with the state of one's soul. He recognizes that false modesty makes a facade of words but that "what is underneath is vicious and messy" (Garber 270). "The Preface, it seems, is as much about language as it is about society, and it is as much about language and the order of self as it is about the relation of language to social and moral order" (Garber 271).

In The Colleen Bawn language is about the relation of language to the self and "to social and moral order." In Boucicault's portrayal of Ireland, personified in Eily and

Hardress, language separates the classes. Hardress is ashamed to make his marriage to Eily known, setting in motion a number of plot complications. Is he ashamed of her poverty, her looks, her personality? The answer lies in the dialogue. Language is the barrier Eily cannot overcome; it is the evidence of low breeding which Hardress cannot endure in his secret wife. In Act I, scene 1, Hardress admits his love for Eily to his mother:

> HARDRESS: . . . Well, mother, now you know the cause of my coldness, my indifference for Anne.
>
> MRS. CREGAN: Are you in your senses, Hardress? Who is this girl?
>
> HARDRESS: She is known in every fair and pattern in Munster as the Colleen Bawn--her name is Eily O'Connor.
>
> MRS. CREGAN: A peasant girl--a vulgar barefooted beggar.
>
> HARDRESS: Whatever she is, love has made her my equal, and when you set your foot upon her you tread upon my heart. (56)

But has love made Eily Hardress' equal? The fact that she is a peasant does not stop him from openly admitting his love for her to his mother. However, though he has admitted his love, he cannot bring himself to admit the marriage. What causes his hesitancy on this point? He speaks the reason after his mother exits. "What will my haughty, noble mother say, when she learns the truth! how can I ask her to receive Eily as a daughter? Eily, with her awkward manners, her Kerry brogue, her ignorance of the usages of society. Oh! what have I done?" (57) At the center of his concern is the way in which Eily indicates her low class status through her language.

In The Colleen Bawn, Boucicault satirizes language as a social barrier. In dealing with social barriers, Boucicault acted as a forerunner to Shaw in his realization and portrayal of language as an indicator of class and therefore a barrier (Krause 30). Eily, the colleen bawn, speaks in the Irish dialect, much to the dismay of her secret husband, Hardress Cregan, a young man of the Big House whose family is now penniless but has

lost none of its false-pride. Hardress cannot imagine making his bride public, especially when it comes to introducing her to his mother; besides, he may be able to rebuild his fortune if he can get out of his secret marriage and manage to unite with real money in the person of Anne Chute. Interestingly, Boucicault champions not only the poor Irish, but he also seems to be ahead of his time in his treatment of the sexes, as when Anne proves her inner nobility by using the Irish dialect at tender moments and when recognizing the nobility of common Eily and the falseness of well-mannered, well-spoken gentry.

Eily knows that Hardress' shame of her is based upon the way she speaks; she realizes that language is the chief division between them. When the priest who married them questions why her husband will not make the marriage public, Eily explicitly expresses the source of difficulty. Her defense of Hardress to the local priest illustrates Boucicault's ironic touch.

> FATHER TOM: Maybe, afther all, ye'd have done better to have married Myles there, than be the wife of a man that's ashamed to own ye.
>
> EILY: He isn't--he's proud of me. It's only when I spake like the poor people, and say or do anything wrong, that he's hurt; but I'm gettin' clane of the brogue, and learnin' to do nothing--I'm to be changed entirely. (64)

Father Tom is correct--she might have been better off to marry Myles, the peasant-rogue who loves her, than to be married to an aristocrat who is ashamed to make their marriage public. But Boucicault is not satisfied with keeping the peasants together; he wants to change the order. He recognizes what the English emphasis on not only speaking the English language but in the English acceptable accent has done to his fellow Irish. Speaking of the danger to the consciousness of a culture which is buckling beneath the power of a dominant language force, J. A. Laponce says,

> When language is the cleavage, or at least one of the cleavages, that separates the subordinate group from the dominant, the minority will be particularly conscious of the importance of its language when it defines the specific aspects of its minority status and sets the limits of its field of action. The minority that is conscious of its minority status and accepts this status will thus often have a fairly weak generalized self, but a linguistic identity that can only be the stronger thereby. (46)

Eily's low self-esteem continues to be evidenced, as does her inability or subconscious unwillingness to adopt an anglicized accent. The problem of language as a class barrier is strongly reinforced in a scene between Eily and Hardress in Act I, scene 2:

> EILY: Oh, Hardress, asthore!
>
> HARDRESS: Don't call me by those confounded Irish words--what's the matter? you're trembling like a bird caught in a trap.
>
> EILY: Am I, mavou--no I mean--is it tremblin' I am, dear?
>
> HARDRESS: What a dreadful smell of tobacco there is here, and the fumes of whiskey punch too, the place smells like a shebeen. Who has been here?
>
> EILY: There was Father Tom an' Myles dhropped in.
>
> HARDRESS: Nice company for my wife--a vagabond.
>
> EILY: Ah! who made him so but me, dear? Before I saw you, Hardress, Myles coorted me, and I was kindly to the boy.
>
> HARDRESS: Damn it, Eily, why will you remind me that my wife was ever in such a position?
>
> EILY: I won't see him again--if yer angry, dear, I'll tell him to go away, and he will, because the poor boy loves me.
>
> HARDRESS: Yes, better than I do you mean?

EILY: No, I don't--oh! why do you spake so to your poor Eily?

HARDRESS: Spake so! Can't you say speak?

EILY: I'll thry, aroon--I'm sthrivin'--'tis mighty hard, but what wouldn't I undert-tee-ta--undergo for your sa-se--for your seek.

HARDRESS: Sake--sake!

EILY: Sake--seek--oh, it is to bother people entirely they mixed 'em up! Why didn't they make them all one way? (66)

After this exchange based on dialect differences, Hardress whines, "It is impossible! How can I present her as my wife? Oh! what an act of madness to tie myself to one so much beneath me--beautiful--good as she is" (66).

Hardress had hoped Eily would be able to switch dialects with the ease of a thoroughbred changing pace. But Eily is not a thoroughbred, neither in the sense of class nor animal; she cannot simply shift out of her Irish identity, marked by her dialect, and into an approximation of the acceptable upper-class English dialect. Even if she were capable, one might wonder whether she could ever be comfortable in any but her natural Irish tones. Grillo speaks of the discomfort sometimes accompanying dialect switching:

> Studies of dialect- (or style- or code-) switching often suggest that many speakers have a "repertoire" of styles at their disposal. That speakers may thus "command" a variety of linguistic resources should not, however, lead us to suppose a "free market" in style-switching. . .styles are not value- or judgment-free. At the very least. . .they are ranked in terms of their prestige and may also be thought to signal varying degrees of "intelligence" or authority, or distance or solidarity. For example, Milroy records that on one occasion a teenage informant switched from his normal working-class Belfast voice into something approaching the standard: "His tempo and loudness range levelled out, some vernacular

> phonological features became less evident, and he self-consciously fingered his hair and straightened his clothes." He was immediately teased by his companions for putting on airs: "Come on, you're not on television you know." Thus, although. . .certain ways of speaking have considerable prestige, they are not always universally admired or respected. (170-71)

Boucicault seems to be saying virtually the same thing that Grillo asserts about prestige versus a kind of spiritual respect for the true national tones. Even when Hardress is not present, Eily cannot relax and give over to her Irish nature without a struggle. However, her real friends are present to help her overcome the false constraint Hardress' demands have placed upon her.

> SHEELAH: Come now, Eily, couldn't ye cheer up his riverince wid the tail of a song?
>
> EILY: Hardress bid me not sing any ould Irish songs, he says the words are vulgar.
>
> SHEELAH: Father Tom will give ye absolution.
>
> FATHER TOM: Put your lips to that jug; there's the only sthrippens left. Drink! and while that thrue Irish liquor warms your heart, take this wid it. May the brogue of ould Ireland niver forsake your tongue--may her music niver lave yer voice--and may a true Irishwoman's virtue niver die in your heart! (65)

In this passage, we recognize how serious the problem of language dominance has become. Eily has been forbidden by her aristocratic Irish husband to sing Irish songs. She cannot overcome her abhorrence of her language and her subservience to her anglicized husband without partaking of alcohol to remove her socially constructed barriers to personal delight. The stock image of the drunken Irishman might cause English audiences to laugh. However, they might miss what the Irish sympathizers

recognize, Father Tom's assertion that the liquor is the "sthrippens" (Irish for "the last, and richest, milk taken from a cow at each milking," Boucicault 244), thus the last true Irish bit of resistance, one which seems to encourage other forms of resistance since Eily does sing her Irish song after a couple of drinks.

Dion Boucicault personally understood how language could stand in the way of one's desired place in society. For over fifty years he reigned in the theatre as one of the most successful playwrights. He produced his own shows, directed and acted in them. But, the roles which he could play would always be limited by his Irish brogue. His clever solution was to write plays which contained peasant Irish rogues who charmed audiences by virtue of their wits. He then would play these rogues, as he did in The Colleen Bawn when he portrayed Myles, the rogue who was more genuinely noble than the aristocratic Hardress (Waters 52). Rahill comments on Boucicault's creation and portrayal of Myles:

> Myles was the celebrated stage Irishman in all his glory. . . . As depicted by Boucicault, however, who knew this character in his native habitat and had studied him from life, the stage Irishman assumes new traits and radiates new charm. What differentiates him particularly is that he develops as a personality in the course of the action. In the early scenes he is presented in a minor key as a purely humorous character. . . . As the play proceeds, Boucicault brings this character along slowly, adding touches here and there and working up to a sudden fortissimo. . . . Under the pressure of an emergency, the latent fineness of the likable ne'er-do-well rises spectacularly to the surface in a deed of heroism or self-sacrifice--usually as the curtain to the second act--to bring the drama to its climax, a moment nicely timed to fall in with the sensation scene. Such a moment was the rescue of Eily. The comic, in short, becomes the comic hero. . . The nominal, wellborn straight hero, with which all the

> Irish plays are provided, a colorless figure at best, is thrown completely into the shade. (189-90)

Significantly, the "nominal, wellborn straight" character in The Colleen Bawn is no hero but he is anglicized, whereas the true hero is the "Irish-Irish" Myles.

Aside from his personal desire to use his Irish brogue to his benefit, Boucicault had a larger but related message to make with his satire. He turns the question of language and nobility upside down and inside out. At this point, Byronic satire and Gothic Romance blend so completely that they cannot be separated. In Gothic Romances, "the difficulty of finding a language to talk about passion and instinct" is a common problem (Howells 13). In The Colleen Bawn, the language of the gentry is seen as a facade which covers their inability to express genuine emotion. The male members of the gentry and Mrs. Cregan will not realize this flaw until the end of the play. However, Anne the heiress is quite aware of language as the expression of the soul. In moments of high emotion, she uses the brogue. Realizing that Hardress will lose his home without her help, Anne is moved by the plight of her childhood friend.

> ANNE: And does he think I'd let him be ruined any way? Does he think I wouldn't sell the last rood o' land--the gown off my back, and the hair off my head before the boy that protected and loved me, the child, years ago, should come to a hap'orth of harrum.
>
> KYRLE: Miss Chute!
>
> ANNE: Well, I can't help it. When I am angry the brogue comes out, and my Irish heart will burst through manners, and graces, and twenty stay-laces. (72-3)

Such a demonstration as Anne's dialogue and dialect switching lends support to Laponce's assertion,

> Bilingualism by juxtaposition often dissociates a mother-tongue--the privileged language of the emotions--from the language of the school, an

> instrumental language which may very well develop privileged means of communication, but which rarely acquires the joyous or disturbing vibrations that permeate the language of childhood. (32)

In Anne's disturbance over the danger to her childhood friend, she reverts to the joyous tones of the Irish mother tongue, "the privileged language of the emotions," despite having been highly educated into the English accent.

Before the play has finished, Anne will feel no need to apologize for her switch to an Irish accented English. In the closing scene, the lovers having been reconciled and all confusion ended, Boucicault reconciles the Anglo-Irish gentry to the use of an Irish-English, with stress on **Irish**. Anne affirms Eily's use of the brogue and Anne's husband-to-be joins her in the affirmation. When Eily questions Hardress, "And ye won't be ashamed of me?" Anne and her lover, Kyrle, provide the answer:

> ANNE: I'll be ashamed of him if he does.
>
> EILY: And when I spake--no--speak--
>
> ANNE: Spake is the right sound. Kyrle Daly, pronounce that word.
>
> KYRLE: That's right; if you ever spake it any other way I'll divorce ye --mind that. (103)

Typically, scholars have commented that the ending of The Colleen Bawn is "romantic confection" and that Eily is not "much of a character" (Waters 49). However, they completely miss the ironic tone and social satire implicit in Boucicault's treatment. Boucicault ennobles the Irish peasant class and the Irish brogue in this romantic, satirical ending that merges the two classes. We do not hear Hardress answer, his own bigotry having been effectively silenced. However, Hardress is publically embracing Eily, an act which in his case speaks louder than words. Anne the heiress and her equally aristocratic husband-to-be, not having evidenced Hardress' level of social prejudice even at the beginning of the play, embrace the Irish brogue as the language of love and nobility. Thus, the Irish and their brogue are ennobled while English snobbery becomes a mark of

shame. In his wonderfully crafted and complex satirical melodrama, Boucicault, an Irish playwright who felt himself the victim of English dominance, pulls one over on the English audiences in a thinly veiled comedy through which his Irish audiences could see and speak.

In the end, whether or not many would understand, Boucicault's message woven into the layered fabric of The Colleen Bawn, between the cross weave of Gothic Romance and Byronic satire, was a message for those of his own tribe to hear. As Garber claims, "The language of satire does its part by exposing that kind of language which corrupts language. By attacking the false and fatuous it purifies the words of the tribe. Through those purified words it cleanses and redeems the tribe itself" (289-90). That the English audiences might miss the satirical message is no surprise. "Countering the destructive ironies of the world with the creative ironies of satire was itself an ironic gesture. The world and its despots would never get the point, but it was eminently satisfying to the satirist" (Garber 295).

The blend of Gothic Romance and Byronic satire in The Colleen Bawn is satisfying when recognized for what it is and what it does. If we are to gain an appreciation for this play, we must look at it more closely than scholars have done in the past. It is much more than a simple melodrama, yet it is not a realistic drama. To attempt to label The Colleen Bawn with one genre will not suffice. Boucicault has done what many master artists do, blend the materials he needs for the best result. And the result he intends is the ennobling of the Irish and their way of speaking themselves.

Having explored the context and the content of Boucicault's The Colleen Bawn, I turn now to the public reception in order to ascertain whether or not the playwright's Irish identity matched Irish perceptions on a broader scale. The record is clear about the English appreciation for the entertainment value of Boucicault's works. Even Queen Victoria admired the Irish playwright's abilities. Prior to her husband's death, Queen Victoria attended the theatre on numerous occasions. Between 1840 and 1860, the queen

attended no less than four of Boucicault's plays. In her diary, she records that she enjoyed The Colleen Bawn so well that she attended three performances. Boucicault received a letter of appreciation from the queen, and he and his wife were introduced to the royal couple (Fawkes 41, 70–74, 122–3). But what about the Irish reception? Judging from newspaper reviews of the day, the Irish liked him even more than the English, and probably for different reasons.

In Dublin on 25 March 1861, the following advertisement appeared in the Freeman's Journal:

> Mr. HARRIS has the honor to announce the engagement of Miss AGNES ROBERTSON (Mrs. Dion Boucicault) and Mr. DION BOUCICAULT, who will make their first appearance on EASTER MONDAY, April 1st, 1861, in the successful Drama, acted 166 successive nights at the Theatre Royal, Adelphi, London, to crowded and overflowing Houses, which will be produced with entirely new Scenery (painted by Mr. William Glover), Dresses, Properties, &c., entitled THE COLLEEN BAWN; or, the Brides of Garryowen!--Entirely, new Music, including an Overture, composed and arranged expressly to illustrate this Drama, by Mr. Thomas Baker. The Drama produced under the superintendence and stage direction of Mr. Boucicault, by whom the new scenic effects and mechanical contrivances were invented and planned. Eily O'Connor (the Colleen Bawn) Miss Agnes Robertson (Mrs. Dion Boucicault); Myles-na-Coppaleen, Mr. Dion Boucicault.

Booking information followed, including the length of the run, from 1 April 1861 to 27 April 1861.

Following the opening of the Colleen Bawn in Dublin, the Freeman's Journal published a glowing review. The critic declares, "surely no dramatic piece within our memory presented on the Dublin stage has caused such a sensation, created deeper

interest, or evoked such a furore of popular enthusiasm as the first performance of this piece produced on yesterday evening." The audience seem to have favored the Irish portrait provided by Boucicault, and perhaps the enthusiasm was in part due to the changes in form and function of not only the melodrama but especially the Irish characters.

Following his first general remark, the critic comments upon the source for the plot of the play:

> The story on which the drama of the Colleen Bawn is founded is well known by tradition in the South of Ireland. It takes a front place among the tragic incidents of social life, which, in their painful results, constitute the *cause celebres* of criminal law in every country. . . . [The] gifted author of the piece, in preparing it for presentation on the stage, has made some alterations in the story as it is told in "The Collegians," even as Griffin himself took liberties.

After this brief note on the plot, the reviewer turns his attention to the heart and soul of the play, the Irish characters. He begins by focusing on the Irish heroine and the woman who portrays her:

> The appearance of Miss Agnes Robertson (Mrs. Dion Boucicault) in the part of Eily O'Connor, was hailed with enthusiastic applause. In **personal** [sic], costume, and style of appearance, she was indeed the lively, artless Irish girl. Her version of the sweet southern brogue was not exactly perhaps sufficiently broad for the taste of connoisseurs in the Munster doric, but it was very musical, and her words, whether murmuring expressions of endearment to her false husband, expressing indignation at those who questioned his faith, or pleading for her life with the miscreant Danny Mann, were ever sweet, "ever gentle and soft," like Cordelias.

Clearly, the critic finds the language of Eily the most significant indicator of her character. He quite rightly gives due attention then to Robertson's vocal portrayal of the Irish heroine. However, the writer is taken not only with Robertson's performance but with the character Robertson portrays. He observes, "Nothing could be finer than the natural grace and touching pathos of Eily during the many deeply interesting scenes of this drama."

After commenting on the role of Eily and Miss Robertson's performance, the critic turns his attention to the dramatist and his portrayal of the clown rogue. Of Dion Boucicault's performance, the critic says that he played the role of Myles "with a force and fidelity to nature which we have rarely, if ever seen equalled on the Dublin stage." The critic observes,

> The reception of Mr. Boucicault last evening was flattering indeed. He has long been known by fame and character to the Dublin audience, as the author of more than one brilliant and successful drama, but his appearance in Dublin in the character of Miles na Coppullen [sic], seems destined to form the *comble* of his reputation, as a personater of Irish character, and to cap the climax of his success as a dramatic author.

The critic's evaluation suggests that the inner nobility and rebel character of Boucicault's Irish rogue is a true portrait, one with which Irish audiences can identify and one which Irish audiences will enthusiastically support.

The characters and the manner in which they are brought to life seemed to fascinate this critic. After praising the construction and performances of Eily and Myles, the Irish peasants, the reviewer comments on the higher-class Irish characters:

> The character of Anne Chute, the proud and high-minded Irish heiress, was personated in admirable style by Miss Sarah Thorne, and we feel great pleasure in giving this clever young actress the praise she undoubtedly merits, because, we believe that her success is the result of zealous and

> patient study. . . . The role of the Catholic priest in this play is a very ticklish part to handle under the keen censorship of an Irish audience, and it is no small tribute to the high ability of Mr. Granby to say that he succeeded to admiration in preserving the dignity of the character he assumed, and also in giving the fullest effect to the very important part of the drama which he had to sustain.

Boucicault's Irish portraits of every type seem to have struck an agreeable note with Irish audiences. A notion supported at the close of the review when the critic notes, "At the close of the performance, and, indeed at the termination of every act, Mr. and Mrs. Boucicault were called before the curtain and enthusiastically cheered. An overflowing house may be expected this evening, when, for the second time will be presented the drama of Colleen Bawn."

The opening night reviewer's prediction that the audiences for The Colleen Bawn would continue to overflow the theatre seems to have held true. A report in the 27 April 1861 edition of the Freeman's Journal reads,

> Last evening Mrs. Boucicault took her benefit before one of the most crowded houses of this, perhaps, the most successful engagement in the annals of managerial experience. Every part of the house was so full that hundreds had to go away from the want of more standing room within the theatre. . . . The Colleen Bawn was the great attraction, and all homage was paid to its merits in loud and general applause. It will be presented for the last time this evening in Dublin, and wherever it will be presented it will be sure to take with it the best wishes of all who saw it.

I chose to discuss The Colleen Bawn at some length because, of Boucicault's three Irish masterpieces, this play has received the least attention with regard to political implications. And, as members of the Irish Theatre Archive comment, though Boucicault gave his second Irish effort, Arrah-na-Pogue, "the historical setting of 1798. Boucicault

clearly tried to renew the formula of The Colleen Bawn, with county Wicklow scenery replacing Killarney and Shaun and Arrah as equivalents of Myles and Eily" (Burke 34-5). Turning to the final contribution to Boucicault's famous Irish trilogy, The Shaughraun, these critics comment,

> The title implies a "vagabond" (seachran), and Conn, the Shaughraun himself, is a reworking and development of Myles and Sean. Boucicault created his own greatest role, and one which shows how far he had gone beyond the stage Irish buffoons of earlier writers. The topicality of the setting also aided the triumph of the play--it is set against the Fenian insurrection of 1866. . . . Boucicault's own interest in Irish nationalism seems to have developed in his later years, and in 1877 benefit performances of The Shaughraun were given to help the families of Irish prisoners. (Burke 36)

The one point of this commentary that I question is the assertion that Boucicault's nationalist leanings developed late. As critics have noted, both Arrah-na-Pogue and The Shaughraun, though brilliantly crafted independent works, are in some ways variations on the theme and characters introduced in The Colleen Bawn. Though perhaps not as explicitly as the latter two plays, I think that The Colleen Bawn implicitly proves early sympathy with the Irish nationalist cause as far as dignifying the Irish identity goes. Though his fervor may have increased, developing into more overt nationalism on his part, Boucicault always felt the significance of his Irishness, an Irishness that he wanted to protect even as he displayed it before the world on the stage. And when we consider the "Fireside" pamphlet as a supplementary document to The Colleen Bawn and the opening act, so to speak, at the performance of the play, Boucicault seems an outspoken nationalist even at this stage in his life.

Certainly the political implications of Arrah-na-Pogue and The Shaughraun cannot be ignored. Both were Fenian views of the uprising of 1798 (Rahill 191).

Beamish MacCoul, the Irish rebel in Arrah-na-Pogue, resembles a cross between Finn MacCool and Robert Emmet, two Irish heroes (Waters 53). For the production of Arrah, Boucicault rewrote "The Wearin' of the Green," a patriotic Irish song, and sang it himself, "causing a near riot at the Princess in London on the opening night in 1864" (Rahill 190). Heroic Emmet again appears in the person of Robert Ffolliott in The Shaughraun. In The Shaughraun, Boucicault provides a dark glimpse into what happens to Irish traitors when Harvey Duff, the informer, decides to jump off a cliff rather than allow the mob to get their hands on him (Waters 54). It is difficult to miss the political implications of Arrah-na-Pogue and The Shaughraun. Boucicault's sympathies are nationalist Irish, a fact which stirred up audiences of his day and perhaps has caused him to be repressed by later English literary powerbrokers. And in each of these plays, Boucicault speaks about language and manipulates language to rebel against the constraints placed upon the Irish by their English dominators. The very title of Arrah-na-Pogue, Irish for "the kiss in the mouth," indicates how closely Boucicault links that which comes from the mouth with the national identity. Boucicault's plays sing out their Irishry in every line. As Rahill notes,

> Perhaps the finest thing about them is that incomparable speech which Irish playwrights find so easy to write because they have merely to put down on paper what they hear all about them. A generation before Synge caught the singing rhythm and poetic imagery of this language from his loft in a peasant cottage in Wicklow, Boucicault, his generally despised predecessor, had in some degree done the same thing. (191)

Perhaps Boucicault and his complicated melodramas were not always so despised as Rahill suggests. The production history of Boucicault's most famous Irish plays is impressive. Advertisements in the Freeman's Journal during September of 1865 indicate that the Colleen Bawn played at the Queen's Theatre of Varieties during September and November. The same year four other Boucicault plays were produced in Dublin:

Octoroon, Daddy O'Dowd, Shaughraun, and Led Astray. The Colleen Bawn played for six weeks in New York and for 230 performances in London when it opened in 1860. In 1861, Boucicault presented it for 24 nights at the Theatre Royal in Dublin. In 1864 Boucicault premiered Arrah-na-Pogue at Dublin's Theatre Royal, then moved the successful production to London in March 1865. In 1874 The Shaughraun opened at Wallack's in New York for a four-month run. Notably, the three Irish plays each opened in different international cities yet each enjoyed the same overwhelming success internationally. In 1881 Boucicault performed in The Shaughraun in Dublin (Pine, Dion 15-16).

According to the production records of the Abbey Theatre, Boucicault's Irish plays maintain a popularity with modern Irish audiences. In 1967 Hugh Hunt directed The Shaughraun with Cyril Cusack as Conn. The production ran from January through March of 1967 with return performances in April and June 1968, for a total of 78 performances. Also in 1967 Frank Bailey directed an Irish version of The Colleen Bawn (An Cailin Ban) for the Abbey's Gaeltacht Tour. In 1968 the Abbey took The Shaughraun on tour and entered it as their contribution to the World Theatre Festival at Aldwych. Hugh Hunt continued to direct Boucicault plays, producing Arrah-na-Pogue in 1972 for a total of 69 performances in January and February, with a short run in May, and an extended return in July through August. In 1975 Hunt again directed The Shaughraun during the Christmas holiday season and into January of 1976. The latest Abbey performances of a Boucicault play occurred in June through August of 1990--again The Shaughraun.

Dion Boucicault must be recognized as a dominant voice of his age; and he should be appreciated as one who spoke out to bring down social barriers--one of which was language--and raise the Irish in the hearts and minds of the world. However, he was not merely a man for his time. He has left a legacy of influence. As Rahill notes, "Men of unimpeachable literary taste have expressed their admiration for Boucicault's

dialogue" (192). Boucicault's influence on other writers and through the occasional revival of his works at the Abbey in Dublin and various smaller theaters transcends his own historical moment.

The record of Boucicault's literary influence upon later writers is as impressive as the history of his plays in production. His plays provided the direct or indirect source for works by Wilde, Shaw, Synge, and O'Casey (Krause 9). Wilde's characters of Jack Worthing, Algernon Moncrief, Miss Prism, and Lady Bracknell, as well as the plot device of inserting a fictional identity who must be "killed" off, and the delightful garden scene in The Importance of Being Earnest were borrowed from two of Boucicault's early comedies of manners, London Assurance and A Lover By Proxy. Shaw valued the work of Boucicault "for the knowledge it gave him of how overwhelmingly important the craft of entertainment is for the art of drama" (Hogan 107). He put this knowledge to good use, along with a little literary borrowing in Pygmalion. In The Devil's Disciple, Shaw not only borrowed from Boucicault's trial scene in Arrah - na - Pogue, he paid him the "supreme compliment" by actually reproducing some of the same dialogue. Boucicault's attitude toward "senseless bloodshed" would also show up in the plays of both Shaw and O'Casey (Krause 34). When Reginald Golding Bright, the drama critic, asked Shaw how he might learn about drama, Shaw gave him a list of playwrights he should read. Included with Sophocles, Moliere, Congreve, Sheridan, Schiller, Hugo, and Ibsen was Boucicault. These were the writers which he believed anyone interested in drama could not afford to overlook (Krause 42). Synge's playboy is said to be "Conn the Shaughraun come of age" (Hogan 109). Synge thought that the Abbey playwrights had much they could learn from plays like The Shaughraun. In an article in The Academy and Literature, 11 June 1904, Synge suggested that "modern drama should follow the rich speech and 'personal humour' of Boucicault, instead of the 'impersonal wit' of sophisticated French and English comedies" (qtd. in Krause 43). O'Casey freely admitted his debt to Boucicault and gave him a tip of the hat in his autobiographical

novel Pictures in the Hallway when he writes, "Shakespeare's good in bits; but for colour and stir, give me Boucicault!" (27). Hogan affirms, "O'Casey took from Boucicault not only the perception about comedy and tragedy existing together, but also a high verve, a delight in flamboyant language, in color, in dance, in music, and in spectacle" (111).

Clearly Boucicault's work had a powerful influence on later playwrights. And some scholars think that his influence has not come to an end. With particular reference to The Colleen Bawn, Arrah - na - Pogue, and The Shaughraun, it has been asserted that his plays "remain superbly playable by theatre companies bold enough to take them seriously" (Thomson 12). And at least this scholar hopes there will be some so bold, and that in their boldness those who produce and those who write about the productions will not fail to see and hear the issues of identity and language that fill the lines of Boucicault's plays with such passion and wit as to win a noble place for the Irish in the hearts and minds of the audience.

Notes

1. Another notable moment in history when such theatrical double-speak occurs would be the 1940s in occupied France. During this time, Jean Giraudoux wrote his comical Madwoman of Chaillot, a call for those who value life to rebel against those who would overrun Paris with machines of destruction. Turning to a classical model but making a contemporary point, Jean Anouilh wrote and produced Antigone. Germans in the audience applauded Creon, failing to see the heroic nobility and courage of Antigone; French audience members felt the urge to resist the monstrous immoral state lawmakers who had become the law through military means and horrible death. Boucicault might be a forerunner of both playwrights.

2. Neither "The Fireside History of Ireland" nor the Irish dramas are the only evidence of Boucicault's political nature. Other highly political plays by Boucicault dealing with subjects from imperialism to slavery to capitalism include: Jessie Brown; or, the Relief of Lucknow (1858), The Octoroon (1859), The Long Strike (1866), and The Rapparee (1870). See Rahill for commentary.

CHAPTER FOUR

W.B. YEATS: TESTING THE POWER OF LANGUAGE TO HARM OR TO HEAL

By 1900, Ireland had had a century to consider the union with Great Britain and the effect of language loss on the Irish identity. Having passed through the stages of a gentle acceptance of union and longing for equality, and a growing rebelliousness covered by comedy, Irish writers should, by this point, demonstrate a desperate attempt to return to the pre-colonial identification of nationality. This attempt includes an active appreciation for the almost dead native language in an effort to save the national identity. Sapir suggests that a trend concurrent with resistance to language dominance is the establishment of groups which attempt "to erect their languages into the status of a fully accredited medium of cultural and literary expression" (65). This attempt in Ireland is known as the Celtic Revival or the Irish Renaissance. The movement had two branches to its language tree. On the one hand, the Gaelic League, formed in 1893 by Douglas Hyde, attempted to revive the native language, writing Irish dramas in Irish as a part of that effort. On the other hand, writers involved in the Celtic Revival sought to revive the Irish spirit but in a distinctly Irish version of the English language. This latter group of writers reached a wider Irish audience by the mere fact that the majority of Irish people no longer spoke Irish with any proficiency. Though both groups of writers wanted to achieve the same shaping of Irish national identity, they used two different means, creating a tension of sorts in the movement itself. It is to this latter group that William Butler Yeats belongs.

Yeats wrote his national dramas during a period that stretched from 1892 to 1939. The social context includes a colonial state, an independent Republic of Ireland,

and a partitioned Northern Ireland still under the control of England, a time during which the people moved from desperation to hope to disillusionment, if Yeats is representative. As Seamus Deane points out in his introduction to Celtic Revivals: Essays in Modern Irish Literature, 1880–1980 (1985), the literature written during this period "derives from a culture which is neither wholly national nor colonial but a hybrid of both" (11). Deane also recognizes the dramatic shifts between despair and hope and disillusionment. He writes that "the successes of the 1916–22 period . . . were also seriously flawed by failure. As a consequence of all this, the idea of society and the assumption of stability have never been securely lodged in Irish experience. . . . The effect on literature could not but be profound" (12). Certainly the instability of his nation had a profound effect on Yeats's hope to use language to shape a national identity.

The link between language and identity during the period of the Celtic Revival is undeniable. Deane singles language out first in his discussion of issues that were central to this cultural movement in Ireland. He explains that language is

> always a crucial issue in a country which has had its own language destroyed by a combination of military and economic violence and another imposed by a coercive educational system. The linguistic virtuosity of Irish writers and the linguistic quaintness, to English ears, of the Irish mode of speech in English, are the product of a long political struggle . . . . Irish literature tends to dwell on the medium in which it is written because it is difficult not to be self-conscious about a language which has become simultaneously native and foreign. (Celtic 13)

Of course, the last part of Deane's statement could refer to either Irish or English for the Irish–English speaker. To appreciate the historical context of the Celtic Revival, one must understand the language link to identity.

The tension that the Irish felt about their loss of language and the status of a national identity was paramount at the end of the nineteenth century. The cultural shift of the nineteenth century had, in many respects--chiefly language--made of Ireland an English society. Yet, the Irish were patently not comfortable with such an erasure of their identity; it was time to fight back with a zeal born of desperation. Part of the desperate attempt to salvage an Irish culture was the attempt to revive the Gaelic language. In "Change and Stasis in Irish Linguistic and Literary Culture," Robert Welch explains that "The logic here leads to setting up the Irish language as the only true icon of Irishness" (174). Adopting this attitude led some writers of the Irish Renaissance, then, to "write in Irish because no other language will do, no other language can convey, for them, those interiors that all writers who are real writers want to talk about. They experience the trauma of the fracturing of Irish culture and attempt the healing process in their own work and language" (174). However, Yeats was not one of those who felt he must write in Irish to express his Irishry. He thought his Irish thoughts in the English language he had grown up speaking, but in his Irish mind those English words were shaped by and shaped themselves into his Irishry. In this respect, Yeats may represent reality and therefore survival if Welch is correct: "If a culture cannot make the adaptations that necessity demands then it will die and probably deserves to die in that it has not answered life's call" (175). Appropriately Welch uses an aural language metaphor to make his rather harsh point. In the language of Yeats, we hear an author hard at work to answer the call of life in the Ireland that he has inherited and for the Ireland he hopes will survive. Yeats's Ireland is not an Ireland dead and gone; his is an Ireland that remembers the past in the language of the present, attempting to make its voice heard into the future.

For Yeats, history consists of the past, present, and future all gyring simultaneously. To attempt to stop the movement of life and isolate an historical moment can be both illuminating and destructive. As Welch puts it, "we traffic with time

in the arts of language, and with history and its events. And when we deal with history we come back to fracture and cleavage" (176). Yeats fractures old ideas of linear history to clean the wound caused by the cleavage of his colonized country; his language acts like a lance, waging war against previously constructed images and purging the Irish of the poison of internal strife. Yeats's enemy within his plays cannot be the Irish Ascendancy, as some would wish, because he is healing Irish wounds. The enemy must be foreign. Perhaps some audiences could not understand the power of Yeats's language and metaphors because they wanted him to speak with an openly political voice, the voice of a particular political faction. But Yeats would not become a mouthpiece for factionalism; his fear of politics, as he used the term, was a fear of factional propaganda. He never escaped being political in the broadest national sense because his works, in speaking his Irishry, defend the identity of a once (and still partially) colonized people.

Welch continues to analyze the way in which history plays a part in Yeats's recreation of Ireland's story. He muses,

> What is this Irish way of life, and how may it be described? History will not really help us here, because history, with its correct insistence on consecutiveness, events, discontinuities, fractures, leads us back into the dilemma. Its approach tends to be diachronic, whereas what we need, if it can be done, is a synchronic approach to the system of Irish culture. (176)

Yeats attempts to provide this synchronic approach with his gyring vision of history, his fascination with antinomies, and his evocation of an Irish identity linked to language. Welch explains,

> Yeats promoted change by seeking radical continuity and in seeking continuity he was venturing into areas of experience, mythology, folklore and so on with a freshness of address not hitherto seen. . . . He made a continuity all the stronger and more radical, all the more charged by

> change, because of the effort of will required to accomplish it. The tendency to stasis and that to change, the need for continuity and the desire to sally forth and open unforseen ways of being arrive together in his language, which strains to full complex apprehension of what it is like to be. (179)

I read the last line of Welch's analysis to mean: what it is like to be Yeats, what it is like to be Irish, what it is like to be Irish Yeats living in the Ireland of his time while reclaiming the past to inform the present and push into a future Ireland only then coming into being. Welch writes, "There is such a thing as Irish culture, and it realizes itself deeply when it can activate and be attentive to the basic patterns of being" (181). Yeats uses Irish mythological and historical images to activate through language a way to be Irish in the future.

For writers such as Yeats, the method of reclaiming the national identity depended on returning to Celtic myth (a pre-colonial story of identity) and Irish folktales (gathered from the Gaelic west) for source material. Yeats practiced this method but with a twist; he would bring the tale forward in a new mythical rendering completely ahistorical in his attempt to create a new Irish national identity out of the past but not remaining in the past. In trying to create a new national identity through his writing for the theatre, Yeats demonstrated a strong belief in language's power to harm or to heal the nation. If we listen closely to the lines of Yeats's first play for his new national theatre, The Countess Cathleen (1899)[1], and then turn briefly to a play from his middle period, The Only Jealousy of Emer (1919), and his last play, The Death of Cuchulain (1939), I think we witness Yeats's own struggle with national identity and that identity's link to the power of language. I also submit that Yeats's struggle best represents the struggle of the majority of the Irish people who lived in a generation that moved from one century into the next, from a colonial state into a divided nation partially independent.

Unlike LeFanu and Boucicault, Yeats remains a widely recognized major literary figure. Consequently, his family history is better known to scholars than that of LeFanu or Boucicault. However, I wish to emphasize three aspects of Yeats's personal context, all of which demonstrate his own theory regarding the value of antinomies. In A Vision, his strange book-length attempt to create a mythical explanation of history and individuality, Yeats sets up the importance of the antithetical to the development of wholeness in experience. He writes of "subjectivity and objectivity as intersecting states struggling one against the other" (71). Using interpenetrating cones to correlate the action of the universe to the life of the individual, Yeats explains, "the subjective cone is called that of the *antithetical tincture* because it is achieved and defended by continual conflict with its opposite; the objective cone is called that of the *primary tincture* because whereas subjectivity . . . tends to separate man from man, objectivity brings us back to the mass where we begin" (71-2). Confirming what a literary scholar might already suspect, Yeats admits, "my mind had been full of Blake from boyhood up and I saw the world as a conflict" (72). Yeats clearly considered conflict necessary and even valuable. He calls the antithetical the "aesthetic" tincture, the source of creativity (73, 85); and he declares that each person "seeks his opposite or opposite of his condition" (81). Conflict is not to be understood in Yeats's construction as violent upheaval; rather, his idea of conflict seems to be a healthy and creative tension that makes for balance and completeness. His own Irish experience illustrates the tension of opposites.

Yeats's connection to place, religion, and language in Ireland is a geometrically symmetrical balance of opposites. His family having lived in Ireland for two hundred years prior to his birth, both the Dublin urban area on the east coast and the mysterious Sligo with its rugged rural beauty in the northwest became home to young William. Though Yeats came from a Protestant background, his great-grandfather having been rector at Drumcliffe near Sligo, he was not traditionally religious though his nature was spiritual. Yeats may have followed a family pattern for tolerance and non-traditional

religious behavior. Parson John Yeats was far from rigidly religious. In Joseph Hone's biography of W.B. Yeats, the parson is described as a man who "mixed on genial terms with the Roman Catholics," one who was praised by Sligo's Catholic historian, Rev. T.F. O'Rourke, for his honesty and straightforwardness (5). William's father, Jack B. Yeats, had given up on religion entirely by the time he reached adulthood. Instead of a religious vocation, Jack B. Yeats pursued the life of an artist, writer, and philosopher (Hone 6-7). So it came to be that Yeats grew up surrounded by the myths and legends of the hills of Sligo during extended stays with his grandparents as well as by the artistic bustling of Dublin society in the home of his father and mother. Carrying the influence of opposites with him, Yeats would exercise his spirituality without choosing one side in the traditional Irish religious culture; he would make his own religious myth to incorporate the opposites in life and in his nature.

Language is the final critical area of tension between opposites for Yeats. He committed himself to the goals of the Celtic Revival, meaning the revitalization of an Irish culture that would speak the Irish identity; but he could not master the Gaelic tongue. This tension of opposites within him, as he insisted in A Vision, provides the source of creativity from which springs the dramatic language of Yeats's poetry and plays. Wolfgang Zach, in "Blessing and Burden: The Irish Writer and his Language," claims that

> the problem of language has always been closely intertwined with the problem of identity. . . . Evicted from the Paradise of an indigenous unified linguistic and literary tradition and having to come to terms with the foreign world of an entirely different linguistic and cultural heritage, Irish and Anglo-Irish writers alike have had to forge their identities and linguistic codes anew, each individual writer for himself. (185)

Yeats worked hard at forging his identity anew in a language that would speak his Irishry.

For Yeats, speaking his Irishry in English was not a choice. His language was a burden he turned into a blessing, but not without an attempt at recovering the lost tongue. In a letter dated 11 July 1898, Yeats writes, "I have begun Irish and am getting on fairly well with it"; then in December 1899, in a letter published in The Gael, he states, "I have taken up Gaelic again, and though I shall never have entire mastery of it, I hope to be able to get some of the feeling of the language" (qtd. in O Hehir 99). It would have to be "the feeling of the language" that would help Yeats voice his Irishry, a goal toward which he moved through the sound waves of language all of his artistic life. His struggle to forge an Irish voice out of the opposition of an English tongue and an Irish soul must be recognized and appreciated if any of his writing is to be understood.

While some of his compatriots may have been irked by Yeats's failure to master Gaelic, there were other contemporaries who understood his struggle and appreciated his literary contribution. In what he himself refers to as a gossipy article on Yeats, Stephen MacKenna, writing for The Gael in 1899, comments on Yeats's great sorrow at not being able to master Irish:

> Some Irish critics, not satisfied even with the entirely Celtic note of all he writes, have blamed him for not being a Gaelic scholar and speaker. Yeats blames himself, too, for this; but he is as he is fashioned. He told me once that he had labored hard to get to the heart of the old Tongue for the love he has for things Irish. But the gift of tongues was denied him, with all his splendid equipment.
>
> He was not born into a Gaelic speaking household: it is our national sorrow that so few of us are: and he simply can't learn languages . . . and the Gaelic bowled him over. (134)

Following this record of Yeats's inability to learn Irish, MacKenna makes an important point about his right to speak his Irishry in the tongue over which he does have mastery:

> He regrets it: so must we; so must Ireland. But is he to refrain because of that, from writing the fine Celtic things that are in him? And if he, a Celt, writes finely Celtic things and interprets the soul of the Celt to the Stranger are we to rail at him, disown him, class him as certain inconsiderate extremists affect to class him among traitors, selling their country, selling their souls to the Saxon. The thing is absurd. Yeats is the pride of Ireland today, and will be even when the Green is flying above the Red, the proud emblem of a free, Gaelic Ireland. (134)

The last line of MacKenna's commentary identifies him clearly as a nationalist who longs for Ireland's freedom. However, MacKenna is also a realist who understands the loss of the Gaelic tongue does not necessarily mean the death of the Celtic soul. He recognizes that Yeats represents an Irish reality. While the strangulation of the Irish language might be a mark of shame against the English or a measure of their imperial success, that loss of language should not be held against the Irish who speak their Irishry in English; people like Yeats are no less Irish than Hyde or Synge, and they are more abundant.

Yeats's contribution to the establishment of an Irish literary canon is considerable, regardless of the fact that he wrote only in English. He lives up to the claim Seamus Deane makes that "The recovery from the lost Irish language has taken the form of an almost vengeful virtuosity in the English language, an attempt to make Irish English a language in its own right rather than an adjunct to English itself" (Nationalism 10). This virtuosity can certainly be heard in a large number of fine Irish writers, and the goal of such virtuosity is stated by authors such as Yeats.

Yeats was a leader in the Irish Renaissance, not only supporting the efforts of others to revive Irish culture, but founding a national theatre for the sole purpose of speaking dramatically a positive and powerful Irish identity. Interestingly, even the Celtic Revival faced conflict in Ireland. Yeats's personal scrapbook, now housed among the W.B. Yeats Papers at the National Library of Ireland, contains an article entitled "Trinity

College and the Literary Theatre; speech of Mr. W.B. Yeats," dated 1 June 1899. It records the debate that ensued among participants with regard to the purpose and effect of the literary theatre that Yeats and his colleagues in the Renaissance were attempting to establish. The heated discussion is uncannily like some of those that now take place in post-colonial forums. A motion was proposed "That any attempt to further an Irish Literary Movement would result in Provincialism." The article details the stances of the various participants:

> Mr. W. Thackwell, in proposing the motion, said he lamented the tendency which had lately sprung up of praising work, not because it deals with Ireland or because it was good, but because it was the work of Irishmen. This tendency, he was afraid, could be laid to the charge of the movement which resulted in the Irish Literary Theatre, and in [sic] would inevitably lead to provincialism mentioned in the motion.
>
> Mr. R.J. Rowlette said that, like Mr. Thackwell, he too had something to lament. He lamented the deplorable tendency to decry everything Irish. Merely to have local colour was now to be provincial. Every great writer must, as it were, smack of the atmosphere in which he was brought up.

Significantly, the participants in the debate recognized one of the central problems regarding the issue of nationalism with which post-colonial critics currently find themselves struggling. Certainly the sides of the argument contained here remain a contemporary concern for writers and scholars today, as the Field Day effort and resulting criticism will attest.

The article continues comparing the opposing sides of the issue. J.C. Weir, an auditor, declares an unwillingness to support the "glorification of a particular locality. Ireland should be content and even proud to take her share in the great Empire to which

she had contributed so much." In response, J.J. Noonan defends the Irish Literary Theatre, declaring it part of a wider Irish intellectual movement:

> To it they owed the attempt to propagate, or rather to preserve, the old Irish language, the key to Irish history and to Irish thought; to it also they owed the revival of interest in Irish history, and finally the great movement which was now under discussion. If there was one fault which might lead that movement into provincialism it was this: that it tended to dwell too much upon one phase of Irish character. The Irish were a very complex race. They were not Gaels merely, but a mixed race springing from many peoples.

I confess that Noonan's comment seems most rational, perhaps because it is most in keeping with my own approach in this study of Irish identity as evidenced in Irish drama. However, others at the meeting must have found themselves in support of an Irish literary movement that did not seem at all provincial to them because Thackwell's resolution was voted down "practically unanimously."

Following the debate and vote on the resolution, Yeats rose to speak. According to the report, Yeats said,

> It was impossible that those nations which spoke for good or ill, the English tongue would accept perpetually the ideas of one city [London], of a city which was no longer moved by any high ideal. America had a national literature, and America wrote in English. Ireland would have a national literature which would be written to a very great extent in English. Scotland would probably again begin to express herself in a way personal to herself, and Australia and South Africa and the other English-speaking countries would sooner or later express their personal life in literature.

While supporting the literary contributions made in Gaelic, Yeats recognizes that the greater amount of Irish writing will be done in English but will be no less nationally Irish. His remarks are prophetic. He is actually predicting the post-colonial movement that is now a strong reality, and he ties that national literary identity that must emerge in English to the sociolinguistic effect of language dominance. According to the summary, Yeats goes on to say that, "In taking up the work of giving to Irish intellect a sincere expression of itself they were taking up a work, not for Ireland only, but for the world. Every nation had its word to speak. He believed the work of Ireland was to lift up its voice for spirituality, for simplicity in the English-speaking world." In addition to Yeats's notion of an Irish identity spoken in English that maintains the Irish spirit, his final statement also implies a lack of spirituality on the part of the English, an idea which will be played out in The Countess Cathleen.

In order to ascertain whether The Countess Cathleen speaks Yeats's Irishry, we must first attempt to understand what Yeats meant by "speaking his Irishry." While Irish writers who lived in an Ireland dominated by the English language would necessarily need to communicate in what had become the common tongue, Yeats believed he could at least shape a distinctly Irish form of the English language. In an October 1934 address on Irish culture and the national theatre, Yeats asserted:

> We must put Irish emotion into the English language if we were to reach our own generation, [sic] The people, after generations of politics, read nothing but the newspapers, but they could listen (to what interminable speeches they had listened) and they could listen to plays. (qtd. in David Clark 148)

Yeats believed that drama, given not only its literary quality but its orality, could both speak the voice and reach the ears of the Irish. His notion of an Irish theatre indicated works not only by Irish writers, but works that were void of English influence. Peter Ure confirms that "Ireland had made Yeats conscious of the foreign. He tried therefore to

write in a style appropriate to the leader of a new national literature, a style which would give expression to the values associated with `Ireland'" (69). Yeats clarifies his stance:

> Whenever an Irish writer has strayed away from Irish themes and Irish feeling, in almost all cases he has done no more than make alms for oblivion. There is no great literature without nationality, no great nationality without literature. (qtd. in Ure 64)

Yeats had his nationality and the forming of a national theatre on his mind throughout his creation of his plays. In a note Yeats penned at the end of his first verse attempt at The Countess Cathleen,[2] he writes of his hope for the future of Irish literature: "I believe their [sic] is a great future before the literature of Ireland. We may yet leave our imprint upon the world. The nations that have long held it[s] ear are in their old age. . . . The flood gates of the future are open and wave of idealism is coming into the world and drowning the old regime" (ms. 8758.a). In a note included among the manuscripts dealing with Fighting the Waves, or The Only Jealousy of Emer, Yeats explains, "Lady Gregory, John Synge and I, Standish O'Grady before us, James Stephens after us, planned a literature comic or tragic, founded upon the inventions and habits of Gaelic speaking Ireland" (ms. 8774, fol.1, p. 2). Yeats goes on to describe their attempts as depending upon several items similar to those elements found in Greek plays: "the tragically constructed plot," the fable that speaks of things "unchanging or universal," and the use of "the chorus of people, their words full of vague suggestion" (ms.8774, fol. 1, p. 2).

Yeats wanted to fill the ears of the world, or at the least his Irish world, with the voices of an Irish chorus. He was not content to allow others to speak the Irish story any more than LeFanu and Boucicault before him. However, he led the chorus at a time when emotions and frustration were high enough to sing out the tune loudly and no longer with any muffling for acceptance of the sound. As Flannery asserts, "No artist more fully and truthfully encompasses the complexity of the Irish experience than W.B.

Yeats. . . . Yeats correctly understood that Ireland needed a voice to speak to her own people and world" (240). Yeats himself declared, "Let us learn construction from the masters . . . and dialogue from ourselves" (qtd. in Partridge 197).

One might at first interpret "the masters" to whom Yeats refers as the English, both dramatically and politically; however, here too I think Yeats is jumping back over the dominators to the classical masters of antiquity--specifically the Greeks. The Greeks would provide both a mythical foundation and an historical parallel to the Irish situation in Yeats's mind. In a particularly telling passage among his manuscripts, Yeats makes observations that might lead one to correlate England with Rome and Ireland with Greece. According to Yeats's analysis:

> The pressure of other subjects has decided that one of the classical languages must go, and every man not a pedant or a man stupified by the memory that Latin was once the Volopuc or Esperanto of Europe, knows that it should be Latin. Latin literature has great style and an air of authority but it lacked always fundamental thought. Our eighteenth century, and our seventeenth towards its end, drank it dry, and though our heads ache men of letters feel that at last they can approach Greece without Roman prepossessions. (ms. 8774, fol.1, p. 3)

If we substitute England and Ireland for Rome and Greece, we can see that social and political pressures are calling for the ousting, at the least, of Anglo-English if not English as a whole. While Yeats's head certainly did ache with trying to master Irish, something he never accomplished, he did try to approach the establishment of an Irish-English devoid of English prepossession, an obvious impossibility. Still, his focus and voice form perhaps a new symphonic blend that is distinctly Irish.

As Yeats continues his discussion of Rome and Greece, the correlation that I have made between these two powers and England and Ireland becomes clear as the one that Yeats intended: "Roman civilisation was the hardening and objectifying, or the

decadence of that Greek civilisation which yet survived in Byzantium half ruined for a millenium, and had stretched back, as we know and our fathers did not, for a millenium" (ms. 8774, fol. 1, p.3). Yeats then clarifies the connection as he stipulates what he would have a student of literature learn. He asserts that if he could have his way he would

> compel a boy to begin Greek with his school life and when well grounded learn Irish by the "direct method", and from that school and university should teach the two languages, the two literatures in association and translate the Greek into Irish and learn that our chariot fighting Red Branch resembled the chariot fighting Greeks and Trojans; that D'Arbois de Joubainville spent his life in the study of Irish for no other reason; that the sacred grove where Oedipus was carried off by the gods differed in nothing from the groves where according to Connaught tales men, women and children are carried off; that Greek literature was founded on a folk belief differing but little from that of Ireland; that Roman like English literature was founded upon the written word. (ms. 8774, fol. 1, p. 3).

Yeats goes on detailing the similarities between Irish and Greek culture. Certainly English was legislated, written into the lives of the Irish since the Statutes of Kilkenny and continuing to be legislated for five hundred years until English became dominant.

Yeats wants to reclaim Irish for the daily lives and culture of the Irish people but recognizes that English will still be necessary and sufficient in the international market:

> And this new and powerful instrument of nationality will meet no opposition from fathers of families for it superceeds [sic] no commercial language. Preserve Gaelic where it is already spoken with some device of scholarship or bounties; see that there are teachers for all that would learn. (ms. 8774, fol. 1, p. 2).

Again we hear Yeats's support of Gaelic even while he is realistic about Irish-English. His stance on language is not a betrayal of the ancient tongue nor of his nationality. For

even though the Gaelic League was founded in an effort to revitalize the Irish language, the educational policy of the league was clearly bilingual:

> A rational education, such as any self-governing country in Europe would give [the Irish people], would teach them to read and write the language that they spoke, and that their fathers had read and spoken for fifteen hundred years before them. The exigencies of life in the United Kingdom would then make it necessary to teach them a second language--English. (qtd. in Grillo 101)

Having recognized that he would have to use and reshape English into Irish-English as the language of his national identity, Yeats turned his attention to the content necessary for an Irish national theatre. Even the content was, at times, a struggle for the artist. In "Ireland and the Arts," Yeats confesses:

> I could not now write of any other country but Ireland, for my style has been shaped by the subjects I have worked on, but there was a time when my imagination seemed unwilling, when I found myself writing of some Irish event in words that would have better fitted some Italian or Eastern event, for my style had been shaped in that general stream of European literature . . . . It was years before I could rid myself of Shelley's Italian light, but now I think my style is myself. I might have found more of Ireland if I had written in Irish, but I have found a little, and I have found all of myself. (qtd. in Ure 67)

As Yeats continued to find his voice, he bent all of his creative self toward releasing his Irish imagination. Yeats records that after the scandal surrounding Parnell and the great leader's subsequent death "the Irish imaginative movement began. Everywhere men and women turned from politics in despair" (qtd. in David Clark 148). The new Irish voice that would attempt to forge a self-made Irish identity would come from the writers, the

shapers of language. In an early piece which is included in Letters to the New Island, written between 1888 and 1892, Yeats insists,

> The first thing needful if an Irish literature more elaborate and intense than our fine but primitive ballads and novels is to come into being is that readers and writers alike should really know the imaginative periods of Irish history. It is not needful that they should understand them with scholars' accuracy, but they should know them with the heart. (qtd. in Ure 63)

The key is *imaginative* history, not linear, not "facts," but a history born in the heart of the Irish, specifically interpreted in the heart of Yeats and translated to his fellow Irish. In his introduction to Yeats's address on "The Irish National Theatre," David R. Clark comments, "In his account, [Yeats] is concerned with imaginative truth rather than literal" (144). I, myself, am always a bit unsure about "literal truth." I do recognize that Yeats is never interested in a linear, historical representation of truth; perhaps the only truth he ever believes in and expresses is "imaginative truth."

Yeats's truth took the form of a national consciousness that expressed itself artistically, and his chief artistic mode of choice--despite critical admiration of his poetry--was drama. He saw himself as a dramatist both in the Irish dramatic tradition and in opposition to it. He no longer saw the old Irish dramatic forms as useful. As he explains,

> Our opportunity in Ireland is not that our playwrights have more talent--it is possible that they have less than the workers in an old tradition--but that the necessity of putting a life that has not hitherto been dramatised into their plays excludes all these types which have had their origin in a different social order. (qtd. in Ure 182-3)

Yeats did not delude himself about the difficulty of creating a national theatre with a new form to speak a new voice for Ireland. According to Ure, by 1889 Yeats was

> already aware of literary problems which had perhaps scarcely occurred to the Anglo-Irish poets who preceded him. Amongst these problems there were two more important than any of the others: how was the young poet to search for and find a theme, and how was he to serve the cause of Ireland through poetry? . . . Yeats was early convinced of the paradoxical truth that Anglo-Irish literature could best serve the Irish cause by deriving its sanctions from a wider principle than patriotic impulse alone could supply. He insisted that the Anglo-Irish poet, faced with the need for reconciling his English tongue with his Irish heritage, must not be content with the inadequacies of the Moore-Davis-Duffy school; and he early felt that the exploitation of Irish mythology and history was the best instrument for the shaping of a distinctive style. (62-63)

To shape a distinctive style, Yeats knew, meant establishing a group of writers who would write in that style. Thus, joining with some like- and some not-so-like-minded playwrights, Yeats formed a national theatre that evolved from the Irish Literary Theatre into the National Theatre that to this day remains associated with the Abbey Theatre in Dublin.

Yeats had much to say about the theatre he envisioned from the time of its inception to his death some forty years later. At the end of his address on the Irish National Theatre, Yeats pronounces:

> Ireland has won its political freedom; the struggle for intellectual or imaginative freedom, for an escape from the tyranny of the second-rate . . . or from the nightmare in our own souls, must, in some measure, be fought upon the stage. (qtd. in David Clark 154)

Much has been made of "the tyranny of the second-rate," usually in relationship to the merchant class, but I suggest that the idea of being "second-rate" has a multiplicity of meanings, one of which connects to the troubled Irish identity and its struggle for being

which is linked to language. The tyranny of the second-rate could indeed recall the merchants from The Countess Cathleen, those representatives of Britain who made a nightmare almost become reality for the Irish souls over whom they gained dominance in the play. The fight fought on that stage was played out in words and won by the self-sacrificial vow of Cathleen. The winning of the Irish peasants' freedom in Yeats's play was indeed an imaginative act, one which too often goes unrecognized by critics and Irish audiences for what it means in terms of Irish unity. However, Seamus Deane, perhaps the foremost Irish scholar today, claims, "It is in [Yeats's] plays that we find a search for the new form of feeling which would renovate our national consciousness" (qtd. in Flannery 235-6). Perhaps then Yeats's claim is valid when he says that the theatre that he helped to found is "known to Irishmen all over the world . . . because of its effect upon the imagination of Ireland" (qtd. in David Clark 147). At the least, Yeats reimaged Ireland for the Irish to the world.

Just what was it that Yeats did differently from other dramatists in his recreation of the Irish national identity on stage? According to Todd,

> Theatres had existed in Ireland since the early seventeenth century, but the audiences were mainly English and the plays almost exclusively so. What was now envisaged was a truly Irish theatre, appealing to the masses by focussing on themes which concerned them and by writing in a language which reflected their idiolects. (70)

Todd identifies two types of plays that characterized the new national theatre movement. As he describes them, "There were plays that dealt with the poor, the rural peasants and the urban working-classes, and poetic dramas such as Yeats's The Countess Cathleen" (70). Whether Lady Gregory or Synge contributed peasantry plays or Yeats provided his poetic myths, the goals were the same. The Irish Literary Theatre's statement of purpose, as developed by Yeats and Lady Gregory, claims:

> We will show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and of easy sentiment, as it has been represented, but the home of ancient idealism. We are confident of the support of all Irish people, who are weary of misrepresentation, in carrying out a work that is outside all the political questions that divide us. (qtd. in Frazier 7)

The statement presents an interesting problem. On the one hand, Yeats and his colleagues want to remove the right of representation of the Irish from those who are not Irish or Irish who have adopted the view perpetrated by the those who have been in the powerful position of making the Irish image, specifically the English. While we recognize the kind of reimaging of Irish history and Irish identity that Yeats is proposing as a highly political act, Yeats and company claim that their goal is apolitical. Frazier comments on the highly political nature of Yeats's first play written to fulfill the Irish Literary Theatre's goal.

> The howls in the gallery when The Countess Cathleen was staged showed just how little representation was outside the political questions that divided loyalist and nationalist, Protestant and Catholic, aristocrat and democrat. The advertisement by the founders was, in fact, likely to divide them more, because it makes contradictory promises: the authors will show the real Ireland and the ideal Ireland. (7)

Post-colonial critics recognize the impossibility of showing a "real" national identity and history, yet they insist that the once marginalized view of the colonized be allowed center stage. What appears center stage is not always a glorified image of the colonized, but it is, at least, an image constructed by the colonized. In this sense, Yeats and his colleagues were forerunners of the post-colonial project. As Frazier puts it, "The real Ireland may or may not have the particular vices--and virtues--the play attributes to it" (7), but Yeats's image should be as readily acceptable, if not more acceptable than any other construct because his comes from within the contested territory and identity.

Establishing a national theatre is not easy, especially in a nation in conflict, because a national culture includes diverse attitudes and groups. The furor over The Countess Cathleen illustrates the difficulty of achieving the goal Yeats and his colleagues had set. As Loren Kruger notes, when it comes to establishing an identity of the people, there is "no stable ground or ruling principle on which to erect the nation or the nation's theatre, but rather a battleground of intersecting *fields* on which the legitimacy of national and popular representation is publicly contested" (6). The stage upon which The Countess Cathleen played became a field of battle for contesting Irish identities.

Deane's analysis of the process of identity shaping by the writers of the Irish Renaissance reveals why Yeats would have reacted so strongly against the characters created by writers like Boucicault and LeFanu. As Deane explains,

> In the attempted discovery of its "true" identity, a community often begins with the demolition of the false stereotype within which it has been entrapped. This is an intricate process, since the stereotypes are successful precisely because they have been interiorized. (Nationalism 12)

Perhaps Yeats would have seen the servile attitude of LeFanu's Irish hero and the clownish antics of Boucicault's peasant rogues as demeaning without stopping to consider the ways in which the writers used these characters to undermine English attitudes. Subtle, servile wit would not do for Yeats, so he turned to the pre-colonial Celtic myths. In doing so, Irish writers like Yeats, according to Deane,

> finally took possession of the stereotype [a fierce, imaginative, poetic tribe], modified the Celt into the Gael, and began that new interpretation of themselves known as the Irish literary revival. The revival, like the rebellion and the War of Independence, the treaty of 1922 (which partitioned Ireland into its present form), and the subsequent civil war, were simultaneously causes and consequences of the concerted effort to renovate the idea of the national character and of the national destiny.

> . . . This is a classic case of how nationalism can be produced by the forces that suppress it and can, at that juncture, mobilize itself into a form of liberation. . . . It was a liberation into a specifically Irish, not a specifically human, identity. (Nationalism 13)

With regard to Yeats specifically, Deane claims, "Yeats . . . wished to bestow upon his culture a unique role in helping humankind to survive the onslaught of the 'filthy modern tide'" (Nationalism 13).

Deane writes, "The Irish Revival and its predecessors had the right idea in looking to some legendary past for the legitimating origin of Irish society as one distinct from the British, which had a different conception of origin" (Nationalism 17). However, Deane tempers this praise with the following grim analysis:

> But the search for origin, like that for identity, is self-contradictory. Once the origin is understood to be an invention, however necessary, it can never again be thought of as something "natural." A culture brings itself into being by an act of cultural invention that itself depends on an anterior legitimating nature. (Nationalism 17)

While Deane questions the legitimacy of a natural Irish identity, some scholars question the Irish identity of Yeats's The Countess Cathleen:

> But one might well ask, how much does it matter if the play is Irish? . . . It mattered a great deal to that audience in 1899, however, because WBY had told them beforehand that for the first time on stage, he was going to show the Irish people who they really were. (Frazier 7)

Falling victim to some of the same preconceptions that audiences may have had when they arrived at the theatre for the play's first performance, Frazier bemoans Yeats's characterization of the Irish as a negative portrait. In order to evaluate Yeats's characterizations as negative, Frazier attempts to describe the "general moral conduct of the Irish" in the nineteenth century, preceding and contemporary to Yeats's play, "in

order to judge The Countess Cathleen as a representation of reality" (8). After a couple of paragraphs of commentary on what might be considered typical Irish behavior of the time versus the conduct of the characters in the play, Frazier concludes, "It was not that the Irish did not commit sins, but that they typically did not commit **those** sins singled out in the play--lechery, robbery, and iconoclasm" (9). It seems to me that Frazier focuses too much on facts which are questionable. Yeats purposely avoids placing the play in a specific time period, thus removing it from usual historical constructs and suggesting the realm of allegory, a typical mode of expression for writers working within a colonial context. If the play is read as an allegory about the power of language, as I suggest, it encompasses both Yeats's artistic concerns with the expression of a personal image of a national identity and it voices the political undercurrents at play in language that Yeats, try as he might, could never ignore.

An interesting aspect of the politics of language came into play when

> the ladies of the Chief Secretary's Lodge--Lady Balfour, the countess of Fingall, and others--begged Yeats to let them perform the work as nine *tableaux vivants* six months before the performance scheduled for the Antient Concert Rooms. Yeats wrote his sister that of course, as a nationalist, he could not go anywhere near the residence of Britain's representative in Ireland, much less take part in the performance, but as a gentleman he did not refuse to meet the ladies in Betty Balfour's house to advise them about costumes. Their performance was a complete success: it was fun for the gentry to act the peasants, who must have seemed like fabulous talking beasts out of Grimm. (Frazier 10)

Obviously, politics played a role in Yeats's written response. The oral portrayal of the peasant class by the aristocracy was also a political act. While the English ladies involved were usurping the Irish image once again, the Irish aristocratic ladies may have been discovering the delight of an Irish voice long denied them. Perhaps Frazier's assumption

that the peasant characters "seemed like fabulous talking beasts out of Grimm" might be close to the mark for the English interpretation, but does it necessarily follow that the English and Irish ladies had the same interpretation or "fun" with the roles? If we reduce the conflicts in the play and its presentation to a class struggle only, then the answer would be "yes." However, if the play is truly attempting to reconstruct the Irish identity, then aristocratic Irish must be included in that identity. Yeats himself, with his aristocratic connections, has been accused of lacking an Irish perspective. Frazier observes, "A rather sensible Catholic reviewer for the Daily Express concluded that Yeats, though 'a king in Fairyland,' was completely ignorant of the way an Irishman thought" (10). Of course, such a claim is preposterous. Yeats was an Irishman; his recorded thoughts, his writing, can only be those of an Irishman--aristocratic or not. His Irish voice must be allowed its say, and his struggle to speak his Irishry should be accepted as just that--a struggle which occupied his artistic life.

Having established that Yeats understood how language demarcates a culture, we can now turn to the first play through which Yeats attempted to speak his Irishry. A writer who continually revised his works, Yeats revised The Countess Cathleen extensively. In fact, the revisions are so many and so complex that the play must be treated differently from other works in the Variorum edition of Yeats's plays. For the purposes of this study, I use the 1899 version, which was the first performed in Ireland, as the primary text; I also compare this early version to the 1912 version, which is the published version which most closely correlates to the 1911 opening at the Abbey Theatre. All citations are based upon the Variorum. Early in the play, Yeats demonstrates how language can become divisive in the life of the Irish people. In The Countess Cathleen, language is linked to a separation of the Irish from God and from one another. From the opening of the play, Yeats draws our attention to communication difficulties. The play asks the question, "Is there any power in speech?" The rest of the play provides a resounding, "Yes!"--power for good or evil.

From the opening of the play, Yeats suggests an Irish atmosphere permeated by communication problems and looming evil. Teigue, a peasant lad, speaks of the animals' restlessness and their attentiveness to sounds not discernible by humans, warning signals perhaps of what is to come or is already present. While Teigue pays attention to the behavior of the animals, and, thus, might heed their warning, some Irishman seem completely incapable of communicating or receiving communication. Teigue tells of a man seen locally "who has no mouth / Nor ears, nor eyes" (l. 9-10, p. 7). A man like the one described cannot speak nor can he hear or see warnings of the evil that moves across the land. Since Teigue's father is somewhere out amidst these evil omens, perhaps he also does not hear or see what he should--or he would have fled home.

One might wonder, with such talk of evil spirits, where God fits into the Irish scene created by Yeats. Yeats, not being one who embraced orthodox religion, managed to offend many of his compatriots with his unusual weaving of religious, mythical, and demonic elements in this play. In the 1899 version, there are moments which were evidently especially distressing to some Catholics. However, in focusing on their own partisan interests, the Irish audience ignored the central message and ended up allowing language to divide them in much the way Yeats tried to warn them it could and would. If we recognize that the content of the play has less to do with any particular church than it does with communication and relationships--human to human and human to divine--then the communication acts of the truly devout are seen as ultimately successful while those who pervert communication are doomed to failure in the end though they experience a short-term success.

Maire, Teigue's mother and a devout woman, successfully communicates her hopes and needs, expecting and receiving a positive answer. She prays for her delinquent husband's safe return: "White Virgin, / Bring Shemus safe home from the hateful forest; / Bring Shemus home out of the wicked woods" (l. 11-12, p. 7). Shemus does indeed shortly return, unscathed. However, the second part of Maire's prayer will not be

answered as she would hope: "And save him from the demons of the woods, / Who have crept out and pace upon the roads" (l. 13-14, p. 7). Clearly, Maire recognizes that there is evil walking in her land, but the question remains as to whether Shemus, her husband, is capable of recognizing evil, of heeding the warnings that the animals and his own wife communicate. Shemus escapes from the woods unscathed, as Maire has prayed; but he will foolishly welcome the evil into his own home, into himself. At this point in the play, Teigue remains under the influence of his devout mother; he is able to hear "far-off tympans and harps" following her prayer (l. 17a, p. 9), a heavenly sound perhaps when one considers that they announce the coming of Cathleen. All will change when his father returns and invites strangers into his home, joining them in a dialogue of destruction.

Having claimed that this play, even when it opens, has less to do with religion, and perhaps even with economics, than it does with recognizing the identity of individuals with whom one relates and communicating with the good in self, others, and the divine, I want to demonstrate how Yeats makes this language/identity theme even stronger in his 1912 version prepared for an Abbey production. Though he downplays the identifiably Catholic bits--removing the shrine to the Virgin and changing the prayer--Yeats increases the discussion about communication. In the opening scene Teigue asks, "What is the good of praying? father says / God and the Mother of God have dropped asleep" (l. 19, p. 9). The context of Teigue's question is the famine setting; the content, however, draws our attention to the problem of speakers and listeners. Mary (Yeats uses the anglicized form of the name now), Teigue's mother, suggests a reason for God's seeming inattentiveness to the cries of the hungry Irish: "Maybe He'd have us die because He knows / When the ear is stopped and when the eye is stopped, / That every wicked sight is hid from the eye, / And all fool talk from the ear!" (l. 53-56, p. 13). The suggestion here is that God has ceased to listen to the Irish because the Irish have lost the ability to distinguish between foolish words and words of wisdom. The central

message is for all the Irish to hear, if they will or can: If what the Irish call God does not seem to be listening to the Irish, perhaps the Irish are not listening to God; their ears are filled with words from other speakers. A dialogue can only occur when speaker and receiver share a common desire to connect.

The connection between God and the Irish is not the only one that has been broken. The members of the peasant family can no longer communicate with one another. In the 1899 version when Shemus returns, Maire's dialogue reveals that her husband has ceased to listen to her warnings, ceased communicating with her though he will spend his breath and time with strangers:

> Shemus, you are late home: you have been lounging
> And chattering with some one: you know well
> How the dreams trouble me, and how I pray,
> Yet you lie sweating on the hill from morn,
> Or linger at the crossways with all comers,
> Gliding your tongue with the calamitous times. (l. 26-28b, p. 9)

Maire's earlier fear and prayer are illuminated by this dialogue, especially when Shemus responds, "I'm in no mood to listen to your clatter" (l. 29, p. 9). Shemus seems to have fallen in with whatever or whoever creates calamity; the description of his speech as a "gliding tongue" has a negative connotation that may indicate deceptiveness on the part of Shemus. At the very least, he is a victim of deception by this point, calling the warnings and prayers of his wife "clatter." All too soon he will become a partner in deception, having made of himself a likely candidate. Shemus is deaf to his wife and deaf to the world's spiritual warnings symbolized in nature. He admits that he has returned empty-handed, never able to locate food because he "could hardly hear / A wing moving in all the famished woods" (l. 32-33, p. 9,11). The suggestion, once again, combines the spiritual and physical universe with the notion of birds and angels both going unheard by Shemus. Shemus is equally unaware of the communication of his dog,

an animal who shares his home and is traditionally revered for super-sensitivity to its master. The dog having bayed shortly before Shemus reaches home, Shemus insists that the dog "heard me coming and smelt food" (l. 33f, p. 11). However, Shemus has no food; there is something wrong with his interpretation of his dog's communication, just as he fails to interpret the communications of his wife and the world around him.

Yeats demonstrates that Shemus' failure to communicate properly and well extends to all human relationships. The beggars will not let him join them; and Shemus misinterprets and attempts to deceive the wealthy local landowner. With Shemus as a representative Irishman, Yeats's play explores broken communication between the individual and the divine, between family members, between members of the same class, and in the following scene between members of different classes. The Irish landowners have difficulty entering into a dialogue with their tenants. Upon hearing someone outside his door, Shemus fits an arrow to his bow, ready to shoot until he sees that it is a well-to-do, young woman and her companions. He invites Countess Cathleen, along with her musicians and nurse, into his home, but not without first giving his son oral instructions on how to behave: "call up a whey face and a crying voice" (l. 68, p. 15). Teigue carries out his father's instructions and adds a lie to emphasize his weakened condition: "Lady, I fell but now, being weak with hunger and thirst, / I have not tasted a crust for these four days" (l. 106–107a, p. 19). Earlier he had spoken of having eaten, though a poor meal, the day before, and the family does have a bit of corn meal and one hen left. The Countess Cathleen gives the family all the money that she has in her purse and promises twice the amount on the morrow. In a complete lack of gratitude, Shemus complains about the music which Aleel, Cathleen's harpist, is playing. Cathleen explains to Shemus that Aleel plays music for her to help get her mind off the sorrows of Ireland, sorrows that may kill her. Aleel supports Cathleen's assertions about the comfort of music with a dialogue suggesting to the peasants that they bolt the door against evil and allow music to rule the world instead. For the 1912 version, Yeats reduces the poetic Aleel's reply

and supplies a more prosaic and somewhat clearer commentary about communication. Shemus replies, "I have said nothing, lady. / Why should the like of us complain?" (l. 22–23, p. 119). His reply is laced with irony. He has said something or the discussion regarding the music would never have begun. He is complaining bitterly in these few words of his. His defensive attitude is a lie that betrays his bitterness toward Cathleen, the woman who has just given him money so that his family may eat.[9] The deceit in and defensive tones of Shemus's language betray the state of his soul. In both the 1899 and 1912 versions, Aleel hears Shemus's complaint for what it means. Defiantly Aleel sings, "Who mocks at music mocks at love" (l. 127, p. 23). After Cathleen and her companions depart the cottage, Shemus commands Maire to leave the door open, despite Aleel's warning song. In the 1912 version, Yeats extends the discussion of language acts. Mary warns Shemus that he should heed the words of the countess: "When those that have read books, / And seen the seven wonders of the world, / Fear what's above or what's below the ground, / It's time that poverty should bolt the door" (l. 147–149, p.27). Yeats also writes a line that signifies not only Cathleen's concern for the peasants, but the origin of that concern springing from the powerful use of words. Though the orality of the songs comfort Cathleen, books have made her aware of the sorrows. Oona, Cathleen's nurse, tells the peasant couple, "Sorrow that she's but read of in a book/ Weigh on her mind as if they had been her own" (l. 120–121, p. 23).

Several points may be made about Cathleen's literacy. First, Mary believes that Cathleen has greater power, greater insight into the workings of the world because she reads. Secondly, literacy, though a mark of power, is also a measure of distance. Cathleen does not physically experience the peasants' hunger, yet the power of her imagination triggered by the words she reads is strong enough to make the sorrows she feels capable of killing her. Shemus lives in the midst of the hunger, can hear the cries of the beggars, has cried out himself, yet his heart goes out to no one else. He has closed his ears to his fellow Irish, even to the pleas of his wife, as he becomes centered

on his own needs and wants. Mary's warning should not be read or heard as a description of the division between landowner and tenant farmer, but as a plea for a unified Irish capable of closing their doors to external dangers that threaten internal damage, even death.

Unfortunately, Shemus remains deaf to the loving words of both his wife and the countess, creating division in his family and leaving himself open to the danger of foreigners. He is also deaf to any divine voice, a problem he blames not upon himself but upon God. In the 1899 version, Shemus smirks at his wife's faith, claiming that God "Has dropped in a doze and cannot hear the poor" (l. 170, p. 29). Shemus' conceives God as a negligent and unconcerned being, a view which certainly might disturb some religious folk. However, Shemus is the character whom Yeats demonstrates over and over again is a faulty communicator--listening to the wrong voices, interpreting incorrectly, and speaking deviously. Though Maire's prayer is answered earlier, each character is responsible for his or her own communication acts. Shemus chooses to enter into a dialogue with evil. First he admits that he is "mindful to go pray to [Satan] / To cover all this table with red gold" (l. 170h–i, p.29), alluding to not only a dissatisfaction with God but also with the financial gift of the countess. Then he tries to tempt his son into sharing the culpability for his wicked communication: "Teig will you dare me to do it?" (l. 170j, p. 29). For now, his son resists. Maire tries to dissuade her husband from his wicked foolishness: "O Shemus, hush, hush maybe your mind might pray / In spite o' the mouth" (l. 170k–l, p. 29). Maire's remark supports Jesus' assertion that thinking the words are equal to saying them or performing the act that has been thought; God hears the thoughts (Matthew 5:21–22, 27–28; 15:10–19).

Shemus does not stop at wicked thoughts and talk; he acts upon his evil ideas. In the 1899 version, following an assertion that he would sit down to eat with demons, Shemus kicks to pieces a shrine to the Virgin Mary that Maire has kept in their home. Then he repeats his earlier denouncement of God, but with a twist: "The Mother of God

has dropped asleep, / And all her household things have gone to wrack" (l.182e-f, p. 31). Of course, he is responsible for wrecking the household shrine, just as he is responsible for his inattentiveness to the divine voices. The destruction of the shrine contributed to the problems Yeats's play encountered upon its first performance.

Reacting to public opinion, Yeats decided that using a specific Catholic symbol was unnecessary to make his point about Shemus' perverted dialogue (deaf to divinity but open to evil). In the 1912 version, Teigue encourages his father to call out to the figures who have been seen of late giving gold in the countryside. In both the 1899 and 1912 versions, Mary exclaims, "Is it call devils? / Call devils from the wood, call them in here? / . . . God help us all!" (l. 165, 169; p. 29). In the 1912 script, rather than kick apart a shrine, Shemus strikes his frantic wife and responds, "Pray, if you have a mind to. / It's little that the sleepy ears above / Care for your words; but I'll call what I please" (l. 170-171, p. 29, 31). Shemus grows violent, striking his wife after letting her know that he will "call" into his home whomever he pleases, and it is not the presence of Cathleen--the Irish landowner who has recently given money to his family--that he seeks, but the "devils" against whom his wife has warned him. Wicked in his foolishness, Shemus calls: "Whatever you are that walk the woods at night, / So be it that you have / . . . a friendly trick of speech, / I welcome you. Come, sit beside the fire" (l. 173-177, p.31). He knows he is calling up spirits that speak deceit, yet he foolishly believes they can strike up a friendship. Having never offered the comfort of his fire to Cathleen, Shemus now invites alien spirits to make themselves at home. When they arrive, "dressed as Eastern merchant[s]" (directions after 187, p.33), the aliens frighten him into temporary speechlessness. After encouragement from his son, Shemus asks if there is anything that his family might provide for the merchants. They reply that all they need is "a safe corner to count money in" (l. 195, p. 35). They imply that some places nearby might not be "safe" for them. When he is finally able to enter into dialogue with them, Shemus admits, "There had been words between my wife and me / Because I said I would be

master here, / And ask in what I pleased or who I pleased" (l. 197-199, p. 35, 37). The idea that Shemus seeks a shared language, a dialogue, with the aliens suggests that common language that has been imposed upon the Irish by the aliens from the east, the English. When Shemus enters into dialogue with the strangers, such a dialogue estranges him forever from his wife. The Irish family is not broken by the famine, but by the words exchanged between Shemus and the aliens.

Having demonstrated the potential divisiveness of language through what happens to the Irish family when communication fails at home and foreigners displace family, Yeats turns to the aliens' devious use of language. In the 1899 version, the alien merchants ply Shemus with wine before asking, "What think you of the master whom we serve?" (l. 202, p. 37). Though they have not named their master, Shemus feels quite sure by the wealth they display and the wine they share that he too would like to serve their master. The alien merchants have succeeded in singing a song of temptation to the soul of Shemus. In the 1912 version, Yeats changes the merchants' lines so that they sound more song-like: "all who deal with us / Shall eat, drink, and be merry" (l. 208-209, p. 39). Maire recognizes that the merchants are wicked and that they have used wine to muddle the minds of her husband and son. She also speaks of their coming in terms of the effect they have on the communication of creatures around her: ""Before you came two horned owls peered at us; / The dog bayed, and the tongue of Shemus maddened" (l. 219-219a, p. 39). Challenging their identity as mere merchants, Maire demands, "If you be not demons / Go and give alms among the starving poor" (l. 229-230, p. 41). The challenge she sets the aliens recalls the act that Cathleen has performed which has proven her saintliness. However, the merchants turn charity into an "evil," and insist that the poor must trade for food. When Maire declares that the poor have nothing to trade, the merchants clarify the cost: "They still have their souls" (l. 246, p. 43). When there is no doubt that these merchants are Satan's servants, Shemus and his son are ready to accept their money.

Now words are exchanged that will seal the doom of the Irishmen. The First Merchant states the bargain to which Shemus must agree:

> Cry out
> In every cross-road, every market-place,
> And every lane, we buy souls for money,
> Giving so great a price that men may live
> In mirth and ease until the famine ends. (l. 254, 263-266; p. 45, 47)

When Shemus hears how easy is the task which they have set him, that all he has to do is tell a tale of men who buy souls to fill bellies, he agrees to work for the Prince of Lies. In the 1912 version, Yeats compounds Shemus' wickedness with a lie; Shemus agrees to tell the Irish that these foreigners are "Christian men" when he knows they are demons (l. 267, p. 47). From the opening of the play, Shemus' separation from the divine through his own foolishness and wickedness has been hinted at and now fully effected, with the son now joining his fallen father. Since the entrance of the aliens into the house, the peasant family has been completely divided--the men now alienated from faithful Maire. As this opening act ends, Shemus and Teigue prepare to take the merchants' message of destruction to the larger community where they will be instrumental in dividing the Irish locals from their souls.

In Act II of The Countess Cathleen, Yeats continues to demonstrate the divisiveness of language, a theme which strengthens from the 1899 to the 1912 version. In the 1899 version, the act opens with a scene between Cathleen and her nurse, Oona. Oona offers to sing to Cathleen the songs Aleel has taught them, songs about the old heroes and old spirits and gods of Ireland. By the 1912 version (in which Yeats changes the acts to scenes), Yeats had more fully developed Aleel's character. Yeats cut the scene in which Oona sings to Cathleen and instead played off the separate positive spiritual experiences provided by Aleel, the pagan poet, and Oona, the devout Catholic. Aleel, the poet who does not practice orthodox Christianity, tries to sing Cathleen out of

her sorrow. There is power in his song: "This hollow box remembers every foot / That danced upon the level grass of the world, / And will tell secrets if I whisper to it" (l. 328-330, p. 57). However, Oona wants to be the one to comfort Cathleen. She cautions Cathleen not to listen to Aleel: "The empty rattle-pate! Lean on this arm, / That I can tell you is a christened arm, / And not like some, if we are to judge by speech" (l. 344-346, p. 59). But Oona judges Aleel's speech poorly. She does not listen to his love, only to his lack of orthodox religious expression.[4] In his bitterness at being interrupted and having Cathleen's attention taken from his song, Aleel scolds:

> Old woman, old woman,
> You robbed her of three minutes peace of mind,
> And though you live unto a hundred years,
> And wash the feet of beggars and give alms,
> And climb Cro-Patrick, you shall not be pardoned.
> (l. 357-360, p. 59).

In the dialogue that follows, their inability to listen to each other, despite the fact that both love Cathleen deeply, is clear:

> *Oona.* How does a man who never was baptized
> Know what Heaven pardons?
> *Aleel.* You are a sinful woman
> *Oona.* I care no more than if a pig had grunted. (l. 361-363; p. 59, 61)

At this point in the argument, the entrance of another character stops the bickering and sets the scene for another demonstration of opposed language acts. In the 1899 version, Cathleen's elderly gardener comes with "ill words . . . too bad / To send with any other" (l. 364d-e, p. 61). Rouges have destroyed the orchards and crops and killed the gardener's dog in their hunt for food. Cathleen commiserates with her gardener but excuses the deed as a result of the famine. As the act continues, Cathleen's herdsman brings similar news, then her steward announces the culprits have

come to pay for their deeds. The peasants enter with their tale of fortune in exchange for their souls, a tale that holds no comfort for Cathleen, who would willingly give all that she has to save the Irish people. Though Yeats has played with communication acts in this version--the exchange of tales by the servants and the peasants, the deafness of Oona which causes Cathleen to repeat each tale to her nurse--he cuts the scene down but strengthens the message about conflicting communication in the 1912 version.

In the latter version, Cathleen's steward rushes in with news that the peasants have been stealing food from Cathleen's garden. He is relieved that he has reached her first with this news: "Then God be thanked, I am the first to tell you. / I was afraid some other of the servants-- / Though I've been on the watch--had been the first / And mixed up truth and lies, your ladyship" (l. 368-371, p. 61). Truth and lies have been mixed up throughout this play, and will continue to be a source of conflict and tragedy. However, the faithful steward gets his story right and speaks the truth when he confirms to Cathleen: "To rob or starve, that was the choice they had" (l. 380, p. 67).

Close on the heels of Cathleen's faithful steward, come faithless servants of Satan. Shemus and Teigue come running in with their own tale to tell, one based on the basest of lies. The dialogue between the opposing types of servants reveals the importance of subtext and the danger in not hearing it:

Shemus. . . . I am running to the world with the best news
That has been brought it for a thousand years.
Steward. Then get your breath and speak.
Shemus. If you'd my news
You'd run as fast and be as out of breath. (l. 394-397, p. 71)

Shemus' first statement is a lie cloaked in tones of wonder and excitement. His news has the power to make people sell their souls to the devil, to trade off temporal torture for eternal damnation. Shemus' second statement is truer than he knows, given its double meaning. Indeed, if the steward knew what Shemus knows he would run as fast, but for

one of two different reasons: to escape the evil word-merchants or to warn the people of the lie they tell. Either way, the faithful steward would have no breath to speak the lie Shemus brings; the steward would never voice such wicked words. The good steward encourages Shemus to calm down and get his breath back. The significance of the double meaning in "your breath" is clarified by Shemus' next lines: "There's something every man has carried with him / And thought no more about than if it were / A mouthful of the wind; and now it's grown / A marketable thing!" (l. 399-402, p. 71). The "mouthful of wind" of which Shemus speaks is the human soul. Having already sold his own soul to Satan, Shemus no longer has his own mouthful of wind, his own breath with which to speak. He must speak with the breath of others; now the aliens have placed their words in his mouth so that the voice with which he speaks acts as an echo of theirs. Shemus and his son have come to accept the words of the merchants with such enthusiasm that they cry out their message without hesitation: "'Money for souls, good money for a soul'" (l. 411, p. 73). In this characterization, we can see and hear Yeats's antipathy for the Anglo-Irish merchants who he thought drowned out the voices of old Ireland's heroes and impoverished the souls of the peasants who tried to join the merchant ranks. In both the 1899 and 1912 versions, Cathleen offers to buy back the peasants' souls at twenty times the price paid for them by the demons. In the 1899 version the peasants refuse Cathleen's offer. In the 1912 version, Shemus firmly and merrily laughs off her suggestion, continuing to cry out his message as he departs.

At this point in the 1912 version Cathleen speaks words which will bring her companions from opposition into a partnership of sorts. In the 1899 version, Cathleen instructs her steward to follow after the peasants and "beseech them" (l. 423, p. 75). But in the latter version, Yeats elaborates the instructions. For the sake of the lost Irish souls who have just turned their backs on her, Cathleen tells Aleel, "Go call them here again, bring them by force, / Beseech them, bribe, do anything you like" (l. 423-424, p. 75). Aleel is a song-maker, a poet, the dramatic representative of the poet behind the

play. Three of the four specific instructions Cathleen gives Aleel are commands which require Aleel to employ his verbal skills: call, beseech, bribe. The order of these verbal acts represents increasing desperation on the speaker's part which calls for extreme language measures on the part of the poet if the Irish are to be saved. The other two phrases which are included in Cathleen's speech, given to whom she is speaking and noting the specific instructions, can also refer to language acts. Language has the power to "force" people to behave a particular way. We know that Cathleen and Aleel both believe language has such power; Aleel sings to Cathleen to make her forget her sorrows. In addition, Cathleen gives Aleel free rein to use his powers of language to secure the safety of the endangered Irish: "do anything you like" (l. 424, p. 75). Cathleen then turns to Oona, the devout Christian nurse, and instructs her to assist Aleel: "And you too follow, add your prayers to his" (l. 425, p. 75). In this choice of words, Cathleen not only dignifies the faith of the nurse, she also equates Aleel's language acts to prayer. By listening to and acting upon the verbal instructions of Cathleen, the pagan poet and the Christian nurse join together, acting for the first time as partners who share a similar concern. The unity that Yeats suggests here is what W.J. McCormack in his analysis of Yeats refers to as "a movement towards assimilating certain prominent, recognizable, and immediate aspects of social experience in a manner which absorbs and accommodates them" (296).

Though through the newly joined forces of Aleel and Oona, Yeats creates a hope of language harmony where once there was division, he is not finished with exploring the dangers of language and its potential for harm. In Act III Cathleen encounters words of temptation while she is praying for the healing of her people. The setting is particularly appropriate for Cathleen's first encounter with words of temptation; she is praying before the altar in the oratory of her great hall. While the 1899 version begins with the entrance of the merchants, the 1912 version opens with what has been called a love scene between Aleel and Cathleen. While Aleel and Cathleen certainly love one another to

varying degrees, the scene also reads as a temptation coming from a loved one which precedes the temptation from the evil merchants. Aleel comes to tell Cathleen of a dream he had in which he heard a creature with "birds about his head" speak to him (l. 460, p. 83). Cathleen remembers, "I have heard that one of the old gods walked so" (l. 461, p. 83). The oral folk-tale that Cathleen recalls lends power to the image from Aleel's dream. Aleel reinforces the possibility of the dream-speaker's importance:

> It may be that he is angelical;
> And, lady, he bids me call you from these woods.
> And you must bring but your old foster-mother,
> And some few serving men, and live in the hills,
> Among the sounds of music and the light
> Of waters, till the evil days are done.
> For here some terrible death is waiting you,
> Some unimagined evil, some great darkness
> That fable has not dreamt of, nor sun nor moon
> Scattered. (l. 462–471; p. 83, 85)

Aleel includes himself in the word-picture that he paints for Cathleen of the life she could live away from the sorrow and evil. He must be there to make the "sounds of music." He also speaks of the current evil and the evil to come as wickedness which surpasses any told of in fables of old. There is some question whether Aleel heard any such creature as he describes. Certainly Cathleen mistrusts the origin of the message. She says that the speaker was "not angelical, but of the old gods, / Who wander about the world to waken the heart" (l. 493, p. 87). She may mean that she believes that the message came to Aleel in a dream from one of the old gods, or she may mean that the source is Aleel himself, a follower of the old ways who wanders throughout the world singing his passionate songs. Whichever she means, she will not give in to the temptation

to flee to safety and leave the rest of the Irish to cope with the evil days. Her faithfulness to the people of Ireland humbles Aleel:

Cathleen. . . . I have sworn,
By her whose heart the seven sorrows have pierced,
To pray before this altar until my heart
Has grown to Heaven like a tree, and there
Rustled its leaves, till Heaven has saved my
people.

Aleel. [who has risen]. When one so great has spoken of love to one
So little as I, though to deny him love,
What can he but hold out beseeching hands,
Then let them fall beside him, knowing how greatly
They have overdared?

[He goes towards the door of the hall. The Countess Cathleen takes a few steps toward him.

Cathleen. If the old tales are true,
Queens have wed shepherds and kings beggar-maids;
God's procreant waters flowing about your mind
Have made you more than kings or queens; and not you
But I am the empty pitcher.

Aleel. Being silent,
I have said all, yet let me stay beside you. (l. 498-512; p. 87, 89)

In this dialogue, the greatness of love is spoken: Cathleen's for Ireland, and Aleel's for Cathleen. Cathleen trusts the power of her prayers to force Heaven to act in favor of her people, and she recognizes Aleel's power as a poet. In so saying, she abolishes ideas about social or economic methods of classifying people and tells Aleel that he is worthy of marriage to anyone. Earlier Cathleen attempted to save the Irish by

blending the pagan ways with Christian ways, as represented by the partnership of Aleel and Oona. However, the partnership failed to produce the salvation of the Irish. Cathleen knows that the only possibility for redemption is in a new way, an absolute love and self-sacrifice for all the Irish, tolerant and accepting of all. Her actions will cause a destruction that is more than either Aleel or Oona will be able to bear, but in the end she will save Ireland. Knowing her way will hurt Aleel, she sends him away:

> . . . I send you from me. Do not speak;
> There have been women that bid men to rob
> Crowns from the Country-under-Wave or apples
> Upon a dragon-guarded hill, and all
> That they might sift men's hearts and wills,
> And trembled as they bid it, as I tremble
> That lay a hard task on you, that you go,
> And silently, . . .
>
> *[Aleel goes.]* (l. 517-524, 526; p. 91)

Recognizing the power of the poet's words, Cathleen twice asks him to leave without speaking.

Having withstood Aleel's temptation, proffered in love, Cathleen is soon tempted by those who hate her, the alien word-merchants. In the 1899 version, the Second Merchant tells of a priest, Father John, whose soul has escaped the clutches of evil. Then the Second Merchant upbraids his partner for failing to snare the soul of the Countess Cathleen, despite having failed at his own task of snaring the priest. The dialogue that ensues illustrates the power of prayer:

> *First Merchant.* . . . This holy Countess prayed so long and hard,
> That doors and windows barred with piety
> Defied me and my drudges out of Hell.
> But now she is fallen asleep over her prayers;

[He points to the oratory door. They peer through cautiously.]

She lies worn out upon the altar steps:
A labourer, tired of ploughing His hard fields,
And deafening His closed ears with cries on cries
Hoping to draw His hands down from the stars
To take the people from us.

Second Merchant. We must hurry.
We should half stifle if she woke and prayed. (l. 534v-dd, 535; p. 93, 95, 97)

Though the merchants have repeated some of the same claims about God that Shemus made earlier, they are aware that they misconstrue even while they speak or they would not fear the power of Cathleen's prayers. The alien merchants display their own power over local Irish spirits when they call up a group of Sheogues to help them rob the countess' coffers. These Irish spirits would like to resist the alien demons because Cathleen is "dear to all our race" (l. 535cc, p. 99), but the merchants have inflicted a "sign of evil" on their hearts which forces the Sheogues to obey (l. 535jj-ll, p. 99). After the robbery is completed, stripping Cathleen of the money she uses to care for the poor, amd the Sheogues have vanished, The Second Merchant suggests killing Cathleen. Before the merchants take further action against the countess, however, they want to make sure that the gold is secreted away. They call up the spirits of the dead souls whom they have purchased and find two recently enough departed to have the strength to lift and carry the bags of gold. However, like the Sheogues, these spirits too do the merchants' bidding unwillingly, loving Cathleen for the goodness of her heart. Once the gold is gone, the merchants' attention is quickly drawn back to Cathleen, who has muttered a portion of a prayer even while sleeping. In order to stop even her muttered prayers, the First Merchant decides to wake her and attempt to muddle her thoughts.

As Cathleen rouses, she questions their identity. After telling her that they are merchants, they tell her that they have news for her and proceed to spin lies that indicate all the plans she has made for future stores of food--cattle being driven, ships loaded with stores--will come to naught because some ill fate has befallen each provision. Their stories make her all the more glad that she has money to purchase food to give to the poor from those who have hoarded. Of course, she has not yet discovered the robbery. When she asks the merchants if, in their travels, they have heard "of the demons who buy souls" (l. 568, p. 115), the merchants spin a web of words, telling of two other merchants who look "like us, lady" (l. 574, p. 115). They claim that these others are the two who buy souls, and they belabor the idea that the deals made are extraordinary and would certainly reap a wicked harvest if not for Cathleen's gold. Cathleen listens carefully and hears beneath the merchants' words a frightening tone. She tells them:

> There is a something, merchant, in your voice
> That makes me fear. When you were telling how
> A man may lose his soul and lose his God,
> Your eyes lighted up, and the strange weariness
> That hangs about you vanished. When you told
> How my poor money serves the people--both--
> Merchants, forgive me--seemed to smile. . . .
> There is a something in you that I fear:
> A something not of us. Were you not born
> In some most distant corner of the world? (l. 599-604, 608-610; p. 117, 119)

The undertone of the merchants betrays them as foreigners, the evil in the midst of Ireland. Significantly, this aristocratic lady will not be duped; she hears the subtext of hatred in the merchants' voices.

After the merchants have fled, the porter confirms Cathleen's fears: "Demons were here. . . . / Whispering with human voices" (l. 630, 632; p. 123). However, Cathleen refuses to give in to fear. She affirms, "But always I have faith" (l. 636, p. 123). She insists that God does not forsake His people, though the clay of which people are made may crumble and "a nation falls" (l. 642, p. 123). Yeats is using his heroine to say what he knows: while the old may bring about the new shape, a new shape is needed for a national identity. Immediately following her affirmation of God's concern for his people, Cathleen gives keys to Oona and the Old Peasant, which will give them access to the larder, the dairy, and a room full of medicinal herbs. Cathleen tells the peasant that in addition to all kinds of medicines and herbs, he will find in that room "the book of cures" (l. 651, p. 125). The implication is that she will not be present to administer the healing herbs. She confirms this thought, when she announces:

> I have heard
> A sound of wailing in unnumbered hovels,
> And I must go down, down, I know not where.
> Pray for the poor folk who are crazed with famine;
> Pray, you good neighbors.
> *[The Peasants all kneel. The Countess ascends the steps to the door of the oratory, and, turning round, stands there motionless for a little, and then cries in a loud voice.*
> Mary, queen of angels,
> And all you clouds on clouds of saints, farewell! (l. 654-659; p. 125, 127)

Cathleen's prayer to Mary is fitting because Mary becomes the vessel of salvation for Christians by giving birth to Christ; Cathleen, another woman, will become the vessel of salvation for Ireland and a martyred saint like those among the clouds.

While Yeats makes of Cathleen a sort of female Christ figure, he does not limit himself to an orthodox Christian view of the world. Such independence caused problems

for Yeats, problems which affected the reception of this play. However, if we read the play with an understanding of Yeats's nationalist feelings and desire for Irish unity, then we can avoid simplistic critiques of his ideas about class or religion. He is capable of fusing old Irish ways (often termed pagan) with Christian concepts, peasants with aristocrats. The divisions to which Yeats attends are found in his interest in the uses of language. The purveyors of lies in this play are the foreigners and those who follow them. The prayers of the faithful, be they pagan Aleel's or devout Oona's, have power for good. And the final language act of Cathleen will have the power to save. Cathleen's wisdom in the face of evil speaks of Yeats's affinity for the Irish aristocracy that such women as Lady Gregory would come to represent in his own experience. Cathleen will not fall victim to the devious aliens out of her own foolishness.

Following Cathleen's discovery that she has no money to buy back souls but her affirmation that she still has faith, Yeats decided to insert a new scene into his 1912 script. Scene IV is a brief episode that sets up the scene in which souls are bartered in Act IV (scene V of the 1912 version). The interesting thing about scene IV is that peasants who are telling tales about gold base their descriptions on what they have "heard tell." The First Peasant has the most to say about what he has heard:

> It's beautiful,
> The most beautiful thing under the sun,
> That's what I've heard. . . .
> But doesn't a gold piece glitter like the sun?
> That's what my father, who'd seen better days,
> Told me when I was but a little boy--
> . . . . that is what he said. (l. 662-663, 665-667, 669; p. 127, 129)

Again, the power of the spoken word, the tale passed from one to another, leads to danger. In the next scene, some of the local peasants will agree to sell their souls for

the gold of which they have heard. Since Cathleen no longer has any gold, she cannot outbid for these souls, so she will find another form of value to trade for their salvation.

Once Yeats allows Cathleen to recognize the foreign word-merchants for who they are and what they intend, her victimization is sealed in a different way from that of the foolish peasant, Shemus. The final act of the play demonstrates the ultimate power of language to harm or heal, destroy or save. Act IV opens with the First Merchant calling Cathleen that woman who had robbed them, but would not longer. He then recalls the earlier lies he told the countess about her cattle and ships, admitting to his partner that all the new supplies are well on their way and only five days from arriving. Because the people do not expect help from Cathleen, the lies the merchant has told bring crowds of people willing to sell their souls. When the bartering begins, the peasants always get less than they hoped for. Though a book brought the concerns of the poor to the mind and heart of Cathleen, the merchants use a book to detail the sins of these same poor people in order to scare them into selling cheap. As the sale goes on, Aleel wanders in, too lonely without Cathleen to care about living, and offers them his soul for nothing. The depth of love expressed in Aleel's words and the directness of his stare has a disquieting effect upon the merchants, who instruct Shemus and Teigue to remove the offending singer from earshot and eyesight. Shemus cannot understand why anyone would make such an offer and concludes that Aleel is crazy. The merchants admit that they cannot accept Aleel's soul, a notion clarified in the 1912 script, because it already belongs to Cathleen. Cathleen has already saved one soul.

The situation begins to change when an old woman invokes the name of God while at the bartering table: "*The Old Peasant Woman. [curtseying]* God bless you, sir. *[She screams.]* O, sir, a pain went through me!" (l. 781, p. 145). At her imprecation, the merchants quickly order her to leave. From this point on, the peasants begin to doubt the power of the merchants and to wonder about heaven's power and what they may be

giving away. In the 1912 version, Yeats elaborates the power of the spoken name of God:

> *First Merchant.* That name is like a fire to all damned souls.
>
> *[Murmur among the Peasants, who shrink back from her as she goes out.]*
>
> *A Peasant.* How she screamed out!
>
> *Second Peasant.* And maybe we shall scream so. (l. 782–783; p. 145, 147)

The merchants sense the mood of the crowd turning ugly as some peasants demand to be given back their souls. They sneer, "For cryings out and sighs are the soul's work, / And you have none" (l. 791–792, p. 147). If the merchants can ever be trusted to tell the truth, it may be at this moment. From the opening scene, the suggestion has been made and reinforced that Ireland is not saved because the people have listened to the wrong voices and cut themselves off from a dialogue with one who has the power to save, whether the one be a mortal like Cathleen or the immortal God. However, there is also an element of trickery in the merchants' words. The deal is not done. Some of the peasants realize this and exit quickly, admitting that "if that woman had not screamed / I would have lost my soul" (l. 793–794, p. 147). As the frightened peasants flee, a cry is heard outside: *"Countess Cathleen! Countess Cathleen!"* (directions after l. 794, p. 147).

The ending of the play remained relatively unchanged between the 1899 and 1912 versions. Cathleen has come to speak the words that will save those who could not or would not save themselves. The plight of her countryfolk has overwhelmed her. She cannot escape their pain. She agonizes, "I hear a cry from them, / And it is in my ears by night and day" (l. 800–801, p. 149). Cathleen has come to offer her soul to the merchants in exchange for both feeding the people and freeing all the souls that the foreigners have bought so that these souls may go to God. The merchants agree, answering, "the souls even while you speak, / Begin to labour upward" (l. 814–815, p.

151). Cathleen's words are life-giving to the Irish. However, while her spoken word can free the common folk, suggesting the power of orality, she must sign her name to a paper to ensure her soul's destruction. This, indeed, may suggest something evil about literacy. However, when balanced against the books that led Cathleen to realize the plight of her people and the book of cures, I read this language act as a warning against the binding power of the written word. How many treaties or legal documents had helped divide the Irish? Significantly, when Cathleen signs the document that will free her people at the cost of her soul, "her heart began to break" (l. 837, p. 155). In the final moments, Cathleen is cradled in Oona's arms, with Aleel kneeling beside her and the peasants all around. A stage direction reads, "*A woman begins to wail*"; four peasants halt the mourning, repeating "Hush!" (l. 885, p. 161). Cathleen is not yet dead, and sometimes quiet speaks more eloquently than loud cries. After Cathleen breathes her last breath, Oona "*speaks in a half scream]* / O, she is dead" (l. 907, p. 163). Perhaps she half believes, half doubts the reality of such a death. Or perhaps there is room for only half a grief because her death was a sacrifice of love, one that saved the lives of many. The peasants begin to speak in gentle tones and gentle terms about the woman who has died. But one among the crowd cannot contain his grief. Aleel, the representative of the old Ireland, shatters the mirror that proves Cathleen no longer breathes. He reiterates his wish to die now that Cathleen is dead: "she whose mournful words / Made you a living spirit has passed away" (l. 913-914, p. 165). Like his beloved, Aleel knows well the power of words. He puts his power to work: "And I who weep / Call curses on you, Time and Fate and Change" (l. 919-920, p. 165). The vehemence of his passion so frightens the peasants that one insists, "Pull him upon his knees before his curses / Have plucked thunder and lightning on our heads" (l. 923-924, p. 165). Suddenly lightning flashes and thunder rolls, "the dark clans / Fly screaming" (l. 928-929, p. 165), and armed angels appear. Aleel boldly addresses the emissaries from Heaven:

. . . speak to me, whose mind is smitten of God
That it may be no more with mortal things;
And tell of her who lies here.

[He seizes one of the angels.]

Till you speak
You shall not drift into eternity. (l. 933-936, p. 167)

Aleel's command moves the Angel to speak words of hope. The gates of Hell are closed to Cathleen: "she is passing to the floor of peace, / . . . The Light of Lights / Looks always on the motive, not the deed, / The Shadow of Shadows on the deed alone" (l. 938, 941-943; p. 167). While the images are visual, the deed being considered is a language act: the making of a vow and the signing of a contract. And the last speech of the play is given to Oona, following the Angel's revelation. Her speech takes the form of a request: "Tell them who walk upon the floor of peace / That I would die and go to her I love" (l. 944-945, p. 169). These last sounds in the play leave us with the sense that Oona will be granted her request, thus her own heartbreak will be healed. Ultimately, Yeats packs the last scene with the language of healing, turning the message from despair into hope.

Granting the hopeful ending of The Countess Cathleen, we must also recall that this play marks the beginning of Yeats's dramatic career as a national playwright. The Countess Cathleen, as an early Yeats play, gives us an idea of how Yeats perceived his Irish identity at the time that he founded the Irish national theatre. Clearly the play also illustrates the links between language usage and national identity. In the play, listening to the devious song of the foreign word-merchants divides and enslaves the Irish people. That the foreigners represent England, and their message is spoken with an English tongue, makes the most sense of the allegory. That the hope of the Irish lies with an aristocratic lady who loves the peasants of the land and will try to free them with her words also makes sense given Yeats's growing connections with the aristocracy. While

this early play is hopeful, there is still the need for sacrifice and death to win the way to new life for the Irish. In Yeats's later plays, the darker notes will begin to swell the language of the playwrights' song. But here, at the beginning, the writer still hoped in the power of language to heal his people.

Before troubling the waters with Yeats's later two plays and his shift in perception about Ireland and being Irish, I turn to the reception of The Countess Cathleen to question whether Yeats's vision had a broad appeal for his compatriots. Kruger attempts to negotiate the tension between ideology and the process of legitimation. In an attempt at defining the difference in the two and their convergence, Kruger suggests,

> Before we can understand in what way the theatre can be seen as an institution of cultural legitimacy or what might be meant by its relative autonomy from structures of political domination, we ought to consider the extent to which a theory of ideology can explain the legitimacy and the cultural specificity of the institution. (8)

Continuing along this line, Kruger argues,

> The limitations of ideology . . . signify the gap between the universalist claims of theatre as art and the relations of domination and exclusion at once embedded in and concealed by that claim. . . . The concepts of legitimacy and legitimation, alongside the collective experience of legitimation in habitus, are more compelling because they permit a conceptual reinvigoration of a vividly experienced but ambiguously theorized sense of conventional hegemony. (8-9)

If I understand Kruger correctly, then Yeats's ideology is only legitimated by the communal experience of the audience that affirms such an ideology. While most critics would never make such a claim in Yeats's favor, I argue that they have shortsightedly accepted limited criticism published contemporary to the performance of Yeats's plays (especially The Countess Cathleen) over and above the actual affirmation of the majority

of the audience. Scholars continue to accept the published perception rather than returning to accounts of audience attendance and length of run to ascertain the true popular appeal of the play.

Thus it is that once again, where Yeats and his work are concerned, we run into conflict and opposition. Frazier records that on the opening night of The Countess Cathleen

> nationalists made the largest part of the crowd, not only officially apolitical nationalists like Douglas Hyde, the Gaelic League's president, but political ones too, like Arthur Griffith, editor of the United Irishman and future president of Sinn Fein. He came to show himself in favor of what Cardinal Michael Logue had said no Catholic should see: a play that presented the Irish as a people eager to sell their souls for gold, that said souls came at different prices, and that illustrated as features of Irish life some peasants who stole, some who committed sacrilege, and one woman hell-bent on fornication. (2)

Having named two nationalists in the audience who did not share political views but favored the play, a fact indicative of the time and place, Frazier then turns back to set the literary and social scene that preceded the performance. According to Frazier, The Countess Cathleen

> was the center of excited discussion for weeks before and after its performance. In the Dublin press, through privately issued pamphlets, through student petitions against the play, at academic debates held by Trinity College's Historical Society, and in speeches after the Daily Nation's celebratory dinner, Ireland discussed the play's theology, plausibility, and symbolic meaning. Without doubt, The Countess Cathleen is a fundamentally significant document in the coming to consciousness of the Irish nation. (3)

I agree with Frazier's last comment, and that is why it is all the more important to arrive at the clearest possible interpretation of the reception to the play. I question what has been a rather well accepted version of the reception as negative on the whole.

In August 1899, Stephen MacKenna contributed an article entitled "Notes on the Celtic Renaissance: The Personality of W.B. Yeats" to The Gael. The portrait provided by this Irish contemporary indicates that the assessment of Yeats as outside the mainstream of Irish sentiment at his time is certainly questionable, if not inaccurate. MacKenna's initial praise of Yeats is full of sound imagery quite appropriate in speaking of a writer who attempted to create a new sound for his own Irish identity:

> Yeats has listened for that eternal hidden melody, the secret music behind the noisy brawl, and bending his soul subtly Celtic, to its hearing has caught delicate things, and sad things, and soft things and enshrined them in a musical, flawless, sad verse or in a prose which seems full of the strange soft resonances of a night breeze whispering over far woods. (132)

MacKenna goes on to describe Yeats as the most Irish of Irish writers, a leader in making the Irish voice known to the world:

> He belongs very intimately to us now that he stands before the world as a leader of the new Celticism, the voice whereby Ireland speaks to the English-speaking world. I do not see that it is an exaggeration to say that W.B. Yeats is the foremost Irishman of today: when London critics are wrangling over whether any one since Shakespeare has done as much in the English tongue as this Irishman has done, we, who are Irish and recognize that all that is best in him comes from his Irishism, need not hesitate to hail him as the first Irishman of the day. (132)

MacKenna was not Yeats's only backer. In a letter to Yeats dated May 1899, Wm. H. Turl, "a university coach," expresses his appreciation for Yeats's writing, acknowledging, "I suppose the tribute of thanks from a life he has helped might weigh

more with a poet than the comments--however favourable--of a critic who is paid for writing" (1-2). He then begins an intelligent discussion of the effect of Yeats's writing upon him. During that discussion, he includes this significant commentary:

> Of "Countess Cathleen" you have probably heard more than enough lately; and though I consider myself quite as competent to speak as e.g. a Cardinal who had not read the poem, or a newspaper reviewer who called you "Mr. Yates"--I shall say but this: --I read the play before the production here, and I thought--and shall think, it a very pretty piece, brimful of poetry, and with a moral that pleases and helps me. (2-3)

A writer for the Independent who signs himself "Lounger" also mentions Yeats and his controversial play favorably in a 26 June 1899 article: "Mr. Yeats's experiments in the dramatic form are in some respects his most interesting work. Of the more important essays in this kind, I hold 'The Countess Cathleen' to be beyond question the most valuable." In the Sunday Irish Times, December 1899, Richard LeGalliene, in an article entitled "Poetry of the Year," selected the best literary works of 1899 in various genres. He declares, "As drama I am prepared to back . . . the 'Countess Kathleen' of Mr. W.B. Yeats."

One fact of literary history that makes possible the debate about reception of this play is its publication a number of years prior to its production. Though the play was first published in England in 1892, the first production came in 1899. Prior to the production, Yeats wrote to Edward Martyn saying that he was willing to submit any objectionable passages to his editing pen. In the same letter, Yeats declares, "I am entirely convinced that the play contains no passages which can give offence to any Catholic" (qtd. in Robinson 7). Lennox Robinson, in Ireland's Abbey Theatre: A History, 1899-1951, has compiled contemporary reviews of the first production of The Countess Cathleen, reviews that many scholars seem to ignore. Despite Yeats's declaration, some did take offense at the play, the one fact upon which most scholars

focus. After the opening, an article in the 9 May 1899 Irish Times states that The Countess Cathleen "cannot be considered an Irish play" given its offensive theology and mockery of peasants (qtd. in Robinson 8). However, a review in the Dublin Evening Mail of the same day insists that the performance was a success:

> The house was packed with an enthusiastic audience, and the unanimity of the applause was only broken by some dozen persons, who found something to object to in some of the expressions put into the mouths of the characters of the play. They manifestly took their cue from an article which appeared in one of our contemporaries. (qtd. in Robinson 8–9)

The reviewer goes on to credit the play with "great poetical beauty" and declares that all the performers "were excellent." He also notes that "At the end of the performance, in answer to repeated and enthusiastic calls, Mr. Yeats appeared on the stage, and shook hands publicly with Miss May [The Countess] and Miss Florence Farr [Aleel]" (qtd. in Robinson 9). A review in the Freeman's Journal of the same date concurs with the Evening Mail's account of the reception. The critic records that the audience numbered between four and five hundred. He goes on to say that despite "a dozen disorderly boys . . . the audience, representative of every section of educated opinion in Dublin, was most enthusiastic, recalling the actors and the author again and again cheering loudly" (qtd. in Robinson 9).

While I am not sure what the reviewer meant by "every section of educated opinion," I can appreciate the difference between over four hundred enthusiastic audience members and a dozen disgruntled "boys" who may have allowed themselves to prejudge the play based upon advanced adverse publicity by parties who had even refused to read the play. Unfortunately, scholars have allowed themselves again and again to be influenced by the minority reception, while virtually ignoring how the majority of Irish audience members received the play. Aside from the loud outcry from a small group contemporary to The Countess Cathleen's production in 1899, the majority of Irish

audiences seemed to respond positively to the play, though this is not an indication that they understood Yeats's message. Significantly, the play continues to draw Irish audiences and garner popular support. In February and March of 1969, a successful production was again mounted by the Abbey Theatre Company under the direction of Edward Golden in their Peacock Theatre. The play ran for five weeks.

Though The Countess Cathleen may not have met with the unequivocal popularity enjoyed by LeFanu's and Boucicault's plays in earlier days, the significance of the mixed reception, the debate, and the on-going attention to the play make of this work an important contribution to the evolving literary history of the Irish identity. However, Yeats lived another forty years and his own perception of language and identity shifted over that time. In his introduction to Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature, to which Edward Said contributed, Seamus Deane writes,

> Edward Said concentrates on Yeats, seeing his work as an exemplary and early instance of the process of decolonization, the liberation of the poet's community from its inbred and oppressive servility to a new, potentially revolutionary condition. . . . For although [Yeats] did perhaps fall in the end into a blind provincialism, his attempt to escape from the thrall of Ireland's mutilating nineteenth-century experience has been reproduced and developed in other countries and cultures since. . . . African, Palestinian, and South American writers . . . have read Yeats as a poet whose re-creation of himself and his community provides a model for their own projects--the giving of a voice and a history to those who have been deprived of the consciousness of both. (5-6)

Deane and Said are both right. Yeats did give voice to an Irish identity, and his voice did change as a result of his not being able to escape the nets of Ireland, not choosing to leave his nation behind as Joyce did.

To understand the change that took place in Yeats and made itself evident in his plays for his national theatre, we might give brief consideration to two of his later plays, The Only Jealousy of Emer (1919) and The Death of Cuchulain (1939). In the case of the former, the script would be penned after the disastrous Easter 1916 Rebellion and before the granting of independence to the Republic. The latter play would be written as the Republic was ending its second decade. Both plays make language acts central to the plots. However, unlike Cathleen's act that provides salvation for the Irish and frees them from the lies of the aliens, the result of the language acts in these plays demonstrates a growing disillusionment with the power of language to effect the changes for which Yeats had hoped.

Both of these plays represent the last two episodes in the Cuchulain cycle, plays written about one of the greatest of Irish heroes. With regard to the Cuchulain cycle of plays, Flannery notes:

> Written over a period of thirty-five years, the cycle is a salient commentary on the development of Ireland during the formative years of the twentieth century. As such it adds up to a powerful statement on the complex character of modern Ireland as well as many other ex-colonial states born out of a long struggle against oppression. (239)

Ure claims, "What distinguishes the protagonists in [the Cuchulain cycle] plays is that each of them has a long personal history and a destiny which is being consciously worked out" (196). Going one step further than Ure, I argue that Yeats is working out Ireland's destiny as he apprehends it in this cycle. If I am right, then the plays become even more powerful statements, as Flannery seems to agree.

In a note included among his Emer manuscripts, Yeats indicates a growing disillusionment with his nation and the literary taste of his national audience:

> In writing these little plays [for Dancers], I knew that I was creating something which could only fully succeed in a civilisation very unlike ours.

> I think they should be written for some country where all classes share in a half mythical, half philosophical folk belief which the writer and his small audience lift into a new subtlety. All my life I have longed for such a country and always found it quite impossible to write without having as much belief in its real existence as a child has in that of the wooden birds, beasts, Noah and Mrs. Noah of his toy Noah's Ark. (ms. 8774, fol. 7)

Yeats seems to doubt, by this point in his life, that his dreamed-of Ireland will ever come to be. He has seen the deaths of 1916, an event that took its toll on his psyche and his writing. Refusing the nationalist stance prescribed by the political movement which lauded the folk plays of Lady Gregory and Synge, Yeats may have been the most romantic of all writers of the Irish Renaissance both in style and in notions about his changing nation. But his romanticism constantly changed under the pressure of political realities. While deeply romantic, Yeats's writing lacked the sentimentality of nationalists who see only the positive in the old ways or in the peasants. Had he been more sentimental, thus less prophetically post-colonial, he might have matched his brand of romanticism with nationalist politicians; as he was, he could not bring his romantic notions in line with any one political movement. Given that he was living and writing in a politically charged atmosphere, he could not escape disappointment.

Struggling with his disappointment and doubt, but not yet abandoning hope, Yeats wrote The Only Jealousy of Emer, the second play in his Cuchulain trilogy. The play opens with an unconscious Cuchulain lying on a bed in a peasant cottage, his wife Emer keeping watch. Cuchulain has drowned or almost drowned in a battle with the waves after discovering that he unwittingly killed his only son. Emer has called for Eithne Inguba, the drowned man's young mistress, to come to the cottage. Having failed to rouse her husband, Emer hopes that Eithne Inguba may call the man they both love back to the land of the living. Two warring members of the Sidhe also make their presences known to Emer. Fand has come to claim Cuchulain as her lover, leading the

mortal away from his homeland forever. Bricriu has come to thwart Fand. Whether Cuchulain's spirit accompanies Fand or returns to his body, and, thus, to the mortal women who love him all depends on the message Emer accepts and gives. She must renounce his love and allow him to think that it is Eithne Inguba who has called him back, rather than her own act of sacrificial renunciation. Emer accepts the oral contract made by Bricriu and shouts out her sacrifice at the necessary moment. Cuchulain is saved, but he has no knowledge of who or what truly saved him. The language act that redeems the Irish hero goes unrecognized by all except she who has made it. This situation is almost a mirrored reversal of the end of The Countess Cathleen, when she who makes the sacrifice dies but goes to heaven; and all who love her know the salvation that she has brought them. Salvation is the result in both plays, but the method of salvation in the latter remains hidden. I think the hidden message of salvation reflects Yeats's own doubts about what it will take to redeem Ireland. His hope is not dead, but his view is dim.

Rosalind E. Clark provides a literary genealogy for The Only Jealousy of Emer.

> The early Irish source of the play is the tale "Serglige Con Culainn 7 Oenet Emire" ("The Wasting Sickness of CuChulain and the One Jealousy of Emer"), preserved in two manuscripts containing a compilation of versions, showing that the story had already passed through oral and written reincarnations. . . . When it came to life again centuries later, through translation, the tale was reincarnated in yet a different form by the authors of the Irish Renaissance. . . . The earlier Anglo-Irish versions of the tale culminate in Yeats's play, which reflects not only modern Irish culture and literary ideas, but the ideas imagined within the labyrinth of Yeats's own mind as well. (39)

Clark then describes how Yeats changes the tale so that in his play the focus is upon "the mortal point of view. The whole Otherworld has become less familiar and more

alien" (44). In the early version, the listener usually sympathizes with Fand, the fairy goddess, who gives up Cuchulain's love to Emer. Yeats's version concentrates on Emer and her sacrifice of love to win back her husband to life. Clark claims that "while the play gains over the story as a work of art, it definitely loses in the character of Fand, and in the complexity of the relationships of the women" (45). Earlier she noted that Eithne Inguba "is like a faint shadow of Emer" in the ancient tale. I find it curious that Clark does not recognize that Yeats substitutes the complexity of one set of female relationships for another. While Fand loses ground, appearing "less familiar and more alien," Eithne Inguba gains ground in the mortal love triangle. I propose that the purpose behind this change has less to do with courtly love, as Clark claims (44), and more to do with concepts of an alien influence. Yeats's use of language and discussion of language in the play does more than hint at the alien's use of language as a tool of deception and danger. If Cuchulain, Eithne Inguba, and especially Emer represent the Irish people, then might not the deceit and danger developed in the characters of Fand and Bricriu be useful to indicate something about their alien nature, their other-worldliness? Who, we might ask, are aliens in the midst of the Irish? Who exercise a power over life and death that seems other-worldly? For the Irish of colonized Ireland, the answer is clear--the British. I can imagine the uproar such a reading may cause, but remember that Yeats employs language and symbols to make Irish meaning, not merely to follow some sort of suggested linear Irish history, myth, or "fact." His interest in, yet distrust of, other-worldly figures fills his poetry, plays, and prose. We have already seen his distrust of spirit aliens in The Countess Cathleen.

I agree with Clark when she remarks, "While we are impressed with Emer's dignity and her sorrow, Fand remains totally alien. She is referred to as a `statue' and her appearance is metallic. She longs for Cuchulain's love but only because without it she is `not complete'" (45). If Fand, the alien, represents Britain, the alien force that for so long had dominated Ireland, then it is fitting that her appearance would be metallic, a

cold coin-like appearance, and that she would not be satisfied until she could join Cuchulain, Ireland, to herself. In the original tale, Fand and Emer feel sympathy for one another, much the same way Emer and Eithne Inguba do in Yeats's play. No such sympathy exists between Emer and Fand in Yeats's version. Clark comments,

> In Yeats's play one would expect them to start bickering with each other at any moment were it not that there is a great gulf fixed between the two worlds. Fand is invisible to Emer until Bricriu touches her eyes to "give them sight", and Fand never seems aware of Emer's presence in the final version of the play. The Otherworld and its inhabitants are completely removed from normal human experience. (46)

Again, if the language of the play is manipulated to evoke Irish identity, then the aliens from the Otherworld most fittingly represent the British, a dominant force whose danger the Irish did not realize until too late. That the two worlds are "completely removed" from each other should come as no surprise; they represent two completely different cultures, two different realms with different views of life and different ways of exercising power.

In her analysis of the difference between the original Irish myth and Yeats's version, Clark concludes in a tone that almost bemoans Yeats's use of Fand.

> . . . the supernatural woman has become an idea--a device--a beauty that is wonderful but perilous, one that comes from a place of "otherness." In the Old Irish this feeling of "otherness" is mitigated because of the closeness of the two worlds. The Ulster cycle heroes are often related to the people of the sid, who are therefore ordinary people with whom we can identify. In Anglo-Irish literature this closeness is gone. Only the strangeness and the symbolic significance of the Otherworld is left. Whereas in "Serglige" the fairy mistress was the human and sympathetic character torn movingly by inner conflict, in Yeats this decisive role is

> Emer's. Fand provides symbolism, imagery, beauty but not "character isolated by a deed." Instead her mortal rival takes center stage. (47)

Yes, the Irish female image, Ireland herself, takes center stage and pushes the powerful alien aside. Yeats's reconstruction of the tale reconstructs Irish identity in moving human language, Irishry.

Once the Republic had gained independence, Yeats became increasingly involved politically, serving in the Senate, and increasingly disillusioned. His vision of a unified Ireland that could emerge into a new world power with a spiritually strong identity devoid of denominationalism or factionalism had not come to pass. The nets bound the hope for a new heroic Ireland. And in his last despairing years; The Death of Cuchulain was born to speak his final say and give his closing bow.

In this final play that makes much of messages that can save or destroy, depending on how they are received, Yeats comes down on the side of destruction. Cuchulain, faced with overwhelming enemy forces, knowingly accepts a mixed message from Eithne Inguba and chooses to take to the battlefield, thus ensuring his own death. Oddly, Yeats writes into this final episode about messages and identities a clarification of his second part to the Cuchulain tragedy. Cuchulain knows now that Emer effected his salvation, not Eithne Inguba. Questions about trust having risen in the hero's life, he decides to act rather than react, to listen only to what he wants to hear. He closes his ears to the part of the message that could save him and chooses to isolate himself in a warrior stance. However, he does not die of battle wounds; rather, he is finally killed by a blind man who cannot read messages but has accepted an oral order from the enemy based on a bribe. A harlot and a blind man, coupled with enemy messages of deceit, bring about Cuchulain's fall. This play perhaps acts, then, as Yeats's most prophetic message. Having written himself into the play in the form of the elderly disgruntled narrator at the opening, Yeats calls out into the Irish audience that has become for him

a wilderness. His message seems to be that heroic Ireland is close to death, if not dead already, at the hands of insiders.

Jordan suggests that in branding the woman who appears to sing the song at the end of The Death of Cuchulain a harlot

> Yeats is using a term that has been used by other Irish poets before him to symbolize the defilement of Ireland under British rule. Within the Irish poetic tradition, a country that is ruled by a usurper or one that changes rulers frequently, is called a Harlot (meirdreac). Geoffrey Keating, the seventeenth-century Irish historian and poet, uses such a term to describe the ravishing of Ireland by England in his poem, "A Banba Bog-om Dona Duaibseac," (To Lonely Mournful Ireland). . . . his description of Ireland as the Harlot of England was something that Irish patriots never forgot. (62)

Jordan goes on to record Padraic Pearse's comment on Keating's phrase. Pearse remarks with passion that Keating's phrase would "no longer be a terrible metaphor, but a more terrible truth . . . for is not Ireland's body given up to the pleasure of another, and is not Ireland's honour for sale in the market places?" (qtd. in Jordan 62). Jordan also confirms that Yeats was "thoroughly familiar" with the works of both Keating and Pearse, quoting and borrowing from them in the course of his career. I agree with Jordan that "Yeats' placing of the Harlot in 'some Irish Fair of our own day' (modern market place), clearly suggests that he had Pearse's exact words in mind" (63). In addition to the Harlot at the end of The Death of Cuchulain, a "harlot" of sorts appears in The Countess Cathleen. Recalling the young woman who likes to sleep around and sells her soul to the merchants, I wonder if Yeats had Pearse's comment in mind during the writing of his first play for the Irish Literary Theatre. After all, the problem within that first play seems to be not only a famine (the setting), but the horror of "Ireland's honour for sale." Fittingly, given Yeats's imaginative history, we come full circle, back to

the thematic concern which has occupied all Yeats's career--how to express the Irish identity in a language which speaks his Irishry.

Jordan concludes,

> If indeed Yeats intended the Harlot to represent the tendency of modern Ireland to prostitute herself, then the Harlot's song in the play can be seen as a necessary purification ritual--a constant reminder to Ireland that she must live up to the heroism of the Easter Rebellion. If she fails to do so, then she will once again become the debased and degraded object she was under British rule. (64)

If we consider all three plays that I have treated to be documents that reveal Yeats's perception of the Irish self and how language plays a part in that perception, we get a clear though complex view of a generation in turmoil. Yeats begins with great hope, moves to doubtful hope, and ends in despair of heroics. Ireland had fought for independence, but only gained a partial victory. The bonds of the past now that Ireland had joined the ranks of the post-colonial nations were still too strong. The Irish identity was emerging but not without tremendous sacrifice, a sacrifice Yeats seemed to doubt had accomplished much of anything in regard to removing shackles from the Irish imagination of self. Yet, Yeats went on writing in opposition to his own doubts and as a way out of his own despair and into the universal consciousness as an Irishman. In "A General Introduction for My Work," written in 1937, two years before The Death of Cuchulain, Yeats praises the Young Ireland poets: "They had one quality I admired and admire: they were not separated individual men; they spoke or tried to speak out of a people to a people; behind them stretched the generations" (qtd. in Jordan 64). The quality Yeats admired in these poets is the same quality that makes its voice heard in Yeats's plays; despite the turmoil of his time, he speaks his Irishry.

Notes

1. I refer to the first production date (1899) of The Countess Cathleen unless otherwise stipulated in the text. This is the version that holds the greatest interest because it is the version to which Irish audiences first responded. However, also of significance is the 1912 published version which correlates closely to the 1911 opening at the Abbey Theatre.

2. All manuscript materials cited in this chapter are included among the Yeats Papers, National Library of Ireland, Dublin.

3. Adrian Frazier, admittedly more interested in the context than the text of The Countess Cathleen, provides a Marxist reading of this portion of the play. While I acknowledge that an examination of the class system of Ireland as illustrated in the text certainly has validity, I think a reading that examines the language and identity issue, given Yeats's declared purpose for his theatre, is long overdue.

4. Several sources provide information on the reaction of the Catholic clergy to The Countess Cathleen. Any reliable biography of Yeats, such as Richard Ellman's The Man and the Masks, or any overview of Yeats's theatrical career, such as James W. Flannery's W. B. Yeats and the Idea of a Theatre: The Early Abbey Theatre in Theory and Practice, include a discussion of this episode in Yeats's dramatic career. Frazier also provides a discussion of this episode. However, I maintain that an Irish audience can miss the point of Yeats's play as easily as Shemus mistakes the motives of merchants and Cathleen. I prefer to pursue the meaning in the language as shaped by Yeats rather than as reshaped by the Catholic clergy.

CHAPTER FIVE

BRIAN FRIEL: TRANSLATING EXPERIENCE INTO A POSTNATIONAL IDENTITY

Having considered the fifty years Yeats spent composing plays that would speak his Irishry for the Irish National Theatre, I now look ahead forty-one years from Yeats's last play to a new Irish literary movement founded by another dramatist--Field Day and Brian Friel. Friel's first play for the movement, like Yeats's, becomes the focus for analysis, with two later plays also considered: Translations (1980), The Communication Cord (1982), and Making History (1988). Having moved almost two hundred years forward from the Act of Union, the recognized point of language dominance, writers no longer need hide their messages under the guise of comedy, yet they also do not believe in a romantic notion of a nation united by a heroic Irish Celtic nature. The writers of this Irish generation, like Friel, are, for the first time, talking openly about the loss of their native language and culture and the difficulty of establishing a personal Irish identity that does not create a nationalistic divisiveness. Friel's work epitomizes the extreme distrust of language that combines with an appreciation for the power of language to speak the self--still an Irish self.

Before we can appreciate the Irish self trying to make itself heard in Friel's plays, we must examine the historical context into which Friel is born and from which he writes. Ireland remains a divided island. The 1920 Government of Ireland Act divided the island into two separate states, a condition that still exists. In 1948 the southern, independent state changed from the Irish Free State to the Republic of Ireland, while the partition of the six counties making up Northern Ireland was once again confirmed. Since the partition, Northern Ireland has continued to be divided along largely sectarian

lines--Irish Catholic versus Irish Protestant, with the political power in the hands of the Protestants who are more closely aligned with Great Britain. Extremists from both sides fill the ranks of volunteer fighting forces dedicated to bringing about their own vision of Ireland. For the Catholic Irish Republican Army, a united Ireland is the aim. For the Ulster Defence Association, a Northern Ireland separate from the rest of the island nation and attached politically and culturally to England must be maintained at all costs. As George O'Brien points out, "the Border between the island's two jurisdictions has remained a painful source of contention" (2). Violence between the extremist groups in Northern Ireland erupts frequently, with weekly reports of sectarian killings communicated by Irish news interest groups such as the Irish Emigrant, an electronic news source summarizing news from across the island for all interested segments of Irish culture. Since 1920 special police powers, internment, and direct rule have been continually used to control Irish nationalists and pacify unionists. Though another agreement has been proposed by English Prime Minister John Majors and Irish Republican Albert Reynolds to achieve peace in Northern Ireland, partisans from both sides within Northern Ireland continue to resist, a resistance perhaps born of distrust of legal language to settle a long dispute of affection. As historian David Fitzpatrick notes, "No doubt more sensitive and skilful [sic] government might have averted the translation of disaffection into violence; yet it is difficult even with hindsight to propose an alternative settlement capable of eradicating the underlying disaffection" (274).

With Northern Ireland still a colonial base of sorts, the locus of artistic language expression seems to have shifted from Dublin to Belfast and Derry. Seamus Heaney, Anne Devlin, Bernard MacLaverty, and Brian Friel--to name only four--all come from the North. To be sure, there are still writers of great power emerging from the Republic--John Banville, Edna O'Brien, John B. Keane; but if there is a current Irish Renaissance, it is taking place in the North. If great artistic expression is often borne of troubles, then the North of Ireland should bear quite a lot of artistic fruit. And among

the Northern Irish writers, Friel stands preeminent in drama. His recognition as the preeminent Irish dramatist is not limited to Irish critics. In The History of World Theatre, From the English Restoration to the Present (1991), Felicia Hardison Londre singles out Friel as "Outstanding among contemporary playwrights of Northern Ireland" (480).

Because the creative center of Ireland has shifted to Northern Ireland under the leadership of Friel and his other Field Day colleagues, we need a clear concept of the cultural context for these contemporary writers and the troubles with which they are faced. As an example of the type of tension that prevails in Northern Ireland, George O'Brien explains the political situation in Derry, Friel's childhood home:

> Derry, Northern Ireland's second largest city, had since the state's inception suffered in a particularly blatant fashion from the ruling Unionist party's juridical and social inequities. Despite the majority of its citizens being Catholic Nationalists, they had virtually no chance of replacing the monopoly of Protestant Unionists on the city council, a monopoly maintained by careful gerrymandering of the city's electoral wards and by plural voting rights based on property holding. Friel's father was active in Nationalist circles in the town, as was Friel himself for a period. But the combination of social deprivation and political frustration had a strongly alienating effect. (2)

Therefore, since Northern Irish Catholics are without political power while Northern Irish Protestants are still unable to achieve a sense of security, Irish writers from the North have turned to the pen in order to have their say. In this respect, though still within a colonial context, the Irish writers fit squarely within the contemporary, post-colonial movement. As Linda Hutcheon explains, "after that imposition of an imperial culture and that truncated indigenous history which colonialism has meant to many nations, post-colonial literatures are also negotiating (often parodically) the once tyrannical

weight of colonial history in conjunction with the revalued local past" (152). These Irish writers are negotiating a colonial weight that still oppresses and an equally oppressive romantic past in order to achieve some sense of an Irish self that is capable of surviving in the present and into the future.

If the Irish identity is to survive for writers like Friel, they must first dismantle old unworkable versions of what it means to be Irish. Helen Tiffin's description of the "dis/mantling narrative" fits not only the non-indigenous members of colonized cultures for whom she intends it, but also the methods used by Irish writers, Friel a case in point. Because these participants and victims of a colonial past cannot completely break free from that past, they search for alternative ways of dealing with a past that has left them few alternatives for the present. Tiffin explains that the writer, in addition to radically "re-reading" historical records, inhabits "the absences or the oppositional 'positions' in the imperial textual record, and from these absences or oppositions [interrogates] its presence or fixity" (176). As these writers "recast history," they treat the subject of written texts and language thematically, turning language back upon itself to redefine their present situation (Tiffin 176).

Certainly, Friel and his compatriots live in an Ireland that has not constructed an alternative system free of the imperial chain. However, these writers are employing the method that Tiffin describes, thereby breaking the chains that would hold them. Though language has been one of the chief ingredients used to forge the bonds of imperialism, language becomes the tool in the hands of post-colonial writers like Friel to break out of history's hold. Pine writes that "Ireland's history . . . imprisons it in a linguistic contour which struggles to contain the past, both real and imagined, and at the same time to go out to confront its new realities" (Friel 4).

David Lloyd recognizes that whoever has vocal control also controls reception and perception of the Irish. A current example of vocal control over Irish voice is England's refusal to allow the real voices of Sinn Fein members, long associated with the Irish

Republican Army, to be broadcast. English actors provide voice-overs. In fact, until January 1994 Sinn Fein members could not be broadcast in Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland. As Lloyd comments,

> What is at issue here is effectively a matter of *verisimilitude*: which narrative of "Irishness" comes to seem self-evident, normative, truthful. Control of narratives is a crucial function of the state apparatus since its political and legal frameworks can only gain consent and legitimacy if the tale they tell monopolizes the field of probabilities. The state does not simply legislate and police against particular infringements, it determines the form within which representation take place. (6)

The British Empire determined that English would be the form in which Irishness would be represented when all of Ireland was a colony. Therefore, by the time the Irish partition was effected, the language of representation had completely changed from Irish to English; and any shift in identity would necessarily now be discussed in the dominant tongue, regardless of the new state. So to be Irish--no matter in which part of the island one resides, one must discover one's Irishness in what was the tongue of the colonizer, appropriating that tongue and making it serve the Irish identity.

With regard to the creation of an Irish identity, Seamus Deane, Field Day colleague of Friel, warns that

> This is not merely a paradoxical game whereby the answer to "what came first?" is uselessly answered by "whatever came second." . . . In Northern Ireland . . . the terms of the dispute can be crude. The "native" Irish can say they came first; the Protestant planters can say they were the first to create a civil society. These are not nugatory distinctions, for it is from them that so much of the later history of strife and disagreement evolves. Priority is a claim to power. (Nationalism 17)

Deane, as a scholar and writer, understands the power of language to react and recreate. Out of the colonial experience, writers emerge to recreate an identity for a colonized people that will provide healing and wholeness rather than exacerbate old wounds. However, the process necessitates cleaning the old wounds, a painful process in itself. As Deane points out,

> Ireland is the only Western European country that has had both an early and late colonial experience. Out of that, Ireland produced, in the first three decades of this century, a remarkable literature in which the attempt to overcome and replace the colonial experience by something other, something that would be "native" and yet not provincial, was a dynamic and central energy. The ultimate failure of that attempt to imagine a truly liberating cultural alternative is as well known as the brilliance of the initial effort. Now that the established system has again been called into question, even to the point where it must seriously alter or collapse, Irish writing, operating in the shadow or in the wake of the earlier attempt, has once more raised the question of how the individual subject can be envisaged in relation to its community, its past history, and a possible future. (4)

Deane understands the post-colonial project of contemporary Irish writers in a way that Jussawalla and Dasenbrock failed to consider in their omission of an Irish writer among Interviews with Writers of the Post-Colonial World. The post-colonial project for Irish writers is not finished or failed but continues to produce meaningful discussion in hopes of affecting individuals and society, and, thus, of effecting change.

In this post-colonial environment, a group of writers from Northern Ireland combined their efforts in a literary movement concerned with Irish society and identity. The group Field Day began in 1980 when Friel and actor Stephen Rea founded the Field Day Theatre to produce Friel's Translations. The movement expanded to include other

playwrights, poets, essayists, scholars, and critics, resulting in numerous individual works and finally the Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing (1990). According to Deane, the conflict in the North "restored to center stage all those issues of communal identity, colonial interference, sectarianism, and racial stereotyping that had apparently been sidelined. It is at this juncture that Field Day positions itself" (Nationalism 14). Thus, Field Day was a response to the ongoing colonial crisis in Ireland. As Deane describes the project, Field Day was

> founded in 1980 . . . six of its seven directors are from the North and all of its enterprises, in theater, in pamphlets, and in the Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing (1990) have a bearing upon the nature and genesis of the present impasse. Although Northern Ireland is the site of the conflict, the whole island, including the Republic of Ireland, is involved, as well as the United Kingdom. (Nationalism 6)

Deane emphatically states, "Field Day's analysis of the situation derives from the conviction that it is, above all, a colonial crisis" (Nationalism 6).

Numerous scholars have taken an interest in the endeavors of the Field Day group. Eric Binnie affirms Deane's assertion that the group's work takes all of Ireland into consideration. He explains that the Field Day writers "aim to examine and analyze the established opinions, slogans, myths, and war-cries which have gone to the creation of the present troubles in Ireland" (365). The troubles mentioned by Binnie affect "the whole of Ireland" (365), not just Northern Ireland, though admittedly the most obvious troubles are located North of the Border. Binnie observes that

> The aims of Field Day Theatre Company are to create a shared context which might make possible communication across Ireland's border; to give all Irishmen an artistic "fifth province" rising above and covering the whole island, an hypothetical province which would neither accept the North/South division, nor ignore the separate traditional strengths of

> those on either side. Thus Field Day is located in the North (British Ireland) and works in both North and South, yet has strong reservations about both. The intention is to create an awareness, a sense of the whole country, North and South together, and to examine predominate attitudes to the island as a whole. Friel's artistic development since the formation of Field Day has moved steadily towards a closer integration of historical considerations and contemporary themes, achieved, for example, by examining the role of language as a reflection of national character. (366)

Binnie thus summarizes the aim and method of Friel and his Field Day colleagues. Attempting to reflect the national character without denying differences within the national character is a difficult task requiring intense self-scrutiny. The Field Day group has no interest in a naive reconstruction of Irish identity; rather they grapple with the entire question of identity head-on. As Deane explains,

> What seems like an endless search for a lost communal or even personal identity is doubly futile. Just naming it indicates that it is lost; once named, it can never be unnamed. In the second place, such an identity is wholly unreal. It can be made manifest only by pretending that it is the conclusion to a search of which it was the origin. . . . The pursuit of such questions leads to notions of national character, questions of the language appropriate to its proper expression and, by extension, to the stereotyping of groups, classes, races in relation to the kinds of writing that they produce. Still, monotonous as it may be, it is inescapable. Otherwise we may never see the colonial forest for the nativist trees. (Nationalism 11)

The Field Day writers strive to understand the shifts in Irish identity in order to move through divisive versions of national character to a healed and whole Irish character that accounts for individual and community relations. According to F. C. McGrath,

> Friel and his Field Day colleagues are concerned particularly with the images and myths that have shaped the national consciousness, especially those that have helped form the prejudices that divide the country today. . . . As they demythologize the old histories and myths, they hope to supplant them, in a cautious and self-conscious manner, with new ones that are free from the colonial perspectives, those of both the colonizer and the colonized, that have encased Ireland's history for the past eight hundred years. . . . Central to Friel and the Field Day enterprise is a contemporary epistemological orientation that governs the different writers' images of Ireland, especially the way those images are created through language. (535)

Therefore, language is central to the Field Day enterprise and Friel's work. Language becomes the object of interrogation and the tool of reimaging Irish identity. Disturbing the old myths about Irish identity, Friel and his colleagues are completely aware that they are engaged in creating a new myth, a myth because they have lost faith in factual truth. History ceases to be a set of facts for these writers who exercise art to tell the story that needs a new set of images in order to make contemporary sense. Deane clarifies the significance of artistic production to the Field Day members, stating, "Field Day sees art as a specific activity indeed, but one in which the whole history of a culture is deeply inscribed" (Nationalism 7). Therefore, if we are to understand Irish culture and identity, according to Deane, we must turn to artistic representations of that culture. Chief among those representations, for both Field Day and this scholarly analysis, is drama.

The leading Field Day dramatist, perhaps the most important contemporary Irish dramatist, is Brian Friel. Friel's personal context places him on both sides of the Irish border, a significant part of his personal history that will inform all of his plays. He was born near Omagh in County Tyrone, Northern Ireland on 9 January 1929. Moving to

Derry with his family at the age of ten, Friel grew up and attended school in Northern Ireland, an Irish Catholic in a colonial situation. However, he would holiday across the border in his mother's native Donegal, to which he finally moved in 1969 and where he currently resides. The remote area of Donegal in the Republic provides the environment for his imaginary village of Ballybeg, the place where many of his plays are set. Derry provided the setting for the offices of Field Day, the artistic movement which Friel helped found. Prior to making his living as a writer of plays and short stories, Friel followed in his father's footsteps, spending a decade teaching in Derry. The years he and his father spent as teachers evidence themselves in the multitude of teachers who inhabit his plays, including Hugh and Manus in Translations and Tim and Claire in The Communication Cord. The year after the production of his first stage play, The Francophile (A Doubtful Paradise) (1959), Friel retired from teaching and has devoted his considerable talents to writing. Friel's reputation continues to grow, confirming his artistic and critical leadership as both playwright and post-colonial writer. In Brian Friel and Ireland's Drama, Richard Pine writes that "Brian Friel has gained an international reputation for Irish writing in the English language. . . . As a post-colonial writer he has much in common with his contemporaries, in particular throughout the African continent" (1).

One of the common concerns that Friel shares with other post-colonial writers is a near obsession with language manipulation. Binnie notes that Friel "sees his role as that of one who creates self-awareness through the critical examination of Irish beliefs, as these are expressed in the contours of everyday speech" (366). Though Pine connects Friel's language most clearly to Synge's, I think Pine's description of Friel's language more readily brings to mind Yeats: "Friel has provided us with a new language, an Irish-English more powerful than English-English, to express these 'concepts of Irishness,' which becomes a new metaphor by means of which we can discuss both public and private sorrows, fears and even joys" (8). While Synge is central to the reconfiguration

of an Irish-English, it was Yeats who led the movement to speak an Irishry in English because he could not speak Irish. Friel follows Yeats's lead to in the founding of a theatrical movement whose purpose was to employ language to speak a new Irish identity. In some ways, Friel is an extension of Yeats at the end of Yeats's career, when he had grown to distrust language and nationality. Desiring to rise above old versions of Irishry, both men find themselves engaged in a battle with rusty social bonds that refuse to give way--an image Friel will use to advantage in The Communication Cord. Unlike Yeats, Friel is not a hopeless romantic; he is not a romantic at all. However, he understands the romantic longings for connectedness, to an Irish past or to an Irish person, and how language makes a mockery of the attempt to connect. McGrath writes that "Friel has become gradually more and more obsessed with the operations of language and the images, particularly images rooted in desire, that it creates" (542).

Deane clarifies Friel's obsession with the shiftiness of language and its connection to identity when he notes that,

> In the theater, the central preoccupation has been with a particular experience of what we may call translation. By this I mean the adaptations, readjustments, and reorientations that are required of individuals and groups who have undergone a traumatic cultural and political crisis so fundamental that they must forge for themselves a new speech, a new history or life story that would give it some rational or coherent form. Brian Friel's plays, Translations (1980) and Making History (1988), . . . are some of the most effective examples of the explorations characteristic of Field Day's theater. . . . [The] dramatic analysis centers on anxieties of naming, speaking, and voice and the relation of these to place, identity, and self-realization. (Nationalism 14)

Pine points out the questions that lie at the center of Friel's dramatic imagination:

> is any interpretation possible between individual languages? How does one in fact establish the intimate sense of community (*communitas*) and then learn to grow into the society (*societas*) of the wider, larger, more complex world? Can there ever be a true conciliation between private language and public discourse? Is the concept of "community" even practicable in the age of the global village? (3)

Pine also proffers an answer for Friel with regard to the last question. Pine claims that "Friel becomes the Irish Chekhov because for him the world is not Ireland writ large, but Ireland is the world writ small. A society in search of its identity must know the pathways and holy places of the mind as surely as it knows its streets, hedgerows and sheeptracks" (3). Because Pine sees Friel's concept of Ireland as the world writ small, which to be understood must be known intimately well, he suggests that map-making becomes for Friel a way into knowing the world. I would agree that map-making is a way of knowing the unknowable, but I think that it is also a pictorial language representation for containing the mysterious and, thus, a mechanism for control of the imperial power when displayed in post-colonial writing generally and in Friel's works particularly.

Though Friel and his Field Day colleagues are attempting to create an Irish identity that accounts for diversity, Friel's nationalist sympathies are easily recognized. Kearney notes, "Brian Friel's drama has sometimes been accused of engaging too directly in Irish nationalist politics" (510). Aware of his own nationalist tendencies, Friel at times works against his own nature. As McGrath observes, "While Friel is well aware of the political implications of his own writing and of the various Field Day programs, he also is very concerned about becoming an overtly political writer. . . . Although Friel's later plays often deal with political issues, in general he has not let politics overwhelm his responsibilities as an artist" (544). Kearney too credits Friel with avoiding ideological

abuses, confirming that "Friel's art is political in a way which defends language against the abuses of political ideology" (515).

A simplified political ideology may not exist for Friel any more than a factual history; all is a shifting image, one voice's telling of what has happened or is happening. Whether the telling finds acceptance depends on audience agreement with the writer's version. Coming from the North, Friel is acutely aware of where agreements have broken down and communication has ceased. McGrath explains,

> For Friel . . . social contracts are grounded on fictions. The contract works when the fiction is mutually agreed upon, and it breaks down when there is no agreement. Most of Friel's writing . . . focuses on that lack of agreement in our social fictions. Perhaps this has something to do with the fact that for centuries Ireland refused to accept its colonizer's fiction of itself. (538)

Unwilling to accept former fictions of Irish history and Irish identity, Friel has set out to create his own Ireland and Irishry as he explores the conflicts created by language and its effect on identity. He knows his Ireland and his identity are fictions of his making; but they are his fictions in his voice, and he does not claim that his fictions are fact. As McGrath concludes,

> For Friel fictions are constitutive of the only realities we have. In the world of his later plays no independently verifiable reality ever appears; every reality is somebody's fiction, and his tragedies result from one fictitious construction of reality overpowering another. His plays, in other words, are very much like the "real" world, where, as we know, people routinely bludgeon each other with their own fictive truths. . . . In world politics, establishing fictions, or, to put it the way Friel, Synge, or Yeats might put it, asserting the right to become one's own fiction of oneself, is a serious and often bloody business. (538)

Friel escapes contributing to the violence by refusing to believe his own fiction, by acknowledging his tale as one more in an anthology of possible Irish stories played out on history's public stage under shifting lights of perception.

Acknowledging Friel's distrust of truth, of language, of a clearly conceived national identity, how are we to look at this drama, Translations--as history, social commentary, or the struggle of particular individuals? Various scholars have taken different approaches, and Friel himself has struggled with the approaches to play. Kearney describes the play from an historical basis: "Translations deals with pre-famine Ireland bracing itself for the final transplantation of Gaelic into English" (Kearney 511). McGrath leans toward a sociological approach: "Translations demonstrates a keen awareness of the relations between language, politics, and history" (McGrath 541). Binnie elaborates further on sociological implications of the play, observing that

> Friel's treatment uses historical incident as his starting point. The early nineteenth-century process of standardization which the central British government imposes upon the local inhabitants, in particular the systematic Anglicizing of Irish place-names, becomes a telling metaphor for the relationship of one country to the other. Friel presents the resultant loss of Irish self-confidence in socio-linguistic terms--briefly, language creates history; a people who do not keep faith with the historical names of their location lose their identity; a people without a sense of their own history become vulnerable for take-over. Vagueness about the past leads from a loss of self-confidence either to hopelessness or to violent crisis. Thus, without spelling it out, the relationship between the historic context and present Irish problems is relayed to the contemporary audience. (369)

Interestingly, Friel has resisted readings of the play that emphasize its importance as a sociological document. He insists that, first and foremost, the play is about

individual struggle. Yet even during the drafting of the play, Friel realized the content was taking over. In a note written during his writing of Translations, Friel complains that

> One of the mistakes of the direction in which the play is presently pulling is the almost wholly **public** concern of the theme: how does this eradication of the Irish language and the substitution of English affect this particular **society**? How long can a **society** live without its tongue? Public questions; issues for politicians; and that's what is wrong with the play now. The play must concern itself only with the exploration of the dark and private places of individual souls. (qtd. in Pine 146)

Though Friel agonized over the play's development into a social document, he could not escape his own subject matter and its historical, sociological, and political implications for the individual or the group Irish identity. Pine explains Friel's struggle, a struggle which mirrors the subject of the play:

> The final form of Translations is due to [Friel's] eventual realization that the "political" issues were inescapable, at least in the broadest sense, because for the first time in his work the "inevitability" of change is presented in the form of a cultural encounter. . . .he cannot eradicate from his text the damage caused by the breakdown of communication implicit in the form of the play itself. (147)

Where the play breaks down as history, history being a concept with which Friel has noticeable difficulty, it recreates the Irish story in socially significant fictional views. In order for a post-colonial writer to focus attention on the concerns of the colonized "without succumbing to a nostalgia for lost origins," Gayatri Spivak cautions, "the literary critic must turn to the archives of imperial governance" (254). Friel meets Spivak's test of solid post-colonial criticism in that he does not invent a nostalgic Irish history in Translations. Instead, Friel returns to the British archives and challenges the "official" history by providing an Irish perception of the recorded events.

As F. C. McGrath asserts:

> Obviously for Friel history is not a matter of an "objective" account. It matters to him who constructs Ireland's historical images and what their allegiances, prejudices, and assumptions are. . . . With its experimental representation of Irish in English, Translations itself renews an image of Irish history, an image Friel synthesized from Dowling, Carleton, Andrews, O'Donovan, Colby, and others, at the point when the old Gaelic culture was being translated (as Friel was translating it) into another language. (542)

Friel avoids the nostalgia against which Spivak cautions, but at the same time he does not accept prior Anglicized constructions of history as "Truth." However, like other post-colonial writers, such as Rushdie and Achebe, though Friel reconstructs the history of the colonized, he never claims to be telling the "Truth" either.

McGrath traces earlier "agreed upon fictions" that serve as background for Friel's Translations:

> in a historical play like Translations [Friel] sees his responsibility as not to a solid world of fact and event to which language merely refers but to a tradition of "received historical ideas," that is, to the already written. Friel drew the historical materials for Translations from the received histories of the hedge schools and the nineteenth-century British ordnance survey that created the Anglicized map of Ireland as we know it today. For his knowledge of the hedge schools he went to P. J. Dowling's The Hedge Schools of Ireland and to the writings of William Carleton. For the ordnance survey, in addition to John Andrews's history of the survey, A Paper Landscape, he relied on the letters of one John O'Donovan, who worked on the survey in Donegal, and on the memoirs of Colonel Colby, who was in charge of it. (540–41)

While McGrath's summary of Friel's sources is valuable, McGrath's commentary is a bit misleading. McGrath writes that

> Friel linked his concern with language to these discoveries [about the ordnance survey and about an ancestor who was a hedge-school master] by setting the play in the townland of Baile Beag, County Donegal, in 1833, just as the local hedge school--where, as often in the west of Ireland, instruction was in Gaelic--was about to be replaced by the new national school, where lessons were to be taught exclusively in English. . . . What Friel captures in Translations is a critical passage in Ireland's history when the last remnants of a living Gaelic culture are about to become Anglicized. The schoolchildren will no longer be taught in Gaelic, and the official place names will no longer be Gaelic. The political advantages of Anglicizing Gaelic Ireland were obvious. The schools taught in Gaelic also taught the Gaelic version of Irish history and preserved and fanned the traditional historical prejudices against the British. In the new national schools, Irish schoolchildren would learn the history of Ireland, fully documented of course, but with documents written in English. (541)

McGrath fails to indicate that hedge schools were themselves illegal. The name derives from the fact that lessons had to be taught in secret, often behind hedges or in out-of-the-way barns too deteriorating to house animals. The adults in Translations are peasant farmers who come to learn what they can in the evenings, after the chores are completed. Since 1366, education in Gaelic, as well as state supported education for Catholics, had, with brief exceptions, been illegal. The new national schools would make education available to all Irish, regardless of religion, but English would be the language tool for learning.

In the struggle for language dominance, education becomes a primary battlefield. From the reign of Henry VIII until 1792, the penalty for teaching Irish was severe. Despite these penalties and "the legal and practical difficulties in gathering and retaining a class of pupils," Hedge Schools sprang up around the country. These schools met in secret, often hidden in ditches among the hedges of the countryside. Families paid for the privilege of learning their own language and using their language as they learned other subjects.

> Dowling estimates that by 1824 the Hedge Schools made up the great majority of the 9,352 "pay schools" then in existence in Ireland. The curriculum ranged from arithmetic to instruction in the classics, but the great claim of the schools is that in the eighteenth century at least the medium of instruction was largely Irish, and that the schoolmasters maintained a tradition of literacy in Irish by copying and preserving Irish language texts in manuscript form, compiling dictionaries and grammars, and by writing (mainly poetry) in the language. (Grillo 100)

Not until 1879 did the Irish gain the right to teach Irish as an extracurricular subject. Then in 1900 Irish was allowed as an elective subject within the schools. However, by this time the damage had been done. It was safe for the English to allow Irish back into the educational system because English had become the powerfully dominant language in Ireland. Even the Gaelic League had acknowledged the necessity of fluency in English for life in Ireland. After the creation of the Irish Free State in 1922, Irish might have been expected to make a comeback. The Irish language was declared the official state language, a status maintained when the Free State became the Republic; and, until 1973, school children had to prove competence in Irish before graduation. The fact that competence in Irish as a prerequisite for matriculation was abandoned in 1973 proves how thoroughly dominant the English language had become

among the Irish people. What the English had spent over five hundred years destroying, the Irish could not revitalize in a mere fifty years (Grillo 49, 100).

As Friel retells the story of the historical moment when English finally succeeded in its dominance of Irish through the educational system and a new set of maps, language becomes both subject and object, acting upon the fictions of the past and acted upon in Friel's fiction. Friel, with the advantage of hindsight, explores the beginning of the end for the Irish language in his play which is set in 1833, during the English repression of Irish and privileging of English. The plot revolves around a young English lieutenant attached to the Royal Engineers who has come to map the area and translate all place names into usable English names. Pine describes what he believes is the central issue of the play:

> in Translations Friel. . .[discusses] the adequacy of language as a tool of communication. . . .In looking at the language question, Friel unites the **sense** of place with the **function** of place. . . .Language itself is the factor which unifies these two aspects of the human spirit--its sense of being, and its method of being--or it may be the factor which segregates them, displaces and anesthetizes meaning and paralyzes purpose. Naming, which is central to the play and to the theme of identity, is the key to language. As Ngugui might tell us, when a community loses it language it loses its culture and its identity. (145)

Though Friel focuses on the one Irish community of fictional Baile Beg, the scope of his discussion has wider implications for the international community. McGrath claims that

> One thing that has kept Friel from being "merely provincial" is his preoccupation with language and power of its fictions to shape our experience. In Translations the fictive power of language is linked metaphorically with a potent brew called Lying Anna's poteen, which

> Hugh's son Owen and the lieutenant Yolland drink to assist them in Anglicizing Baile Beag's Gaelic place names. Like Joyce and Synge before him, Friel would make the word become flesh through the power of a lie. His orientation toward language has enabled Friel to achieve one of the career goals he articulated in 1972--to fashion a reasonably consistent perspective in which his art can take root and find sustenance. . . . In his later plays Friel found that "coherent, persistent, inclusive, and forceful" paradigm in a contemporary view of language that is characterized by a complex awareness of the relation of language to both public and private desire and of the relation of language to politics, culture, and history. (544-45)

Smith notes that Friel read and re-read George Steiner's After Babel while working on Translations. Smith quotes some of the lines that seem to have affected Friel's fiction, the last line of the passage having been included by Friel in the dialogue of Owen: "Language is a constant creation of alternative worlds. There are no limits to the shaping powers of words, proclaims the poet . . . . **Uncertainty of meaning is incipient poetry**" (393). Translations abounds in uncertainty. What will come of the new mapping and the new educational system? Can Irish names and ways be translated into English names and ways? Does anyone in the play really understand anyone else, and what does this imply about Ireland?

The play is set in a hedge school in "a disused barn or hay-shed or byre" (Friel 11). The schoolmaster is Hugh O'Donnell, an elderly liquor-loving scholar of languages. But most of the time, his lame son Manus takes charge of instruction. The students are adults from nearby farms and the neighboring village. They are poor and pay what they can provide for the master and his son, such as cans of milk. The curriculum includes Latin, Greek, and arithmetic. English is not taught, to the dismay of some forward looking members of the community. All of this is in keeping with the historical facts. A

nice twist, which may or may not be grounded in fact, is that not only can the English not communicate in Irish, they also cannot communicate in Greek or Latin. Hugh, master of the hedge-school comments,

> I encountered Captain Lancey of the Royal Engineers who is engaged in the ordnance survey of this area. He tells me that in the past few days two of his horses have strayed and some of his equipment seems to be mislaid. I expressed my regret and suggested he address you himself on these matters. He then explained that he does not speak Irish. Latin? I asked. None. Greek? Not a syllable. He speaks--on his own admission--only English. . . . Indeed--he voiced some surprise that we did not speak his language. I explained that a few of us did, on occasion--outside the parish of course--and then usually for the purposes of commerce, a use to which his tongue seemed particularly suited. . . . English, I suggested, couldn't really express us. (Friel 25)

Two messages are suggested by Hugh's discourse. One is that the Irish are not natural merchants, English being the tongue of commerce--a suggestion that perhaps the Irish are not practical or that they still are behind the times. However, the second message is that the supposedly barbarous Irish are culturally richer and internationally astute, while the English feel all the practical knowledge that is necessary when it comes to language is the working use of English--an indication of English ethnocentrism.

However, there is one Englishman who, like the Norman nobles of middle ages, wants to learn the language and ways of the Irish natives. Lieutenant Yolland attempts to learn Gaelic so that he can communicate with the Irish on their own terms, so that he can become a member of the community. However, he has great difficulty in appropriating the Gaelic sounds; and he knows that even if he masters the sounds that may not be enough. He tells his translator:

YOLLAND: . . .Even if I did speak Irish I'd always be an outsider here, wouldn't I? I may learn the password but the language of the tribe will always elude me, won't it? The private core will always be. . . hermetic, won't it?

OWEN: You can learn to decode us.

Though Yolland has been captivated by the Irish countryside and people--in fact has fallen in love with an Irish colleen--he is still there to do an English job: to name the places on the Irish map. He is faced with complications: not all the Irish names given to the places in various records match, and should he try to translate the sound of the Irish name into an English spelling or should he try to translate the meaning of the Irish name into an English word? As Dell Hymes explains, the Englishman and the Irish villagers share no ethnography of speaking. Ethnography of speaking "is a question of what a foreigner must learn about a group's verbal behavior in order to participate appropriately and effectively in its activities. The ethnography of speaking is concerned with the situations and uses, the patterns and functions, of speaking as an activity in its own right" (191). Lieutenant Yolland speaks of the alternative culture of the Irish in terms that indicate an absolute otherness from that of the English. After living among the Irish villagers, he says of his new life, "It wasn't an awareness of **direction** being changed but of experience being of a totally different order" (Friel 40). Yolland will never be able to enter into the language and life of the Irish community because both are too foreign to his own English nature.

In Act Two, scene two of Translations, Friel shows Yolland and his Irish translator, Owen, trying to master the naming of things. Deane explains that "Field Day's preoccupation with naming" is directly related to claims of priority. As he argues, "The naming or renaming of a place, the naming or renaming of a race, a region, a person, is, like all acts of primordial nomination, an act of possession" (18). Friel's scene supports Deane's analysis:

OWEN: Now. Where have we got to? Yes--the point where that stream enters the sea--that tiny little beach there. George!

YOLLAND: Yes. I'm listening. What do you call it? Say the Irish name again?

OWEN: Bun na hAbhann. . . .

YOLLAND: Bun na hAbhann.

OWEN: That's terrible, George. . . .Bun is the Irish word for bottom. And Abha means river. So it's literally the mouth of the river.

YOLLAND: Let's leave it alone. There's no English equivalent for a sound like that.

OWEN: What is it called in the church registry? . . .

YOLLAND: Let's see. . .Banowen.

OWEN: That's wrong. *(Consults text.)* The list of freeholders calls it Owenmore--that's completely wrong: Owenmore's the big river at the west end of the parish. *(Another text.)* And in the grand jury lists it's called--God!--Binhone!--wherever they got that. I suppose we could Anglicize it to Bunowen; but somehow that's neither fish nor flesh.

(Yolland closes his eyes again.)

YOLLAND: I give up.

OWEN: *(At map)* Back to first principles. What are we trying to do?

YOLLAND: Good question.

OWEN: We are trying to denominate and at the same time describe that tiny area of soggy, rocky, sandy ground where that little stream enters the sea, an area known locally as Bun na hAbhann. . .Burnfoot! What about Burnfoot?

YOLLAND: *(Indifferently)* Good, Roland. Burnfoot's good.

OWEN: George, my name isn't. . .

YOLLAND: B-u-r-n-f-o-o-t?

OWEN: I suppose so. What do you think?

YOLLAND: Yes.

OWEN: Are you happy with that?

YOLLAND: Yes.

OWEN: Burnfoot it is then. *(He makes the entry into the Name-Book.)* (34-5)

Yolland has the say over what the place will be called, no matter the various versions provided in earlier maps and records of the place. Yolland, the Englishman, chooses the most English of the possible names and gives his assent to that name, an assent readily accepted and inscribed by the Irish translator Owen. However, the process of arriving at "Burnfoot" has not been as simple as just described.

Several points of conflict come to light in the exchange between Yolland and Owen. First, the Englishman responsible for the naming of places on the Irish map is not taking his job as seriously as one might who was connected to the place itself. The places and the names have no significance for Yolland. Second, the Irishman involved in the naming seems at a loss as to what to do, finally settling on a rather ridiculous substitution. There could be several explanations for Owen's linguistic behavior. First of all, he is referring to legal documents which have been drawn up probably post-1400, which means drawn up according to English law and language. Therefore, the documents simply reflect earlier attempts to translate the Irish name of the place to an English usage capable of being sounded or understood. Third, Owen is engaged in a form of linguistic suicide, willingly stripping not only the Irish identity from the places on the map but also from himself by an act of submission. According to earlier dialogue, Owen has been living in Dublin for the past six years and has become a wealthy merchant, fluent in English. He tells his brother and father, the O'Donnells who run the hedge school, that he is in the pay of the English to act as translator. For economic reasons he has come

under the power of the English. His chief concern is to make his English masters happy. He even goes so far as to tolerate the fact that the Englishman does not call him by his proper first name. Owen, Roland--what's the difference? Not much more than Bun na hAbhann and Burnfoot.

By making the reader/audience question, like Yolland and Owen, what is in a name, Friel emphasizes the importance of naming at the moment that Owen seems to abandon such social significance. Shocked at Owen's indifference and Yolland's ineptitude, the audience understands that names mean a great deal. Edward Sapir explains the social importance of names and signifiers:

> A further psychological characteristic of language is the fact that while it may be looked upon as a symbolic system which reports or refers to or otherwise substitutes for direct experience, it does not as a matter of actual behavior stand apart from or run parallel to direct experience but completely interpenetrates with it. . . .[It] is generally difficult to make a complete divorce between objective reality and our linguistic symbols of reference to it; and things, qualities, and events are on the whole felt to be what they are called. For the normal person every experience, real or potential, is saturated with verbalism. This explains why so many lovers of nature, for instance, do not feel that they are truly in touch with it until they have mastered the names of a great many flowers and trees, as though the primary world of reality were a verbal one and as though one could not get close to nature unless one first mastered the terminology which somehow magically expresses it. (50)

As the two men become more immersed in the job of naming, Yolland begins to take his job more seriously as he becomes both steeped in Irish names swirling about his head and in Irish poteen making his head swirl. Finally he finds himself defending the use of the original Irish names and laughing uproariously at the discovery that all this

time he has been calling Owen by the wrong name. For a time it looks as if the Englishman and the Irishman are going to share an ethnocentric basis of speech. But the moment is short lived and events take ominous political turns. By the end of the play, Yolland has disappeared and is presumably dead, Owen has thrown aside the ridiculously constructed name-book, Hugh has agreed to teach English in his school, and the English military are about to turn the Irish villagers out of their homes and slaughter the farm animals if information on the lieutenant is not forthcoming. In other words, what began as a simple exercise in map-drawing and place-naming turns out to be not so simple. The linguistic threat becomes a looming political and military presence. The Irish world of Baile Beag (now Ballybeg) is turned upside down.

Making this map-making moment come alive by creating memorable scenes and interesting and engaging individuals who are threatened with extinction of one sort or another, Friel shifts our focus from debatable "facts" on record to **images** from Irish history. Toward the end of Translations, Hugh, the teacher at the hedge-school, tells Owen, his son who acts as translator for the English, two of the thoughts that have occurred to him: "A--that it is not the literal past, the 'facts' of history, that shape us, but images of the past embodied in language" and "B--we must never cease renewing those images; because once we do, we fossilise" (Friel 66). In writing this dialogue, Friel speaks to the purpose of the post-colonial debate. The post-colonial project does not tell the truth so much as reshape our old images of history and shift our focus so that the once marginalized, colonized country gains the center.

When Hugh, Friel's fictional Irish teacher, speaks of language shaping history, we may be confident Friel himself is also speaking. Some scholars may doubt this claim; Hugh's drunkenness and somewhat objectionable character may suggest that Friel scorns the teacher. However, Friel, like other post-colonial writers such as Rushdie and Achebe, does not wish to create unbelievable romantic national heroes. Friel's Hugh, like Rushdie's Saleem in Midnight's Children and Achebe's Okonkwo in Things Fall

Apart, is a painful portrait of real human weakness, weakness perhaps resulting from and contributing to the continued oppression. The weak individual is all the more poignant in that he has the intelligence to recognize what is happening around him though not the power to stop his own victimization. That Friel's teacher spells out how personal history binds individuals, resorting to the rhetorical "A" and "B" indicators, is particularly appropriate to Friel's post-colonial message contained in this politically shaped and out-of-shape character. According to Richard Kearney,

> One of Friel's primary concerns . . . is to explore the complex relationship between political ideology and the problematic nature of language itself. . . . It is not surprising then that Friel should display a particular attentiveness to the ways in which different political ideologies--i.e. those of British colonialism and Irish nationalism in particular--have so often informed or deformed the communicative function of language. (510)

If Hugh seems a deformed choice to speak Friel's message, then that deformity is rightful, as is the lameness of Manus, Hugh's crippled son. Friel exploits the characters' deformed natures while attributing to them a sharpened sense of language. It is his aim to overturn English exploitation of the Irish, an exploitation suggested by the social and physical deformations of the two Irish teachers. Kearney describes Translations as "[highlighting] the way in which language was used by the British to exploit (both culturally and politically) an indigenous community in County Donegal" (510).

In language dominance theory, language is a tool of dominance in the hands of the colonizer and a tool of resistance in the hands of the colonized. R. D. Grillo has extensively studied the shifts in language usage within the British empire. He concludes, "any study of linguistic dominance, linguistic hierarchy and linguistic inequality is inevitably a political study" (7). Grillo explains the theory behind the English tactic of language dominance:

> [An] integral feature of the system of linguistic stratification . . . is an ideology of contempt: subordinate languages are despised languages. From at least the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries the word "barbarous" and its derivatives was one of the commonest epithets employed in Britain . . . by speakers of the dominant languages and dialects to refer both to subordinate languages themselves and their speakers. The argument could work two ways: the relevant population was barbarous or savage, and therefore so was their language; or the language was barbarous, and therefore so was the people. (173-4)

Friel clearly associates the ideology of contempt with the colonizing British when he characterizes the English captain who has been sent to the Irish village of Baile Beag but makes no attempt to learn the native language of the country he now inhabits. Instead, the captain expresses surprise that the Irish do not speak his tongue. It is noteworthy that the adults who attend Hugh and Manus's hedge-school are multilingual, speaking Irish, Latin, and Greek, but the captain speaks only English. According to language dominance theory, a monolinguistic culture provides cultural unity and ensures dominance. Consequently, a multilinguistic culture may have difficulty achieving cultural unity unless one language becomes the agreed upon dominant voice for most communicative transactions. Accordingly, the captain's monolingualism implies that he comes from a culture accustomed to dominating while the Irish multilingualism implies the likelihood that the Irish could become victims of dominance by a culture other than one that speaks the native language.

Friel provides images of those Irish who are in the process of falling victim to the dominance of the English language and the English notion of contempt. When Hugh's merchant-class son from Dublin arrives to act as the army's interpreter, he condescends to the Irish villagers, implying the power of the English hold on him since his move eastward and upward. "OWEN: . . . I'm employed as a part-time, underpaid, civilian

interpreter. My job is to translate the quaint, archaic tongue you people persist in speaking into the King's good English" (Friel 29). Later in the play Hugh asks Jimmy, one of his students, to translate a Latin phrase. Jimmy translates the phrase as "'I am a barbarian in this place because I am not understood by anyone'" (Friel 64). The translation provided by the Irishman ironically indicates that the real barbarians are not the native Irish but the encroaching English soldiers who are not understood by the Irish.

If Friel introduces us to the British ideology of contempt when he reveals the typically British linguistic arrogance, he acquaints us more fully when he depicts British educational policy. Education, when promoting the use of one language, helps to create dominance. In Translations Manus, who helps his father at the hedge-school, asks Bridget, "What headline did my father set you?" She answers, "'It's easier to stamp out learning than to recall it'" (Friel 20). With the institution of the national schools, taught in English, the Irish would finally become culturally dominated by English. As Ronald Wardhaugh explains,

> when a government decrees that one language rather than another must be used in certain circumstances, then that is a conscious decision affecting both languages. . . . A very first prerequisite to the spread of any language is a base from which to spread or to dominate others. (2)

From the concerted effort the English made to replace the Irish language with their own native tongue by creating an educational "base" from which to work, clearly the English purposed to break the hold of Irish on the Irish and strangle the native tongue, replacing the sounds of Gaelic by legislating (writing) English as the language of exclusivity. As Wardhaugh reminds us:

> To this day, England and English dominate Northern Ireland. The Irish language enjoys no official status of any kind in Northern Ireland. . . . It can be taught in the schools but only Catholic schools make such teaching compulsory. To some extent Irish has become identified with

> the cause of those who seek to unite Ulster to the Republic of Ireland. (94)

Therefore, since the Catholics of Northern Ireland continue to resist English domination, the Catholic schools attempt to keep alive the struggling Irish language. The battle continues though those who fight for their language and identity may have little hope of reversing the losses they have already clearly suffered. With regard to the deliberate campaign for language dominance through education, to use an appropriately violent language expression: English was literally stuffed down the throats of the Irish. It is at this point of language strangulation through the means of education that Friel places his play.

In addition to implicating the English use of education to eradicate Irish, Friel's Translations suggests that the English colonizers also remapped Ireland and supplanted Irish place names with English names as part of the same political maneuver to subjugate Irish culture. In her post-colonial reading of Henry Rider Haggard's King Solomon's Mines, Anne McClintock analyzes "cartography as a form of military appropriation" (148). McClintock comments, "The colonial map is a document that professes to convey the truth about a place in pure rational form, and promises at the same time that those with the technology to make such perfect representations are best entitled to possession" (151). The lieutenant attempts to rename Irish places with "rational" English signifiers. Using the technical apparatus of the Royal Corps of Engineers as embodied in the lieutenant, the English attempt to engulf the Irish nation into the British Empire by mapping out an English representation of Ireland. Sara Suleri writes of "a mode of recolonization" in literature that is "characterized by the desire to contain the intangibilities of the East within a Western lucidity. . . . Typically, the narrator is a cartographer, the only locus of rationality in an area of engulfing unreliability" (169-170). Suleri's analysis of the colonizing efforts of imaginative cartography applies not only to India but to other colonized countries as well. The violence of cartography plays an

important role in Africa in Haggard's King Solomon's Mines. But the violence of colonial cartography is not geographically limited. Friel's Translations dramatizes the violent effects of cartography when used to reimage a Western colonized culture--the Irish.

Whether employing an ideology of contempt, education for language dominance, or cartography for cultural containment, the message from the colonizer to the colonized is clear: we are a superior race who have come to destroy the blight of your inferiority and to reinvent you in our image while maintaining our dominance. Such an attitude of superiority often betrays at bottom a fear of being infected by the "inferior" peoples. Among the "contagious" classes which Anne McClintock identifies as "a chronic threat to the riches, health, and power of the 'imperial race'" in Victorian Britain are "the Irish" (158). McClintock analyzes two theories of racial degeneration that evolved during the Victorian era. The first theory, polygenesis, claimed that "different races had sprung up in different areas of the earth, in geographically different 'centers of creation'" (160). Based on this theory, the English, as McClintock has correctly implied, viewed the Irish as a separate and inferior race. This racial distinction was not connected to skin color; the Irish were racially inferior because they were other than English, not just geographically, but genetically and culturally as well. Turning back to Translations, we might recall that the English lieutenant, Yolland, speaks of the alternative culture of the Irish in terms that indicate an absolute otherness from the culture of the English: "It wasn't an awareness of **direction** being changed but of experience being of a totally different order" (Friel 40).

At the heart of Friel's work is his experience as an Irishman living in a post-colonial Ireland where he is different from the English and even from the Irish of the past. As Binnie points out, "Friel founded his company in the strife-torn city of Derry, right on the edge of British Ireland, artificially cut off from its hinterland of Donegal, now in the Republic (Southern Ireland)" (365–6). While Donegal resides in the

Republic, Friel resided for quite some time in Derry (Londonderry), which lies inside the Northern border and where he established Field Day headquarters. His experience makes him doubly aware of the issues of colonialism.

Linda Hutcheon explains that duality of experience and meaning go hand in hand with colonialism: "Doubleness and difference are established by colonialism by its paradoxical move to enforce cultural sameness while, at the same time, producing differentiations and discriminations" (Hutcheon 162). We see and hear doubleness and difference in Friel's Translations. The Irish are different from the English, a point illustrated most strongly in the play by the differences in language and method of attaching names to places. Yet the difficulty both the English lieutenant and the Irish villagers have in communicating with one another, despite a strong desire on the part of the lieutenant and Maire, reflects a sameness about the basic difficulty of human beings to communicate with others outside their culture. Of course, the irony of the English attempt to "enforce cultural sameness" through the translation of place names on a map of Ireland made by the British Royal Engineers is that there will now be two names and two sets of maps for the land and its inhabitants, the old Irish maps and the new official English ones. In the process of enforcing sameness, more doubling and differentiation creates further possibilities for miscommunication and discrimination on both sides.

In an effort to communicate their concerns and free their repressed voices, post-colonial writers have taken lessons from their old masters, reappropriating the realm of language to break old discriminations and empower colonized people. While sometimes they employ language with a straightforward vengeance, at other times post-colonial writers fill their language with puns, double entendre and forms of irony. Within post-colonial literature, Linda Hutcheon notes,

> On the level of language, irony becomes one of the chief characteristics. . . . Irony is thus one way of creatively modifying or even twisting the

> language so as to signal the "foreignness" of both the user and her/his experience. (163)

Of course, in Ireland the English are the foreigners. Like the Magistrate in Coetzee's Waiting for the Barbarians, The lieutenant and the captain, as well as those they represent, are the barbarians encountering a kind of culture outside their realm of experience.

The form of the play is perhaps its greatest irony. This play, written by an Irishman, is written in English and is about the death of the Irish language. Everyone in the play except the lieutenant, the captain, and the Irishman who acts as translator is supposedly speaking Irish. In reality, the audience hears a play which is completely in English, the language which won the language war, even though the actors go through the motions of not understanding one another, the "English" characters remaining deaf to the "Irish" characters and the "Irish" characters maintaining a blank look while "listening" to but not understanding the "English" characters. Robert Smith recognizes, "The paradox of a play, in English, about an Irish-speaking community at the moment when it is being rendered, by translation, irrevocably past and speechless, points to the paradox of understanding in general" (392). With regard to a specific character, Smith points out another irony, "The waiflike woman is ironically named. The Hebrew Sarah was the mother of nations. Friel's Sarah stands for a people's loss of tongue and name" (399). Ironically also, this Sarah is present during an episode in Irish history that signals impending death--the death of Irish Gaelic and the Irish culture as it existed before English language dominance. Friel fittingly uses the feminine symbolism of Sarah to represent the birth of a new nation based on English dominance but even more to represent the powerlessness of the Irish people to stay the death of their language and way of life.

Clarifying the conjunction between the colonized Irish and women with regard to the use of irony, Lorraine Weir observes,

> Among those whose basic communication may frequently depend upon the skilled use and reception of ironic utterance--that is, among the powerless--irony will be all the more powerful. The Irish, as is commonly known, are masters of irony and invective; so is the primary community of women. (qtd. in Hutcheon 164)

Broadening this conjunction by citing such authors as Narayan and Rushdie, Hutcheon comments, "Joining women and the Irish here would be ironic post-colonial writers" (164). Ironically, Hutcheon's phrasing, while joining the three groups she mentions in their use of irony, distinguishes the Irish from post-colonial writers, indicating that she fails to see the Irish as post-colonial writers. While I do not equate all masters of irony with post-colonial writing, I have difficulty understanding how Hutcheon could fail to view Irish writers as post-colonialists in the same vein as a Rushdie, given the past and present political history of the island as well as the ironic style of writers like Friel.

Reimaging an episode from the political history of Ireland, Friel employs irony during the dialogue in which Captain Lancey attempts to explain to the hedge-school adult students what the Royal Corps of Engineers is doing:

> LANCEY: (. . . He speaks as if he were addressing children) . . . . We are here--here--in this place--you understand?--to make a map--a map--a map and . . . . A map is a representation on paper--a picture--you understand picture?--a paper picture--showing, representing this country--yes?--showing your country
>
> in miniature--a scaled drawing on paper of--of--of--. (Friel 30)

Of what? The picture that will be made will be an English representation of Ireland that shrinks the island nation and reduces it to a material easily handled by English powers, or so the English powers intend according to a deconstruction of Lancey's oversimplified explanation of the English project. Once Owen convinces Lancey to speak to the Irish villagers as if they had the capacity to understand, with Owen providing the translation,

the irony of post-colonialism can be heard ringing in the English-employed Irishman's decoding.

> LANCEY: "Ireland is privileged. No such survey is being undertaken in England. So this survey cannot but be received as proof of the disposition of this government to advance the interests of Ireland." My sentiments, too.
>
> OWEN: This survey demonstrates the government's interest in Ireland and the captain thanks you for listening so attentively to him. (31)

Of course, the captain has not thanked the villagers for anything, nor have the villagers "listened" to the captain; they watched the captain and listened to Owen. Owen's translation of the captain's words, which are read from a prepared government document, reduce the rhetoric concerning the English project to a base and basic concern--control.

The one person in the play who seems to understand the danger of attempting to establish control over individuals or nations is Hugh, the often out-of-control but wise teacher. Though his message goes unheeded, Hugh warns the lieutenant, "it can happen that a civilisation can be imprisoned in a linguistic contour which no longer matches the landscape of . . . fact" (Friel 43). The fact that Hugh hesitates before using the word **fact** indicates that Hugh has doubts about the existence of fact. Whose facts construct the landscape? And if the facts are only human construct can they not be changed when power changes hands? And which civilization is "imprisoned in a linguistic contour?" Is it Ireland that is trapped within the forced boundaries drawn by the English? More than likely. But the statement can be read with the doubleness of meaning characteristic of post-colonial rhetoric. Perhaps the English are trapped by their own devices, in a country which does not match the map they have drawn and will not adhere to the linguistic code nor the historical image that the English wish to impose.

Hugh's closing lesson allegorizes Irish revolution that will overturn English rule:

> . . . there was an ancient city which, 'tis said, Juno loved above all the lands.
>
> (Begin to bring down the lights.)
>
> And it was the goddess's aim and cherished hope that here should be the capital of all nations--should the fates perchance allow that. Yet in truth she discovered that a race was springing from Trojan blood to overthrow some day these Tyrian towers--a people of kings of broad realms and proud in war who would come forth for Lybia's downfall. . . . (Friel 68)

Is Friel advocating another revolution, this one to take place in Northern Ireland? I do not think that is the case. But I do think he awaits and anticipates the day that the Tyrian towers of colonialism, the trappings of colonial identity, will be overthrown by those who recognize that old ways of being Irish--no matter who has provided the identity construct--will not work. Friel represents a generation who are able to bring the problems created by external domination into the light for a non-romantic analysis of the effects. The hope for this Irish generation lies in self-awareness as well as in a re-reading of history. The Irish identity that Friel provides is complex and suited more to personal experience than to simplistic notions of nationalism; nevertheless, the identity is Irish, based on the shared pain and past of the Irish experience, not English.

Speaking an Irish identity and an Irish experience, Friel's work also crosses national borders into the international realm of post-colonialism, a significant move for Irish writers. Though Ireland exists within the imagined geographic boundaries of Europe, Brian Friel's Translations demonstrates that Irish literature should take its place and speak its piece in the post-colonial discussion. Friel's play evidences the same contextual concerns and the same stylistic maneuvers characteristic of post-colonial writers. However, this play is only one of Friel's works; and Friel is only one of many Irish writers writing from a post-colonial viewpoint. Given the past and present history of Ireland, it is time that post-colonial critics realize that the works of contemporary

Irish writers have as much share in a post-colonial debate as Joyce did and Achebe does. Furthermore, it is time that all post-colonial critics put aside blinders of color and continent containment and recognize that post-colonial concerns embrace all victimized cultures who have fallen into the more powerful grip of any external power invading their homeland.

Before turning briefly to two other Friel plays that continue to demonstrate his obsession with language and identity, we need to ascertain whether Friel's image of Ireland and Irish identity matches contemporary Irish audiences. Only in the broader appeal of his language plays, can we be certain of his vision as representative of his generation. However, the popular and critical acclaim that Friel's play, Translations, has earned him seems to support Friel's Irish vision and voice.

An advance report on the world premiere of Translations appeared in the 23 September 1980 Derry Journal. The report predicted that "about 500 members will attend the city's first theatrical world premiere." The reporter notes,

> "Translations" is being staged by a new company called Field Day, founded by Friel and the Belfast-born actor Stephen Rea, formerly with the National Theatre in London.
>
> The prospect of Derry hosting this event has caused the air to become thick with talk of cultural revival, and the writer's role in the community, and the relation of arts to politics--particularly as the production is being supported by the Arts Council of both Northern Ireland and the Republic, to the tune of about f40,000 and f10,000 respectively.

The article provides a summary of the play's plot. Then both Friel and Rea are quoted:

> "The play deals with the meeting of two cultures, and specifically of two languages, and the translations which follows [sic]--linguistic,

> psychological and social," says Friel. He declines to be drawn on present day parallels.
>
> "The play has a great deal of political resonance," says Rea. "If we put it on in a place like Dublin's Abbey Theatre, its energy would be contained within the theatre and its clientele. But its energy is bound to spread much more profoundly through a place like Derry."

According to the article, the energy did indeed spread by virtue of a difficult and wide-spread performance schedule. Following five nights at the Derry Guildhall, the play would move to the Gate in Dublin for a two week run, to be followed by a series of one-night stands in five cities: Magherafelt, Dungannon, Newry, Carrickmore, Armagh, and Enniskillen.

The headline following the opening in Derry gives an immediate indication of the reception: "Standing Ovation for Friel's 'Translations'." The reviewer notes, "A standing ovation greeted the end of the world premiere of 'Translations'--the latest play by Derry playwright, Brian Friel,--at Derry's Guildhall on Tuesday night" (Derry Journal 26 Sept. 1980). The writer observes that the highest regard was afforded to Friel: "But the warmest and loudest applause was reserved for the playwright himself when he came on stage to acknowledge calls of 'Author, author'." Friel appropriately addressed the audience in a manner related to the entire issue treated by the play. As the reviewer records, "in three languages, aptly reflecting those dealt with in the play, he [Friel] said: 'thank you' to the audience in Latin, Irish and English, in that order." The reviewer then observes that the audience also reflected the diverse culture of Ireland: "It was a proud night in Derry as well, with an audience that reflected people from all walks of life both North and South of the Border."

Of the play, the reviewer notes,

> Underlining the whole play is the strong sense of identity which the hedge school community has arising from its Irish speaking culture, while the

> British army survey is out to destroy this. And indeed, as one person commented afterwards: "They were speaking in different languages then and are still speaking in different languages now." . . . The play finishes with nothing resolved and again there is a message for what is resolved more than a century later?

The reviewer takes time to record audience reaction, both specific and general, to the play. The Bishop of Derry, Most Reverend Dr. Edward Daly, is quoted as saying, "I have always emphasised the importance of culture as an antidote to violence, 'Translations' could not have come at a better time." The reviewer goes on to say that "The reaction of the local people has been overwhelming with all the scheduled performances booked out and an extra matinee performance arranged for tomorrow."

Since its opening in Derry, Translations has continued to draw crowds and elicit critical acclaim. Ulf Dantanus claims that Translations "guaranteed the success of Field Day" (208). Translations has gained not only Irish popularity, but has become internationally acclaimed. George O'Brien affirms that this Friel play is "his most important" (102). He also notes that "The response of the London Times reviewer gives a general sense of how the play has been received since its opening night: 'I have never been more certain of witnessing the premiere of a national classic'" (qtd. in George O'Brien 102). Significantly, the English reviewer recognizes that Translations is distinctly Irish, a "national classic." Translations also received the 1981 Ewart-Biggs Memorial Award for Anglo-Irish understanding. According to O'Brien, this award "confirmed the play's importance and popularity" (102).

In 1983 Translations played for two and a half months, from mid-March to mid-April, with a return engagement from the end of June to mid-August, for a total of 44 performances at Dublin's Abbey Theatre. On 18 March 1983, David Nowlan reviewed the opening of Translations at the Abbey for the Irish Times. Nowlan spends the length of the review commenting on the performances rather than the script. He faults the

actors for "terrible uncertainties of voice and accent . . . [and] a lack of verbal clarity" (8). Though he praises the performances for being emotionally sound, he claims that the actors are "let down by their linguistic techniques" (8). The irony in the weaknesses attributed to the performances is apparent. Nowlan comments upon why the sound of the performance is crucial to the meaning of the play:

> What's in a name? Baile Beag or Ballybeg? Owen or Roland? And if the name doesn't matter, what's in a language? Or a tribe? Or its culture? "Translations" is about the erosion of a name, a language, a culture. The English army's Anglicisation of the native Donegal names, the English government's replacement of the Irish schools by standardised national schools; these are the Trojan horses which will attack an ancient civilisation from within. But when the words themselves are uncertain, the fabric of the drama is weakened. (8)

Perhaps Stephen Rea's concerns about the play's containment if performed at the Abbey were somewhat warranted. However, the Abbey has provided an internationally recognized Irish venue for Friel, an important contribution if Friel is to effect international opinion about the Irish.

Though Translations was Friel's first concerted effort to re-read Irish history, to retell the tale, and to recreate Irish identity, it was not his first or last effort to deal with the language/identity theme. Alan Peacock claims that during the mid-seventies Friel began writing dramas that deal increasingly with the "socio-political world" (xvii). According to Peacock,

> This development, broadened into an historical perspective, may be seen as reaching its culmination in 1980 with Translations. Translations in turn is a nodal text for Friel's preoccupations with language in its complex cultural significances, its manifold realisations, its glories and duplicities. . . . [And] the interrelationship examined in Translations between language

> and national history and destiny was to be taken up as a central issue in Making History (1988). Meanwhile, through the eighties, Friel had explored the possibilities of "translation" in the broadest sense with the comic contemporary reprise of the preoccupations of Translations in The Communication Cord (1982). (xvii)

Thus, by ranging freely over the timeline of Irish history, Friel emphasizes the enduring significance of language to the Irish national identity.

There are critics who object to viewing Friel's works as they range across time. Fintan O'Toole argues that "to see Friel's work as a composite history of Ireland, or to go further and say, as many have done, that plays like Making History and Translations are not merely history plays but plays 'about history' . . . denies the extent to which Friel's plays are less about historical sweep than they are about the excavation of unchanging places, people and dilemmas" (202-3). O'Toole favors digging deep over looking wide. However, I see no reason that both cannot be pursued so that a broad view is achieved without overlooking the particularity of Baile Beag, Ireland as the place of Friel's imagination.

Like Irish playwrights before him, Friel knows the art of the particular and the universal, and how to make playwrighting meet the cultural needs of both. Unlike Irish playwrights of preceding generations, Friel cannot imagine a noble nationalist identity devoid of the imperial influence. However, O'Toole rightly compares Friel's imaginative pursuits to those of Yeats, "filling a political vacuum" (208). O'Toole does not mention Yeats's distrust of the politics with which he was involved, but if he had the connection would even be stronger between the two playwrights. As O'Toole describes the political environment of contemporary Ireland, "the politics of the Republic, which are seen in . . . The Communication Cord [are] at best ridiculous and at worst viciously corrupt" (208). He adds, "nor [can] the tribal warfare of the North offer a ground on which history can operate, on which a future can be posited" (208). Based upon Friel's portrait

of Irish politics, for the whole island, O'Toole claims that the playwright must be considered "post-nationalist" (208). Though O'Toole does not clearly define what he means by post-nationalist, I think he is on the right track. Therefore, I will attempt my own description of Friel as a "post-nationalist."

If "post-nationalist" refers to one who recognizes the dangers of a divisive privileging of an ethnocentric nationalism, one who knows that nationalism is a political construct rather than a natural condition of one's geographic location and/or genetic history, then Friel is post-nationalist. He is interested most in the Irish experience that has created the condition in which contemporary Irish people find themselves and with which they must deal. The Irish with whom Friel is concerned are Catholic and Protestant, Northern Irish and from the Republic, rural and urban. Each of these "types" contributes a tone to the tale, but any Irish tale can only be told by an individuals. There is no one tale that tells the whole story, just as there is no one type that is the true Irish representative. However, there is an Irish experience born of the past and living into the present that all the Irish share and with which they all must struggle. Friel, as an Irishman distrustful of the language that has been used to control him and controlling the same language to tell his own tale, continues to explore, interrogate, and probe the Irish story.

Comparing The Communication Cord and Translations with regard to "historical improbabilities," Sean Connolly calls The Communication Cord "the coarser burlesque of the Irish obsession with an idealised past" (153). Connally himself asks "To what extent do they [historical improbabilities] matter?" (153). Connally seems to recognize that Friel may not be interested in, or even recognize as possible, probable renderings of history. The important part of Connally's comment is his recognition of The Communication Cord as burlesque, though he provides no commentary on the reason for Friel's choice of dramatic style. I think the choice is significant when we consider that this is the only one of the three linked language plays that is given a contemporary

setting. Neither historical romance nor serious drama with a tragic bent would suit the contemporary moment, one which has no romantic heroes nor must necessarily end in death--of language, culture, or individual persons. This burlesque holds out hope for moving forward without erasing what is behind: talk about the past, dream about the past, and laugh at the ridiculous way some try to hold on to a past that has helped to forge the present pain.

In The Communication Cord (1982), Tim, a university lecturer who may or may not finish his dissertation in linguistics on response cries, borrows a restored eighteenth century cottage from a friend to impress the politically important father of a girlfriend. However, all goes awry, with multiple confusions over identity included. No one is who he or she is supposed to be; characters speak at the same time, rendering understandable communication almost void. And when the Senator first, followed by the false friend, ends up getting his head stuck in the halter that held cows--those dumb but pliant beasts--in the old Irish home, the irony of communication failure and antique chains that bind leads to hysteria. Finally, Tim, having realized the foolishness of his false communications and attempts to please the Senator and the Senator's daughter, turns in silent communication of his true passion to Claire, a colleague and local girl. Realizing that they are not making sense as they attempt to speak, both give up on words, relying instead on the "reverberations" of their feelings. Tim admits, before entering into a long kiss with Claire, that "Maybe silence is the perfect discourse" (Friel Cord 92). As they kiss, and as the false friend wriggles in his ancient chain, the house literally falls down around them. Their act of silent, honest communication brings down the house that has merely been a facade for a false and long-gone Irish identity.

Robert Welch ends his discussion of The Communication Cord and begins his discussion of Making History by asserting that "Language itself and the traditions, the 'images of the past,' it embodies may enslave us: the communication cord, the means of transmitting messages, the entire network of understanding can become the halter of

victimage. There is in Friel a profound distrust of language, because he understands its power" (145). Welch ties Making History to his commentary on The Communication Cord by explaining that

> In Making History (1988) O'Neill is someone who tries to resist this power. His situation is that of someone who is surrounded by people with very strong languages who are trying to translate him into their terminology or into one they recognise. He doesn't have a stable language himself. He speaks with an English accent for most of the play, except in moments of anger, when he breaks into his native Tyrone. (145)

This description should call to mind the noble Irish FitzEdward of LeFanu's Sons of Erin and the equally noble Anne Chute of Boucicault's The Colleen Bawn. FitzEdward passes for English when he wants, and Anne sounds English except in moments of passion when the Irish tones alone can communicate her soul in sound. We have come full circle in O'Neill's character, with Friel providing new insight. As Welch puts it, Friel's O'Neill wants "to retain some inalienable right to be Irish in the country which is his. The trouble with that is that none of the available models will quite do" (146). Whereas playwrights of former generations had what they thought were answers--LeFanu pleaded for an Ireland and Irish identity that was separate but equal to the English; Boucicault claimed a nobility for the peasant Irish soul over and above the English landowner; Yeats looked to language and the recreation of Celtic myth to bring about a new national Ireland--Friel knows that no one answer is available.

Peacock asserts that Friel's "linguistic and historical preoccupations, which so notably inform Translations, are significantly exercised once again in Making History (1988)" (xii). He goes on to note that "The reception of these two plays in particular, within and beyond Ireland, sealed his reputation as an Irish dramatist of international stature" (xii). Peacock describes Making History as "a dramatic meditation on the integrity of historical narrative" (xiii). Though there is quite a time difference between

the settings of Translations and Making History, as Desmond Maxwell points out, "Both are set in a historical past, a crucial period of political and cultural change whose ubiquitous stresses are shown at work in a small, localised group" (62).

In Making History, Friel provides a mismatched pair of lovers similar to Yolland and Maire in Translations with a sexual reversal. In this story, which takes place in 1601--the time of the Irish defeat at Kinsale, Hugh O'Neill is the Irish noble, Earl of Tyrone, while the bride is English Mabel Bagenal. Like Yolland, Mabel "abandons her own community for a society of which she cannot be wholly a member" (Maxwell 63). However, rather than a map-maker, Friel provides a historical biographer to translate Irish meaning to future generations. Lombard, a Catholic priest who does not believe in historical fact any more than does Friel, is the biographer for O'Neill. Maxwell concludes that

> Making History--in a way the story Lombard will not tell--is about the strategems of transcribing--selecting? shaping? perverting--historical facts in order to establish a version of reality whose "truth" is verified by its acceptance. O'Neill is a case in point. Many of the shibboleths and prejudices of contemporary Irish politics look back to just such mythologised pasts. With Translations, Making History is about the power of language, whether to possess by naming, or to recreate the historical past as it can the personal. (64)

From the opening of the play, O'Neill is obsessed by naming and telling. He wants to know the names of the plants he has selected to adorn the house for his new bride. He insists on getting clear messages from and about the Spanish who may help the Irish overthrow their English masters. He wants the names of the Irish who surrender to the English following complete defeat of the Irish rebels. Yet, O'Neill uses duplicitous language to his own advantage in order to survive. He even writes an act of submission to Queen Elizabeth I, though his spirit remains unsubmissive if broken.

Commenting upon O'Neill's submission to the Queen after the rebellion is crushed, Welch describes it as "a submission couched in the most elaborate and courtly English" (146). He goes on to observe that "There is now a perfect 'congruence' between word and situation. This language of victimage describes a situation which has come about because one culture, one language, has defeated another" (147). Welch is correct. Both O'Neill and O'Donnell recognize that the submission is a sham, but the defeat is all too real. O'Neill flees to Italy, where he lives out his days in restless frustration and increasing alcoholism, waiting for help to regain his nation, help that will not come. In the meantime, Lombard writes of O'Neill the hero.

Though O'Neill protests that he wants Lombard to tell the whole story, not just a part that will suit Lombard's needs, O'Neill remains silent when given the chance to change Lombard's outline of the story. The silence indicates that O'Neill no longer can say what the truth of his own story is even though he knows that it is not what Lombard has written. As Welch explains,

> The "truth" the play has revealed is that there are different sets of cultural awareness which are conveyed in different languages: this truth relies upon the totality of those languages the play has set before us, its structure an arrangement of fragile interlinkings over the gulf between cultures and individuals. The end of the play is powerful in its unremitting focus on a man who is distrustful of all language, which means he is trustful of no-one. (147)

O'Neill has become distrustful through experience, a pragmatic reaction to life's pain. However, Lombard is even more pragmatic than O'Neill. Experience has not changed Lombard during the play, a period covering approximately fourteen years. Lombard has always been honest about his distrust of history, his own approach to writing O'Neill's history. Early in the play, in response to O'Neill's concern about how Lombard will tell the story, Lombard answers, "If you're asking me will my story be as

accurate as possible--of course it will. But are truth and falsity the proper criteria? I don't know. Maybe when the time comes my first responsibility will be to tell the best possible narrative. Isn't that what history is, a kind of story-telling?" (Friel History 8). When O'Neill asks, "And where does the truth come into all this?", Lombard replies, "I'm not sure that "truth" is a primary ingredient--is that a shocking thing to say? Maybe when the time comes, imagination will be as important as information. But one thing I will promise you: nothing will be put down on paper for years and years. History has to be made--before it's remade" (8-9).

Here Lombard speaks for himself and for Friel, perhaps for all the Irish playwrights with whom I have dealt in this analysis. By the end of Making History, Lombard still has not written Hugh O'Neill's history; only the outline is prepared. But the story that Lombard will eventually tell will be the story of a hero, and that tale will be retold again and again in various versions until finally coming down to Friel's dramatic examination of the man O'Neill in all of his complexity: "The schemer, the leader, the liar, the statesman, the lecher, the patriot, the drunk, the soured, bitter emigre" (Friel History 63). Lombard provides the framework for his own tale and the future tale told now by Friel, a neat twisting of time and of telling. In the closing scene, Lombard explains to O'Neill that

> People think they just want to know the "facts"; they think they believe in some sort of empirical truth, but what they really want is a story. And that's what this will be: the events of your life categorized and classified and then structured as you would structure any story. . . . I'm simply talking about making a pattern. . . . Ireland is reduced as it has never been reduced before--we are talking about a colonized people on the brink of extinction. This isn't the time for a critical assessment of your "ploys" and your "disgraces" and your "betrayal"--that's the stuff of another history for another time. Now is the time for a hero. Now is the

> time for a heroic literature. So I am offering Gaelic Ireland two things. I'm offering them this narrative that has the elements of myth. And I'm offering them Hugh O'Neill as a national hero. A hero and the story of a hero. (66-67)

The speech that Friel has placed into the mouth of O'Neill provides a summary for all of the process of Irish story-telling, Irish identity making. Once there was a time for making heroes of Irish characters in order to encourage the victims of England's colonization. Those heroes shifted from age to age--from Lombard's tribal warrior, to LeFanu's noble gentleman, to Boucicault's peasant rogue, to Yeats's mythical martyr. However, a new time has arrived; and this is not a time for heroes. Friel is writing in the time that Lombard predicts will one day come, another time-bending trick by Friel who has managed to have his own creation predict an author who might create the story in which he now appears. Friel gives us a play that shows us the pain and failure of O'Neill and his compatriots, without reducing the significance of the struggle even while exploding the heroic myth. Through Lombard, Friel credits the old tales with having served their purpose in certain times and accepts that future storytellers will necessarily tell the tale differently, what Lombard has earlier referred to as one of "several possible narratives" about the same time and person (Friel History 15). Friel has brought the tale back around, allowing it to double back on itself as he re-reads and recreates history, not a false history, but another version.

What then is the Irish identity that Friel has constructed, the story that he attempts to tell? The "facts" of the story remain the same, but the Irish image and identity has shifted once more. The identity that Friel voices is much more personal and less nationalist than preceding versions, yet Friel's Irish identity is completely and unapologetically Irish. The hope Friel provides in his construction of the Irish identity, an identity that seems to have gained both national and international popularity, is an identity that blends nationalism with internationalism, the particular with the universal,

the defined with the diverse. Such a blend is difficult to achieve and may not come to pass beyond the edge of the stage, but Friel's pragmatic dream is as significant in the hope it holds out as Yeats's romantic dream once was--and perhaps has a better chance of surviving.

In Postnational Identity (1993), Martin J. Matustik argues, "Since all identities are historically constructed, universalism and particularism are not necessarily radical opposites" (viii). He explains that both approaches can either help uphold identity or limit identity, becoming both constructive and destructive at the same time. On the one hand, particularism necessitates an Other different from the identity in question in order to delineate identity. On the other hand, universalism denies difference in a subsuming globality. Therefore, Matustik concludes, "An antiracist and antisexist attitude, not just any preservation of identity and difference, recommends itself as the way out of the universalist and the particularist forms of nationalism" (viii). He then lays out the problem: "The question before us, then, is the 'how' of universalism and particularism: how is one to embody the particular differences and how is one to communicate, hence to universalize, one's identity without marginalizing that of others?" (viii). In asking this question, I think that Matustik verbalizes not only Friel's present problem, but the ongoing struggle of the colonized and post-colonial writer who attempt to achieve identity while moving the historical moment forward past the constraints of imperialism and, thus, of differentiating racist nationalism. In essence, Matustik verbalizes the question that lies at the heart of the Irish drama. The answer is always changing and never final because the play goes on, the last act always perhaps the next one, but then again maybe not.

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