Myth Appropriation in Brian Friel's play: Living Quarters

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Abstract:

Primarily, this study is devoted to exploring key aspects of the Hippolytus myth in Brian Friel's play Living Quarters: after Hippolytus. Additionally, the study seeks to shed light on human relationships as being presented in the ancient myth and its re-visited version in Friel's play in an attempt to present a critical outlook of myth appropriation in the play in question by adopting an interdisciplinary approach due to the fact that the uniqueness of the Greek myth offers new visions and endorses new expressions of universal human truths in addition that the feminist approach is interdisciplinary from the beginning and inclusive of every discipline including major disciplinary approaches such as psychology, archaeology, mythology, etc., and sometimes they are politically dismissed as irrelevant to the ancient cultures though gender is implicit in every theoretical approach and mythology inextricably involves gender system in almost every culture

Keywords: Mythh, Brian Friel, Living Quarters, Euripides, Hippolytus

ملخص:

اعتماد ألأسطورة في مسرحية "الحواري الحية" للكاتب المسرحي براين فريل

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى سبر أغوار اعتماد المؤلف المسرحي الإيرلندي براين فريل على أسطورة هيبوليتس للكاتب اليوناني يوريبيديز في تأليف مسرحيته "الحواري الحية: ما بعد هيبوليتس" نظرا لما تتمتع به الأسطورة من سبر للعلاقات الإنسانية ذات الطابع الإجتماعي والسياسي وأبعادها الأيديولوجية في ذلك المجتع الإغريقي وإسقاط هذه الأسطورة على واقع الكاتب المسرحي الإيرلندي لتعبر عن عدة محاور فكرية وإجتماعية وسياسية بل وفلسفية عاصرها الكاتب في مجتمعه الإيرلندي.

Brian Patrick Friel (Omagh, Northern Ireland, 1929 – 2015), the Irish foremost influential playwright and the national cultural icon, visits and adapts Greek and Irish mythology in his plays. His techniques for myth appropriation vary in accordance with his philosophical and authorial intentions. He often uses classical images, allusions, archetypes, symbols, and even incorporates a myth within the myth.

In the *Living Quarters*, Friel makes a direct reference to the myth of *Hippolytus* by the addition of the tag "*after Hippolytus*" to its title signifying referential note to Euripides' *Hippolytus* (428 BC). The main focus of the play is the dysfunctional family as the play represents a deliberate modern- day reconceptualization of Euripides tragedy. (Middeke & Schnierer, 2010)

Brian Friel's *Living Quarters* draws on Euripides *Hippolytus*, but should not be considered a version of Greek tragedy. The play departs from its source material and Brian chooses not to follow the particular sequence of events in Euripides' play and Friel takes considerable liberties in changing the setting, adding and removing characters, and radically changing character motivations. This qualifies his pay as an adaptation under the categorization system in this study.

Friel's *Living Quarters* was produced by Abby Theatre/Amharclann na Mainistreach in association with Oscar Lewinstein on 24 March 1977; and was directed by Joe Dowling. In spite of the fact that translations and adaptations of Greek tragedies have been a common trend in Ireland for more than a century, Irish playwrights have written a few of these. Friel is one of the eminent Irish playwrights to use the Greek tragedy as a source material for his work.

In *Amid Our Troubles: Irish Versions of Greek Tragedies*, Marianne McDonald identifies characteristics common to the Irish adaptation of Greek tragedies, including

> "Irish-English; allusions to Irish history; anachronisms; poetry; philosophy; folk sayings; humour; at times sexual explicitness and scatological language; references to drink and drunks; colloquialisms, literary allusions and wordplay; repetition of words; rhyme and rhythm; the use of music and song; references to a Christian God; rituals; prayers; a sense of mystery, the inexplicable, and the spiritual; memory; 'ordinary' people rather than nobles; gravitation towards human rights and freedom; and struggles over or identification with the land." (McDonald & Walton, Amid Our Troubles: Irish Versions of Greek Tragedy, 2002)

Many of these characteristics are incorporated in Brian Friel's play, *Living Quarters*, which clearly places him in the tradition of Irish writers who have adapted Greek tragedies.

The Phaedra and Hippolytus story is one of the most popular Greek myths for artists of all genres to explore in their work. It was painted in oil canvas in 1802 by Pierre-Narcisse Guérin (1774–1833) – Musée du Louvre (Greekmythologyinart.com, 2018-2020). It has also been discussed by philosophers and made into films, operas as well as being adapted by other major dramatists.

In addition to using *Hippolytus* as a source material for *Living Quarters*, Brian has also drawn on Greek tragedies and

mythology in other works. For example, *Translations* (1980) is characterized by the use of classical mythology, quotations, Greek and Latin languages as extra languages adding verbal richness to the play though these languages are hard to understand. The use of Greek language enhances the main theme of the play which is the decline of the Gaelic language, and also allows comparing the Gaelic language to the dead classical language in addition to delineating the relationship between language and civilization.

The myth of *Hippolytus* is also re-visited by Friel in *The Gentle Island* in which Sarah, the protagonist of the play, gets her father to avenge her honor by killing Shane who has rejected her advances. Shane is like Phaedra in Euripides' *Hippolytus* (McDonald, The Living Art of Greek Tragedy, 2003). Shane is also the archetype of the trickster.

Friel's use of archetypes, specifically the trickster, is reflected in retrospect of the actions of the characters: Shane in *The Gentle Island*, Skinner in *Freedom of the City*, Keeney in *Volunteers*, and Eamon in *Aristocrat*. In *Brian Friel: The Shaman, the Artist and the Trickster* Maria Gaviña Costero analyses Friel's usage of the Irish archetype of the trickster. According to her analysis, the trickster serves to "dismantle, one by one, all the received beliefs that had inflamed the fratricidal conflicts." Moreover, she stresses the significant purpose of using the Irish archetype of the Shaman in *Faith Healer* in order to "exhibit the complex personality and tormented consciousness of the artist. The healing powers of the Shaman, which transform mundane reality into the magic world of possibility, can be very fittingly applied

to the writer's creativity." (Costero, 2018) Though the trickster and the shaman archetypes are not used in the *Friel's Living Quarters*, but the echo of the Shaman as an artist could be found in the character of the Sir. Retrospectively, *Living Quarters* is reminiscent of the influence of both Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search for and Author* and Chekhov's *Three Sisters* upon the art of Brian Friel.

The story of Phaedra and Hippolytus continues to draw critics' attention once again because of its multitude of different thematic clusters, each of which can be made to have contemporary relevance. The story mainly revolves around Hippolytus and Phaedra. The play commences with the appearance of the goddess Aphrodite on the stage on deus ex machina, explaining to the audience that she has grown exasperated because Hippolytus, the bastard of Theseus, has devoted himself to virginity and to worship the goddess, Artemis, her rival. She adds that Hippolytus rejects the power of sexuality and desire. Therefore Aphrodite sets her plan to cause Phaedra, Theseus's wife and his stepmother, to fall insanely in love with Hippolytus. Aphrodite's statement, thus, sets the tragic course of actions into motion.

Euripides draws an indirect confirmation of Aphrodite's judgment of Hippolytus character by making a servant see Hippolytus when he was honoring the statue of Artemis. The servant urges him to worship Aphrodite's statue as well, but Hippolytus arrogantly denounces worshipping Aphrodite. As soon as Hippolytus exits, the palace is stirred with Phaedra's ailing as she refuses to eat and nears to die. Though Phaedra refuses to tell what is ailing her, her nurse urges her to talk and eventually is able to elicit Phaedra's confession that she has been overwhelmed with

sexual desire for Hippolytus. An ailment she treats as a terrible disease. At first, Phaedra's nurse expresses shock and disgust, but later she decides to bring her a magical potion to cure Phaedra's desire. Though Phaedra's greatest fear is the revelation of her secret that would eventually lead to the ruin of her reputation, the nurse finds Hippolytus. After having Hippolytus swear an oath of silence, the nurse proposes him to have sexual affair with Phaedra. But, Hippolytus cruelly denounces the proposition and shouts at the nurse. Phaedra hears Hippolytus shouting at the nurse and decides to commit suicide, but after she plots to guard her reputation. Before she commits suicide, she makes the chorus swear an oath of silence not to repeat what they know. Then she enters into her palace and hangs herself. Just then, after paying a visit to an oracle, Theseus returns wearing a flower crown which ironically indicates a favorable response. He grieves to know that Phaedra is dead and cries even more when he finds a wax tablet in Phaedra's hand containing a note in her own handwriting and in which she accuses Hippolytus of raping her. Exasperatedly, Theseus calls down one of his fatal curses granted to him by his father Poseidon upon Hippolytus. He then calls Hippolytus who tries to defend himself innocent of raping his stepmother but Theseus is deeply convinced that Hippolytus is guilty and decides to exile him from both Troizen and Athen. Later, the messenger who has been sent to escort Hippolytus to the border of the country comes and explains that while Hippolytus has mounted his horse to depart along the shore, an earthquake rumbles and that a massive wave out of which a bull runs forth and chases Hippolytus causing Hippolytus chariot to collide with a cliff and flip. Hippolytus has been dragged along the ground and tangled in the reins. When Hippolytus is found, he is on the verge

of death. On hearing the news, Theseus becomes satisfied for Hippolytus has met his punishment. Artemis suddenly appears and tells Theseus the whole truth. Theseus regrets believing false accusations against Hippolytus, refuses waiting for a fair trial, and calls down the irreversible fatal curse. He bestows all blame on an ancient unresolved crime among his ancestors for the suffering. In the end, while Hippolytus is dying, he is carried and set down before his father. Both of them have enormous pain and sadness for each other. Artemis appears and ensures that they have a moment of reconciliation and forgiveness before she vows to avenge Aphrodite and sets up a cult for the young maidens to honor the memory of Hippolytus forever.

The complexity of Hippolytus story has allowed for radically different versions of adaptation. Sometimes adapters have chosen to present the story as a metaphor for gender conflicts and what they see to be gender indifference between the two sexes while others use it to explore ethnic and racial tensions and to criticize the nature of oppression, misunderstanding, and lack of communication. Still, others have chosen Hippolytus to explore filial-parental relationships. No matter what other themes playwrights chose to explore, they must ultimately deal with the very taboo subject of incest, the painful crime of ancient roots in human memory.

In *living Quarters*, Brian Friel chooses not to use anything resembling a Greek chorus and also abandons the Greek names of Euripides' original version, giving his characters recognizable and evocative Irish names instead. Theseus becomes Frank Butler, Hippolytus becomes Ben, and Phaedra becomes Ann. The role of goddesses, Aphrodite and Artemis, does not exist, but the

role of god is mysteriously attributed to Sir in a vague stance. Friel also adds new characters such as the priest and Frank Butler's daughters and does not follow the sequence of events as in the original plot of Euripides' *Hippolytus*. Perhaps the most significant change to the myth Friel makes is the shift of suicidal character in the person of Frank Butler, the figure of Theseus, who commits suicide instead of Ann, the Phaedra figure. In addition, Friel makes the culprits leave unpunished in similar ways war-culprits and politicians are sometimes left unpunished.

Euripides's Hippolytus

Several translated versions of Euripides' *Hippolytus* appeared in the 20th century. Among those famous translators of Euripides' plays are the German classical philologist Ulricht von Wilamowitz, the well-known authority on ancient Greek and its literature; and Gilbert Murray, the classical scholar of ancient Greek language and culture. Both Wilamowitz and Murray made Euripides' *Hippolytus* and other plays accessible to a wide variety of readers in our contemporary era. Upon reading Gilbert Murray's translation of Euripides' *Hippolytus* Bertrand Russell was deeply struck by the troubled soul of Phaedra. He wrote to Murray telling him how much he was affected by his Hippolytus: "Your tragedy fulfills perfectly – so it seems to me – the purpose of bringing out whatever is noble and beautiful in sorrow; and to those of us who are without a religion, this is the only consolation of which the spectacle of the world cannot deprive us." (Ray, 1996) Furthermore, Ray monk states that Russell was deeply struck by the lyric that informs the audience of Phaedra's suicide:

> … that dark spell about her clings;
> Sick desires of forbidden things.

On the other hand, Wilmowitz's version exerted a similar impact in the German theatre and helped transmit the Euripidean text into Europe as well.

Euripides' *Hippolytus* is divisible into two halves and has two protagonists (Hippolytus and Phaedra) only if Theseus is not to be included as a third protagonist. The first half of the play extends from lines 1 to 775, deals with Phaedra's struggle against Aphrodite's intrigue and ends up with her suicide. The second (from lines 776 to 1466) deals with Hippolytus' way of life and his attempt to defend his reputation against Phaedra's sexual desire and against her false accusation of raping her. The major themes in Euripides' Hippolytus are: Phaedra's culpability, incest, chastity, fate, thinking versus doing evil, speech versus silence and consanguinity of the two protagonists, Phaedra and Hippolytus, in addition to parental-filial relationship (Hippolytus' relationship with his father).

It is said that Euripides had written two versions of Hippolytus myth. One is a lost version and what remain of it are just fragments with different content and commentaries, and the other is the extant version. Both Michael R. Halleran and W. S. Barret accept that the extant version is a re-writing of the lost version with a different portrayal of Phadera's character. Halleran wrote:

Aristophane of Byzantium in his hypothesis to *Hippolytus* ... explains that the surviving play must have been second because it "corrected" what was unseemly in the first. About that first play, at times called *Hippolytos (Kata)kaluptomenos* (*"Hippolytus veiled"*) …we have much conjecture but relatively little hard information. … What Aristophanes of Byzantium meant by

"corrected" is probably indicated in an ancient *life* of Euripides … and the comic playwright Aristophanes' Frog (1043, 1052-4), which both suggest a Phaedra intent on adultery. Such a Phaedra must come from *Hippolytus I* and would conform to the mythological stereotype of "Potiphar's wife" and contrast sharply with the virtuous and discreet Phaedra of Hippolytus." (Halleran, 1995)

According to Halleran, in his treatment of found fragments of the lost version, the play began with an expository prologue spoken by Phaedra and it is set in Trozen. In the prologue, Phaedra and the nurse discuss the passion of Phaedra. There is a scene in which Hippolytus and Phaedra directly confront each other "as she tried to seduce [him] with the lure of Theseus throne." Another scene shows Hippolytus shocked as a result of Phaedra's revelation of her passion for him and in shame "the shocked Hippolytus covered himself with cloak in response to Phaedra's overtures."

In his *Euripides Hippolyos* Barret gives a detailed account of the myth of *Hippolytus 1* as a "traditional legend" *without* modification:

"Phaidra was a shameless and unprincipled woman who when she fell in love with Hippolytos made a deliberate attempt to seduce him; he rebuffed her, and she, in anger and self-defence (lest he should accuse her to Theseus) accused him instead to Theseus of rape or attempted rape. Theseus cursed him. Poseidon sent the bull, and he was killed. Then, apparently, Phaidra's treachery was exposed; whereupon she killed herself." (Barret, 1964)

Barret views the principal character to be Hippolytos, not Phaidra, and claims that Euripides had given him the "tradional chastity," but little is known about his characterization from the fragments of the lost version. Barret surmises that Phaidra made her approach to Hippolytus in person and on the stage. Hippolytus reacted by veiling his head in horror. Hence the title of the lost version was "Hippolytus Veiled". Barret further surmises that Phaidra, when she accused Hippolytus of rape or attempted rape, may have provided a fake evidence of violence and that Theseus summoned Hippolytus to make his defense. But Hippolytus was kept away from proving his innocence by his oath of secrecy that he contacted to Phaidra before she had made her overtures. In the end, Theseus delivered his curse and added a sentence of exile that led Hippolytus to be driven away along the coast of Trozen where the bull came out from the sea and killed him. The truth later was revealed and Barret surmises a possibility that the nurse gives her confession and thus Phaidra killed herself. He also assumes that the play ended with *a deus ex machine* and a prophecy of Hippolytus' future cult.

Living Quarters: A Political Parable

> "Brian Friel's *Living Quarters: after Hippolytus* (1977) can be read as a political parable, full of sound and fury signifying despair. In this play we are conscious of the Irish republic's problems, since the hero of the play, Commandant Frank Butler, is in the Irish army. He lives in a remote part of County Donegal, Ireland" (McDonald, The Living Art of Greek Tragedy, 2003)

In this quotation from *The Living Art of Greek Tragedy*, Marianne McDonald reads Friel's *Living Quarters* as a political parable, full of sound and fury. She further stresses a sort of anxiety of influence existed in Friel's play. The aspects of the political parable embedded in Brian Friel's text and his adaption of the myth of Hippolytus reveals the immorality and atrocity of the brothers in the war. Friel draws an analogy between the civil war as a crime against the nation and incest as a moral and social crime. Just as the crime of incest is so brutal and immoral against the father's prerogatives and remains inerasable and unforgivable in the memory of the father, family and society, the Irish civil war as well remains the same.

Laurence Stone argues that "incest taboos have everywhere existed, but have varied widely in scope, and in the zeal with which they have been enforced; the female sexual libido has usually been regarded as dangerously powerful." (Stone, 1977) Both Euripides' *Hippolytus* and Friel's *Living Quarters*' main cluster of theme revolves around the incest theme which is a problematic theme to be presented on the stage. Despite the fictional status of the two dramas, there exists a sense of sexual abuse of patriarchal power. In addition to the absence of maternal figure – as is the case in Friel's *Living Quarters* and her absence is a striking pattern featuring Brian Friel plays – who could meditate between the patriarchal authority and filial autonomy.

Criminalizing the sexual relationship between stepmothers and stepsons as incest whether in ancient or modern time is a common attitude and is a crime in many societies and is a source of abhorrence. Barret, in his commentary on Euripides' *Hippoly-*

tus, argues that incest was permissible in Athenian law. One is permitted to marry his half-sister (Barret, 1964). But Richard McCabe disagrees with Barret's supposition and by tracing the history of incest in the 16th and 17th centuries; McCabe confirms that incest between stepparents and stepchildren was treated by the ecclesiastical courts as incest between equivalent blood relatives. Stepmother occupies the maternal position of the mother. And any sort of breaching the natural law by having sexual relationship with her is prohibited in Islam and in other religions as well, therefore, incest is forbidden by law and religion, even if the father is dead. Since incest is a breach of natural law, McCabe views the motif of incest in drama as:

> "[A] metaphor or analogy for any number of human problems related to changing concepts of natural, positive or divine law. Wherever desire of any kind is opposed by prohibition, wherever scepticism erodes received doctrines, the theme of incest may emerge as a powerful dramatic focus for the resulting conflict since it involves the very nature of man as a political animal – 'political', that is, in the widest sense of the term: the attitude of the polis to the proper relationship between governors and governed, law and licence." (McCabe, 1993)

Therefore, as an expressive vehicle of political discourse and corruption within the family, incest is commonly used to figuratively mirror state corruption. It is noteworthy to mention that both Euripides' *Hippolytus* and Friel's adaptation of Hippolytus myth in *Living Quarters* are exemplary models of tragedies that explore the incest context and provide a sort of dialog between the past and present regarding the concept of incest with their so-

cial, religious and political implications. The two dramas question the ability of tragedy to influence real-life behaviors.

As an incident, incest is deep-rooted in ancient history and connotes a sort of analogy with Potiphar's wife myth. The name of Potiphar's wife was neither mentioned in Islam nor in Hebrew. The name Zuleikha was given to Ptiphar's wife in the medieval Hebraic Sefer HaYashar. Barret hints to Potiphar's myth in his commentaries on Euripides' Hippolytus because Potiphar's myth has common links or analogies with the story of Phaedra and Hippolytus. Potiphar is a figure mentioned in the Hebraic Bible and Islam. In Holy Quran, she is mentioned as the wife of Al-Aziz. Potiphar is known as the captain of Pharaoh's guard. He purchased Joseph as a slave and was impressed by his intelligence. Therefore he made him the master of his household. Joseph, as mentioned in the Islamic tradition, was endowed with half beauty of all humanity. His beauty captured the eyes and heart of Potiphar who tried to seduce him. When he refused all her enticements or advancements, he ran off leaving his outer vestment on her hand. (wikipedia.org/wiki/Potiphar) Her desire was left unfulfilled and she was delusional. She retaliated by falsely accusing him of attempting to rape her. False accusations link Potihar's myth with the extant version of Euripides Hippolytus. Brian Friel may have utilized the indication of the incest relationship between Anna and Ben by providing semiotic signals or speech clues in *Living Quarters* such as the first hint in Frank and Tina dialog:

Frank: (To Tina) And Anna's stuff – her dress and all that – that's all arranged?

Tina: *Lying on the bed in Ben's old room*. Everything's perfect. Stop fussing, Daddy. (Friel, 1984)

The audience shares this knowledge as well from the second clue presented in the dialog between Anna and Ben:

Anna: Oh, Ben, there's one thing I'd like you to do for me
Ben: Yes?
Anna: If you would.
Ben: What's that?
Anna: You look startled.
Ben: Why should I look startled? What is it?
Anna: *I left a pair of old flat shoes in the caravan* – I think *they're in that press under the sink. And a blue and white scarf - it's hanging behind the door.*
Ben: I'll get them for you.
Anna: That's all.
Ben: Fine. (Friel, 1984)

By providing these clues, Friel unravels necessary knowledge of the taboo relationship between Ben and Anna to the audience so as to let Catharsis be effective in purgating the audience's feelings. Thus, the audience shares the prior knowledge that the Butler's are ignorant of except Ben and Anna.

Another aspect of the political parable is reflected through the sense of the geographic borderline – between Irish North and South – in *Living Quarters*. Friel is an eminent Irish playwright and a good reader of Irish history. Much of his childhood and boyhood is spent across the border in Donegal (Irish Dún na Gall, the fort of foreigners), where Commandant Frank Butler's living quarters is located as being described in the set of the *Living Quarters* and is the place where Friel's family originated. Friel belongs to a middle class and comfortable family. He was the

member of the first generation of the Northern Irish Catholic minority who were denied basic civil rights by the Protestant minority. He shared his fellow Catholics their sense of frustration and disinheritance. Furthermore, he spent his holidays with his mother's family a short distance from across the border at Glenties in rural County Donegal (Jones , 2000). It is the place where Friel experienced freedom and grow a responsive imagination that pervades many of his works.

A reflection of the border is found in *Living Quarters*. Christopher Murray emphasizes the political perspective of the borderline that Frank Butler conceived before deciding to commit suicide. Frank Butler, like Brian Friel himself, is a Donegal man close to the border with Northern Ireland. Partition shaped his schizoid character in a schizophrenic community of which Friel became interested, and where "the gaps between word and deed, between thought and feeling, between action and memory, and between the heart and the head" can be reconstructed (Corbett, 2008). Through these gaps, Friel made his characters speak out their traumatic and violent voices of the forgotten narratives left behind. Historically, North Ireland was not a stable nation. Before 1922, Ireland was united and its people shared a traumatic history which is locatable in specific historical events profoundly affect the island and its people. Violence erupted in North Ireland in the late sixties and was a sort of clash of ideals and allegiance between two opposing fractions of the same community. The conflict root deeply stretches in history, passes on from generation to generation and throws its painful burden and legacy upon the Irish youth. Ireland's history is wrought with violence, colonization and oppression. Irish citizens, Catholic in religion since

the fifth century, have internalized the island's traumatic history as part of their ethnic and national identity, and their traumatic history metaphorically ruptures their cultural landscape creating a crevasse in their Irish identity with its separate communities and histories. Wherever the crevasse is formed, it opens a void that swallows their narratives and silences their voices as victims who inhabit that space of the Irish landscape.

Throughout its history, Ireland witnessed different types of events that impact the definition of its nation's identity. In the sixteenth century, the Protestant King Henry VIII, who succeeded to England's throne in 1509, violently occupied Ireland and became King of Ireland in 1541. His motivation for occupying the island was self-protection lest that his "domestic rivals or foreign enemies might use Ireland as a base for operations against [his regime]. Irish recalcitrancy was, from [his] point of view, a danger which increased as the sixteenth century progressed and as [the Tudors] became more deeply involved in the European struggle for power and in the religious warfare of the age." (Moody & Martin, 1995) Therefore, he conquered the island, abolished its monasteries and established the Protestant Church in the Catholic Ireland. As a result of this invasion, the Irish became homeless as the British dominated the island, and imposed their authority on religion and established their Protestant government. More British citizens immigrated to the island and their migration led to the rise of tension between the two communities. Moreover, the British migration set the "Irish society and Irish-British relations in conflictual mould" (Ruane & Todd, 1996) that is still present in the memory of the Irish and constitutes part of their present lives as far as the descendants of the original

Protestant settlers still live in Ireland. The Irish have experienced an indelible imprint of colonization at the hands of the British.

The other event that left its imprint on the Irish identity and culture is the English Ordnance Survey which took place effectively in the early years of Queen Victoria under the directions of Captain Thomas Larcom, the ablest practical geographer who had worked on the Irish landscape. The English Ordnance Survey or what was known to be an effort to Anglicizing the Irish geographical features by replacing the town names with English names and remapping them under the orders of the British government and was carried out by its military. At the heart of the event was a British effort to impose the English language, heritage and culture upon the Irish; and to try to get rid of the Irish language which was declared unfit for government affairs. The effect of this ordnance upon Brian Friel is

> "clearly fitted into [his] reading about the first English Ordnance Survey of the Irish colony, which was begun in the early nineteenth century, close to where Friel was born and still lives. The basis of that exercise was the renaming of places to make them more comprehensible to English-speakers, a process of apparently pragmatic translation that had profound effects: hastening the irrelevance of Gaelic as a language and therefore the end of Gaelic culture." (Coult, 2003)

The ordnance itself has become another source of split in the Irish identity as many Irish were institutionalized to speak English, the official language of the country, at governmental locations where the Irish language is banned, and the Irish had to

speak Irish at home. Therefore, the British attempt to remove the Irish language also means to erase the Irish history and identity.

> "The settler makes history and is conscious of making it. And because he constantly refers to the history of his mother country, he clearly indicates that he himself is the extension of that mother country. Thus the history which he writes is not the history of the country which he plunders but the history of his own nation in regard to all that she skims off, all that she violates and starves." (Fanon, 1963)

Hence, this conscious decision of the British colonizer to erasure the Irish language and to remake history is gestured to by Brian Friel in his plays *Making History* and *Translations*. In *Living Quarters* these events are politically alluded to as traumatic memory hinges within the Irish playwright himself, but further enlarged in the previous two mentioned plays.

In the 1840s, another catastrophic event occurred in Ireland hitting the most favorite crop of the island's residents of lower social class. It was known as the Potato Famine. In 1841, over two-thirds of the Irish population was dependent on agriculture for a livelihood whereas the condition of the other third was far from enviable. "The potato, too, is perishable and cannot be held in store to relieve scarcity like grain. In such circumstances, if anything were to happen to the potato harvest, disaster would occur on a scale which Ireland would be unable to control and for which the British government was unprepared." (Moody & Martin, 1995) The potato blights hit Ireland for two more years and led to the death of one million people and the emigration of

1.2 million of the Irish population. The famine affected the life of the Irish society and initiated a trend for emigration, which in turn started to reverse with the emergence of Celtic Tiger in 2000. Luke Dodd, in his article entitled "Famine Echoes" published in the *Ireland and Irish Studies*, wrote about the devastating impact of the famine, and stated that it "represents one of the key, determining events in the relationship between Ireland and England, a powerful, all-encompassing metaphor for loss, death, and victimization." (Dodd, 1996)

The British colonial policies exacerbated the Irish suffering by dividing the island into two countries in 1922, the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The split was mainly created in the Home Rule Bill of 1920 with the final result of separating the parliaments in the north and the south of Ireland. The treaty led to the separation of the community into two fractions, the first led by Michael Collins who supported the treaty as he believed it to be a step towards freedom whereas the other fraction was led by Eamon De Valera who believed the treaty to be a further step towards consolidating the foundation of British colonization of Ireland.

The sense of segregation affects the identification of the Irish as either Protestant or Catholic, or in other words, Unionist or Nationalist. Furthermore, this sense of partitioning is felt more in North Ireland as it affects their daily life as a Catholic community. The sense of bordering between the two countries is much more deepened as they are to celebrate different holidays and vote in different elections because there are two different governments. The sense of the border is much more echoed in the North and is re-echoed in Brian Friel's plays as well.

In the South of Ireland, tension rose and violence erupted for many years because of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and its splinter groups that were considered to be the most violent Catholic paramilitary organizations in North Ireland. Between the years 1920 and 1922, IRA performed many raids along the borders between the two countries. Those raids led to the death of over 400 people but were countered by the death of two-thirds of the Catholics at the hands of either the militant Protestant organizations or the British paratroops. The impact of these violent events remained in the minds of the Northern Irish Catholics and became inerasable as they consider themselves to be the victims of these events. Their pain perpetuated as long as the British continued to occupy the North of Ireland and eventually led to what is known in the Irish traumatic memory as the Northern Irish Troubles in 1968 where anger dominated the younger generations and grew deep-rooted within them and ultimately led to the eruption of violence across Northern Ireland.

The Northern Catholic Irish felt a sense of racial discrimination that led to a division between the Catholics and the Protestants and eventually turned into the eruption of violence once again in 1968. The root of this conflict, according to McKittrick and McVera, emitted from the events of 1920:

> The government system put in place in the 1920s is one of the keys to explaining the later troubles, since there was such extraordinary continuity in its workings over the decades, and since the outbreak of the troubles was so directly related to it. The Catholic civil rights movement

> would take to the streets in 1968 with complaints which related directly to the arrangements of the 1920s. (McKittrick & McVea, 2001)

As a result, the North of Ireland became unstable and the Northerners set two main aims for their fight. The first was to demand the fulfillment of equality within their country and the second was to free their homeland from the British colonization. From 1968 onwards, violence escalated between the Catholic community and the dominant Protestant community with approximately 3600 deaths in rioting, bombing, and murder. Violence becomes the cleansing force used by the Catholic community that made them fearless and award them self-respect.

The most significant event that had affected the Northern Irish community was the Bloody Sunday which occurred on the 30th of January 1972. It took place when the Northern Irish Civil Rights Association planned to run a peaceful protest against British internment that allowed the British to arbitrarily detain Irish citizens without a trial for those detainees. The march proceeded on the 30th of January in Londonderry as planned and was led by Ivan Cooper, the Protestant member of the parliament who gained the respect of the Catholic community because he politically spoke out on their behalf and was also known for his belief in equality. On that specific day, the British army barricaded targeted points and lined the streets lest the Irish riots would break loose. The Irish march was to end at the Mayor's office at Guildhall but the British army blocked them. The Irish split off and forced their way through the blockade and this led to the death of fourteen Irish men when the British troops opened fire on the

marchers. The facts about what exactly happened are mysterious because the marchers narrated something different from what was registered in the official governmental documents on one hand. On the other hand, IRA denied his involvement in these events as well. Bloody Sunday had left a great traumatic memory on the Irish Catholics. McKittrick and McVea wrote:

> The incident [Bloody Sunday] had enormous ramifications, taking a place in Irish history as a formative moment which not only claimed fourteen lives but also hardened attitudes, increased paramilitary recruitment, helped generate more violence, and convulsed Anglo-Irish relations. (McKittrick & McVea, 2001)

Responding to the public outcry which followed the Bloody Sunday shootings, the British government announced on the 31st of January 1972 the setting-up of a tribunal of inquiry under the chairmanship of the lord chief justice, Lord Widgery, who initiated a full-scale investigation on the 14th of February 1972. The colonial government claimed that the tribunal objective was

> "to reconstruct, with as much detail as was necessary, the events which led up to the shooting of a number of people in the streets of Londonderry on the afternoon of Sunday 30 January. The Tribunal was not concerned with making moral judgments; its task was to try and form an objective view of the events and the sequence in which they occurred, so that those who were concerned to form judgments would have a firm basis on which to reach their conclusions." (Lord Widgery, 1973)

The tribunal concluded that the British army bears no responsibility for the inevitable deaths of the Catholic demonstrators despite the ban and that "[t]here is no reason to suppose that the soldiers would have opened fire if they had not been fired upon first." (Lord Widgery, 1973) Therefore the British soldiers were set free and were non-guilty leaving the Catholics of Northern Ireland having the worst feeling of injustice and silenced with an unhealed gaping wound.

The impact of Bloody Sunday on the Irish was narrated differently by many critics and was documented in many ways in books, interviews, and articles. Above all, Brian Friel was not away from documenting his special narrative of that day. Friel's play *The Freedom of the City* (1973) "is a bitterly ironic documentary on Bloody Sunday, on disastrous overreaction by security forces, on the subsequent Widgery tribunal of inquiry, and on the response to the killings by churchmen, politicians, and people." (Rushe, 1973) Though Brian Friel, who had actually taken part in the march, claimed that his play was not a direct response to Bloody Sunday, the opening scenery image of the priest holding a handkerchief above his head links the play with Bloody Sunday. The image is reminiscent of Fr Eamonn Daly, who led a small group through the shooting that happened in Bloody Sunday in such a position as depicted in the play. (Corbett, 2008)

Living Quarters (1977), is Friel's memory play that has deep cunning memory of Bloody Sunday. Friel once again continues documenting what he has initiated in his previous play and re-documents the Irish traumatic memory of "***that day***". The echo of repeating the phrase "*that day*" six times in the opening para-

graphs of Act One of *Living Quarters* is rhythmically significant as the same phrase is repeated in the Widgery Report five times or maybe in the original version was repeated six times as well. Furthermore, Brian uses the verbal phrase "to reconstruct" just once as is used in its infinitive form in the Widgery Report once as well. Was it a coincidence? The textual connotation in Brian Friel's play indicates a hint to the Widgery Report. The sense of "to reconstruct, with as much detail as was necessary, …" left its emblematic mark in Brian's description of the ledger as " a complete and detailed record of everything that was said and done ***that day***, as if its very existence must afford ***them their justification***,…" (Friel, 1984) Moreover, Brian's use of the word "Hansard," which is "the traditional name of the transcripts of Parliamentary debates in Britain and many Commonwealth countries" (Wiki/Hansard, 2020), further emphasizes the essence of the political dilemma of Ireland.

However, Bloody Sunday is retrospective in Brian Friel's memory and is reflected intelligibly in *Living Quarters*. The experience of that day is traumatic to the playwright and his nation. Brian expresses a capturing sense of entrapment in *Living Quarters* that deserves to be scrutinized. "It is here on May 24th some years ago that our story is set, as they say - *as if it were a feast laid out for consumption or a trap waiting to spring.*" (Friel, 1984) Marianne McDonald interprets it as "an allusion to the trap of *la machine infernale*, Jeane Cocteau's account of Oedipus, who is caught in a trap in which he cannot escape." (McDonald, The Living Art of Greek Tragedy, 2003) But Brian Friel is interplaying with the unreliability of words through what George

Steiner calls "a veil spun by language to shroud the mind from reality." (Steiner, 1971) Regarding the strategy Brian Friel uses in adopting traps, Richard Pine wrote:

Friel also sets out to catch a conscience with his plays. To that extent (and in that sense only) he places great importance on his traps. The complexity and sophistication of the traps will vary according to whether he simply wishes to seduce his public audience into a vision of the world, or to map out a private territory of the characters themselves. It is as if in the 'love' plays he has dredged up emotion in buckets, and in the plays of the 1970s he looks more analytically and formulates some tentative replies to the maddening questions. […] But in looking at the strategy he adopts in Living Quarters and Aristocrats we must maintain the distinction between the public drama which peoples the actual world with imagined characters, and the private play-within-play which confuses the imagined world with the actual. (Pine, 1990)

A sense of confusion between the imagined world and the actual world of "that day" exists in the *Living Quarters*. No doubt, Friel senses a sort of trap that happened on that specific day. Bloody Sunday is a day of a massacre deliberately proceeded according to a plan. President of Sinn Fein, Gerry Adams, has no doubt that "the killings were a deliberate military operation designed to strike terror into the hearts of all Irish nationalists living under British rule through the exercise of murderous violence against unarmed civilians" (Adams, 2001). Adams confirms that Bloody Sunday was also "a controlled, deliberate exercise, decided and planned in advance at the highest political and military

level." (Adams, 2001) The trauma of that day has become a black mark on the British identity and a blow to the British claims of moral authority in dealing with the escalated violence in Northern Ireland. The truth of "that day" was sought by the Irish and the British, and it was the effect of a wound. The trauma is

> "the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language." (Caruth, 1996)

The truth of Bloody Sunday becomes particularly complicated for the Northern Irish Catholic survivors who hoped a non-biased inquiry would take place, but the Widgery Report proved to be a failure to proclaim the truth of that specific day because the chaos of that day was exploited for the good welfare of the British authority.

Friel's *Living Quarters* is a revelation of traumatic truth of a wounded psych represented figuratively by the character of Frank Butler who is engulfed with the mythic layer of Euripides character, Theseus, to harbor his reader from the actual truth Brian alludes to.

Friel, as a contemporary Irish playwright, formed his history and identity out of the national events of Ireland with its North and South as one entity; and many of his plays are responsive to

the Irish trauma, to the Irish split and division of identity; and his narrative is a means via which the silenced voices granted their spatial arena to be told. Masculine and feminine voices are granted their moments to textually utter their trauma that is originated out of colonial oppression and its effect on their colonized identity.

Brian's plays exemplify the narrative of gender conflict and colonial oppression that occurred in Ireland where the traumatized nation speaks the traumatized truth of Ireland's history. *Freedom of the City* was written only one year after the traumatic event of Bloody Sunday. *Living Quarters* and *Translations* also speak of events that may have occurred more than a century through their depth of mythic ubiquity to retrospect the historical root of certain traumas of a colonized history.

Without intervening in these traumatic historical events, Friel's uniqueness in representing trauma on national and individual levels made him abler to dramatize these historical events onstage rather than other contemporary playwrights of his generation. Friel remains realistic in narrating the trauma of Ireland by placing both his character and the audience in the proper time-based and spatial history of Ireland and through exploring the possibility of a faithful history in the very indirectness of his narrative by placing his characters in their realistic settings and speech patterns and thus challenges the audience to reinterpret the rest of the play.

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