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The Irish Catholic Family in Exile:

Ideological Narratives and the Uncanny Home.

Sara Keating PhD.

School of Drama, Trinity College Dublin, September 2006

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Summary

This thesis uses the dramatic model of the Irish Catholic family as a microcosm through which to examine the ways in which cultural and political ideologies have shaped a particular value-determined narrative of Irish history that privileges unifying ideological discourse over social reality. This thesis firstly establishes an Irish Catholic domestic model as a value-laden site in which political and ideological ideals were institutionalised, and then turns to an examination of the ways in which twentieth century drama has challenged these ideologies through their representations of the Irish Catholic family on the stage. However, by investigating how such dramatic challenges can themselves become institutionalised in canonical form, this thesis aims to deconstruct the continuing dangers implicit in the construction of narratives of Irish cultural expression.

Acknowledgements

My gratitude is extended to everyone at the Samuel Beckett Centre, particularly Professor Brian Singleton, Professor Dennis Kennedy, Ann Mulligan and Rhona Green. Especial thanks must be extended to Steve Wilmer for supervising the tentative beginnings and full gestation of this thesis, and to Dr. Matthew Causey for convincing me that critical theory holds the key to unlocking the secrets of one's own assumptions.

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Introduction

When Tom Murphy's *A Whistle in the Dark* was submitted to the Abbey Theatre in 1961, the serving artistic director Ernest Blythe rejected the play in a scathing letter to the author. This incident has become a widely quoted anecdote by Irish theatre scholars as illustrative of the Abbey's artistic policy at the time, which was less influenced by aesthetic quality than a particular ideological commitment. The indignant letter of rejection to the young playwright damned the play as a slur on the people of the nation. "There are no such people in Ireland" Blythe said.[1]

Murphy's play, however, was set in Coventry, and the violent struggling culture he depicted was certainly a fact in the Irish ghettoes of England, where tens of thousands of Irish men and women found economic and psychic refuge from the impoverished social and economic landscape of their homeland and the stultifying repressive environment of their family homes. Ironically, Blythe's rejection of this important play about emigration became the impetus for Murphy's own emigration, or, one could say, the condition of his artistic exile. The Carney sons in *A Whistle in the Dark* may have been exiled to England by the social, economic and domestic circumstances of their lives, but, in Blythe's rejection of the play, they were also exiled from the Irish stage. As the Carney sons represented individuals fighting against the repressive, patriarchal structures of the Irish Catholic family, so Murphy came to represent the errant son fleeing the equally repressive authoritarianism of a patriarchal Irish society as it was embodied in its most important cultural institution, The Abbey Theatre.

John Waters in his essay 'The Irish Mummy: The Plays and Purpose of Martin McDonagh' [2] is concerned with widespread critical attitudes to Martin McDonagh's prolific plays. Discussing the academic interrogation of McDonagh's authority to speak on behalf of the Irish nation, Waters' essay provides a surface exploration of the problematic status of *The Leenane Trilogy* in its relationship to Irish culture, and tries to account for the critical rejection of the

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[1] Personal Interview, 2000.

[2] John Waters, 'The Irish Mummy: The Plays and Purposes of Martin McDonagh' in *Druids, Dudes and Beauty Queens: The Changing Face of Irish Theatre*, ed. Dermot Bolger (Dublin: New Island, 2001).

relevance of McDonagh's dramatic world to either the Irish past or the Irish present. However, the critical unease with which the gothic peasant world of McDonagh's Connemara was greeted reflected an anxiety of discomfort rather than disbelief. The exaggerated peasant aesthetic of the plays threatened Ireland's hard-won ideological security as a post-colonial nation, not in a literary or political sense, but in an economic sense. Ireland had moved beyond imperial domination and its struggling post-independence days to become a prosperous European state. Ireland was not the Yeatsian Land of Heart's Desire anymore; as a progressive, modern, 'Celtic Tiger' state, Ireland *had* all she desired.

It would be a gross injustice to overlook the significance of the dramatic constructions of the Irish Catholic home in the work of these two playwrights, both as a physical site in which the drama is played out and as a metaphor to interrogate and deconstruct an important foundational institution of Irish society. Although similar in basic dramatic form, the McDonagh and Murphy plays differ radically in their construction. However, they provide an interesting continuum through the dramatic discourse of domestic dysfunction that has defined the Irish theatrical canon, while the heightened circumstances of their original critical reception provides us with an entry point into the wider argument of this thesis. For these anecdotal paradigms serve as an interesting framing point for introducing the dialogue between home, exile and the Irish Catholic family on the twentieth-century stage, which will be explored in this thesis through the work of Eugene O'Neill, Tom Murphy, Brian Friel and Martin McDonagh.

Operating under the title 'The Irish Catholic Family in Exile: Ideological Narratives and The Uncanny Home', this thesis will use the site of the Irish Catholic home as a microcosm through which to examine the way in which cultural and political ideologies have shaped a particular world-view in Irish society; a world-view in which cultural and political narratives privilege unifying ideological discourse over social reality. This thesis will begin with a discussion of the development of the Irish Catholic family as an institutional unit in which the social, political and ideological ideals of the burgeoning Irish state were developed during the early stages of the twentieth century, and will ask how twentieth-century drama has challenged the very basis of their construction through its representational form.

Taking its lead from the institutionalised slippage between home and family in the Irish language version of the 1937 Constitution (still regarded as the official version), where the word for family, 'An Teaglach', is the same word used for the home, this thesis will argue that this coterminous ideological relationship disrupts the operation of the Irish Catholic family in real social terms and on its own private domestic level within the home. However, this coterminous ideological relationship does not connote interchangeable meaning for the Irish Catholic home and the Irish Catholic family. Thus reference to the Irish Catholic home will denote the physical (or metaphysical) site imbued with a specific ideological sentiment that will be delineated in Chapter One, while reference to the Irish Catholic family will denote the series of relationships that define an individual's affiliation to the physical (or metaphysical) site of the Irish Catholic home. As the title of this thesis indicates, it is the Irish Catholic family in its various manifestations on the twentieth-century stage that is the key focus of this thesis. Thus, where the thesis refers to the Irish Catholic home, it specifically denotes the ideologically determined site in which domestic relationships are played out.

Following the full exploration of the ideological model of the Irish Catholic family in Chapter One, each ensuing chapter will explore its dramatic examples of oppositional domestic models chronologically, looking first to Irish-American playwright Eugene O'Neill for the genesis of dramatic resistance, whereby the dysfunction of the home and the breakdown of the family unit proposes a different, harsher reality to its originating ideological form. While the Tyrone family in O'Neill's play *Long Days Journey Into Night* does not actually perform their Irish Catholic identity as a series of religious rituals, this thesis will uncover the Irish Catholic cultural codes that shape their domestic relationships and their interaction with their wider social environment, complementing the social and historical analysis that will suggest that the Irish Catholic family model was an ideological model rather than a performed social model.

Each subsequent chapter will then focus on the historical period of the late 1950s through to the mid-1990s and the works of Brian Friel and Tom Murphy, whose plays enunciate a particular dramatic resistance to the ideological familial model, and a resistance which itself became popular theatrical currency. While the Murphy and Friel plays that will be discussed in these chapters span almost forty

years, the main thrust of the argument will suggest that they are informed by a particular ideological world-view that the playwrights continue to resist even in their later work.

The final chapter of this thesis will look to the plays of Martin McDonagh to suggest an historical and structural development in both the manipulation of the ideological inheritance that informed the Friel and Murphy plays and in their dramatic expression on the stage. Written in the late 1990s, the plays of Martin McDonagh struggle not only with the continuing legacy of the Irish Catholic family as an ideological model, but with the legacy of dramatic representations of the Irish Catholic home on the twentieth-century stage. While the early chapters will suggest that the Friel and Murphy plays insist on the dysfunction of the family in the face of the totalising narrative of an Irish Catholic domestic ideal, the final chapter will examine how the McDonagh plays question the construction of this totalising narrative as well as the dramatic narratives of resistance, not least in the extra-textual critical reaction that accompanied their enactment on the Irish stage.

By insisting on recreating the dramatic narrative of the dysfunctional Irish Catholic family, McDonagh's plays force the 1990s spirit of progression to acknowledge and reassess both the legacy of Irish cultural and ideological narratives, and the particular legacies of the Irish dramatic tradition. In light of the conservative critical reaction to McDonagh's plays, Colin Graham's suggestion that cultural narratives in Ireland became postmodern without first being modern[3] points towards a potential conclusion to the wider ideological interests that underlie the dramatic investigation in this thesis; that is that Irish history and ideology moved from an obsession with the past to a preoccupation with the future without first dealing with the politics of present experience.

"Exile can be acquired sitting in the same place for the rest of your life"[4]

The representation of the Irish Catholic home in twentieth-century drama is structured by a dramatic opposition between home and exile that is conditioned by

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[3] Colin Graham, *Deconstructing Ireland: Identity, Theory, Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), xi.

[4] Brian Friel in 'From Ballybeg to Broadway: an interview with Mel Gussow' in *Brian Friel in Conversation,* ed. Paul Delaney (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 207.

setting a particular ideological conception in a wider framework of experiential reference. The unified site of home invokes a "horizontally limited, closed place" that "opens up the space to vertical, metaphysical dimensions"[5] and allows the concept of exile to be explored as both a physical and a psychological state of being. Physically, the dramatic site of the Irish Catholic home is established in peripheral relationship to the wider society and the ideologies by which its conception is bound. Meanwhile, the family unit is marginalised from the wider social world because of its dysfunction, indicating that the individual experience of home brought forth in dramatic representations conflicts conceptually with an overall cultural attitude. While political narratives, as we will see in Chapter One, imagined an ideal Irish Catholic family as a mirror of Irish society, dramatic narratives, as this thesis will illustrate, saw the Irish Catholic family as an aberration of Irish society. The conceptual conflict is manifested materially in the plays in the identity development of individual characters; as the individual Irish Catholic families are exiled to the fringes of the social world by virtue of their dysfunction, so the marginality of the characters within the oppressive home itself brings a second conception of exile to bear within the very structure designed to contain individual development - the home.

The concept of exile enters the dramatic idiom with structural clarity through the plot convention of emigration which, as an important historical reality in nineteenth and twentieth centuries Ireland, has provided dramatists with a natural starting point from which to begin their explorations of wider issues. Emigration functions on numerous levels in twentieth-century representations of the Irish Catholic home, not least as a thematic concern and hard reality for the individual characters within the plays. O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night* and *A Touch of the Poet*, Friel's *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*, Murphy's *A Crucial Week in the Life of a Grocer's Assistant* and McDonagh's *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, for example, deal with the psychological and physical legacies of the emigration process. Meanwhile, in Murphy's *The House,* and *Conversations on a Homecoming,* Friel's *Faith Healer* and McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, the returned emigrant is the central figure in the play.

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[5] Csilla Bertha, 'The House Image in Three Contemporary Irish Plays' in *New Hibernian Review* Vol.8, no.2 (Summer 2004), 77.

Emigration, however, also functions on a deeper metaphorical level in the plays. Conceptualised through the cultural discourse of exile, the emigration theme focuses attention on the construction of the home in its physical and ideological formation, serving "a relentless exposure of Irish society at home." However, it is not proposed as a "solution to Irish problems", but as the "sharpest indicator of how profound those problems are."[6]

By placing home and exile in such close dialectic, the plays draw attention to home rather than exile as the locus of the dramatic conflict and as the centre of the individual's dysfunctional experience within the plays. Home and exile, then, are not polar opposites; they function instead as a mutually problematic dualism, as a symptom and a function of each other, disrupting and defining each other, and deconstructing the very ideologies that have contained their expression both in actual experience and on the twentieth-century stage.

The dual function of exile is reinforced in the double function of the Irish Catholic home itself within the plays. The dramatic representation of the Irish Catholic home works structurally as an oppressive site of experience in which the identity politics resultant of domestic dysfunction can be played out, and figuratively as a value system for projected fulfilment against which the characters' actual experiences can be exposed as dysfunctional. The effect created by the dramatic development of this dual function will be expressed through the binary operation of Freud's concept of the uncanny; home is revealed as 'not home', both as it is defamiliarised when placed alongside its traditional ideological conception and when drawn together with the function of exile as a psychological and physical trope in the plays.

Essentially this opposition invokes two competing versions of home in the plays: home as the site of individual experience and home as a container for an ideology that contradicts its actuality. The Irish Catholic home of twentieth-century drama thus becomes a cultural site in which "the familiar discrepancy between rhetoric and reality"[7] that Eagleton identifies as Ireland's particular post-colonial problem can be played out. Richard Kearney's similar diagnosis of the "disjunction between expression and experience, outward sign and recondite

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[6] Fintan O'Toole, *The Ex-Isle of Ireland* (Dublin: New Island Books, 1997), 168.
[7] Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (London: Verso, 1995), 7.

meaning"[8] in Irish cultural discourse can thus be explored dramatically in the microcosm of the Irish Catholic home, where the fractured expression of individual experience and the collective family unit undermines the ideological foundations on which the characters very conception of their existence and experience is founded.

Eamon de Valera, the first Taoiseach of Ireland and the major architect of the ideologies and economic policies of the Irish Free State, situated the Irish Catholic home, in its metaphysical significance, at the very centre of his vision of the Irish future. He believed that the Irish Catholic family was the key to developing and maintaining the firm moral foundation of the Irish nation and inscribed these beliefs in the 1937 Constitution which declared that the state recognised "the Family as the natural, primary and fundamental unit group of Society and as a moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights antecedent and superior to all positive law." Furthermore, the Constitution served as a guarantee by the state to "protect the Family in its constitution and authority, as the necessary basis of social order and as indispensable to the welfare of the nation and the State."[9] By placing the family at the heart of the nation, however, de Valera conflated the private world of the family and the public world of the state. The separate discourses of home and nation were merged into one ideological process; the Irish Catholic family became defined by the cultural politics of the nation, while politics became defined through the morality of the Irish Catholic home.

By placing the ideology of the Irish Catholic family against the conflicting reality experienced by characters in the dramatic domestic sites of the twentieth-century stage, as this thesis will show, the Irish Catholic family will be revealed in its constitutional, institutional and ideological conception within the interpretative framework of myth, whereby a whole system of working values is distilled in a singular image that both expresses these values and aims to actualise them when subsumed into praxis. If, however, as Roland Barthes' study of myth has

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[8] Richard Kearney, *Post-Nationalist Ireland: Theory, Practice, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1997), 380-381.

[9] Article 41, *Bunreacht na hEireann: Constitution of Ireland* (1937).

suggested, by interpreting myth we reduce it in status to a motivated sign,[10] this thesis can be described as an attempt to investigate both the sign itself (the ideological model of the Irish Catholic family) as well as its function within society – or rather its *dys*function, as the oppositional dramatic representations of the Irish Catholic family in twentieth-century drama have destabilised this mythic model to deconstructive effect. The motivation behind the creation of the Irish Catholic family as a model in which particular standards of a wider ideological project could be exacted is certainly of interest to this project, and will be duly discussed in Chapter One. However, the main interest of this thesis is to expose the mythic value system embedded in the domestic ideological discourse as it comes into conflict with the individual Irish Catholic families represented on the twentieth-century stage.

Towards a Working Methodology

Academic schools of thought have become more and more diluted by interdisciplinary thought as the twentieth century has progressed, in a series of critical and methodological extensions that have proved extremely productive; as critical theory has developed throughout the twentieth century it has become increasingly dependent on the forces exterior to literature and drama for exploring and explaining the importance and the implications of various cultural texts. Similarly, as the media through which cultural texts can be expressed have proliferated with the growing number of new technologies, so the impact of these developments on cultures must be incorporated into the fabric of critical theory.

Structuralist philosophy was particularly influential from the 1950s and 1960s onwards, but over time the range and depth of influence from other disciplines has widened, creating an interdisciplinary methodology from which to begin the exploration of literary texts. Jacques Derrida's famous literary aphorism *il n'y a pas de hors-texte*[11] may literally imply the necessity of returning to the text for the root of literary analysis, but what it actually signified in practical terms

[10] Roland Barthes, 'Myth in Society' in *Mythologies* (London: Vintage, 2000), 125.
[11] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore, London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 158.

was "an insistence upon the ideological force of discourse in general"[12]- and literary representation in particular - whereby the multiplicity of determining forces of discourse are reduced to the reflection of an essential unified reality. That is, Derrida's critical philosophy thus demanded that the text indeed could only be interpreted in light of the full weight of its external contextual reality. It is a philosophy that has left an undoubted legacy on the development of literary and critical theory, one particularly reflected in the increasing tendency towards more transparent models of interdisciplinary criticism fostered as a basic tenet of poststructural thought.

The New Historicist, for example, relies heavily on political science and anthropology in its investigations of how cultural texts interact with, and are shaped by, a world that the texts might claim to exist outside of by virtue of their elevation to a fictional, artistic level. The Cultural Materialist uses a similar strategy, but one based on economics and sociology. Meanwhile, the more politicised critical schools of feminism and Marxism (which have inflected both New Historicism and Cultural Materialism) similarly borrow from economic, sociological, historical and political theory - as well as from each other - to bring out the nuances of the power relationships that they aim to destabilise.

In the same way that Michel Foucault called for "a more rigorous and systematic history" that would "bring out the different layers of events, some being visible.....other(s).....that are invisible, imperceptible for the contemporaries"[13], so the interdisciplinary trends in academic practice have committed themselves to bringing out the different layers in the palimpsest that defines the relationship between human experience and artistic expression. Theatre and literary studies have been enriched as critical practices, and have been arguably made more convincing, in the process.

Perhaps the closely linked critical strategies of New Historicism and Cultural Materialism provide the most practical way of introducing the interdisciplinary methodology that informs this thesis, which, while certainly borrowing from both

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[12] Louis Montrose, 'Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture' in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julie Rifkin and Michael Ryan, (Malden, Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 778.

[13] Michel Foucault, 'Return to History' in *Michel Foucault The Essential Works 2: Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology* ed. James Faubion (London: Allen Lane, 1998), 427-428.

schools in terms of motivation and practical theoretical application, refuses to fully commit to the boundaries of either for its working methodology. Dino Felluga provides one the best examples of the way in which these seemingly similar schools of thought can be differentiated. Felluga states that the main difference between New Historicism and Cultural Materialism is their different objective interests (New Historicism is interested fundamentally in governments, institutions and culture, while Cultural Materialism holds class and economics as its fundamental interest). In practice, Felluga argues, this cannot help but lead to different kinds of history emanating from the specificity of their underlying interests. Thus New Historicists "concentrate on those at the top of the social hierarchy (i.e. the church, the monarchy, the upper-classes) while Cultural Materialists tend to concentrate on those at the bottom of the social hierarchy (the lower-classes, women, and other marginalized peoples)."[14] As a result two varying and opposing histories inevitably emerge.

While Felluga suggests that it is the differences in objective that distinguishes one school of critical thought from the other, Louis Montrose places more emphasis on the similarity and simultaneity between the two, and argues that both working methodologies segue seamlessly together in a natural process of theoretical evolution. Montrose suggests that by neutralising the difference between their objectives, the schools re-orientates them along the "axis of intertextuality, substituting for the diachronic text of an autonomous literary history the synchronic text of a cultural system" [15]; that is, literary criticism can find a place within a wider cultural framework than its initial textual interests might indicate.

Montrose's argument suggests that the important link between the critical schools of New Historicism and Cultural Materialism can be found in the philosophical legacy of post-structuralist thought; that is, in the uncovering of the processes by which meaning is produced. The production of meaning after post-structuralism is inherently linked to the changing function of ideology from a single shared value system to a discursive practice whereby "social subjects are formed, re-formed and enabled to perform as conscious agents in an apparently

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[14] Dino Felluga, 'General Introduction to new Historicism', *Introductory Guide to Critical Theory.* http://www.purdue.edu/guidetotheory/newhistoricism/modules/introduction.html.Access: 6/03/06. See also ed. Adam Veeser, *The New Historicism.*

[15] Montrose, 2004, 779.

meaningful world." [16] However, where Montrose's argument succeeds in differentiating the critical strategies (their reading of literary history as 'synchronic texts of cultural systems'), he simultaneously obscures the central limitation in their methodological practice; that is, the potential appropriation of New Historicism and Cultural Materialism to the ends of the very ideological processes that they aim to expose.

This thesis involves itself with both ends of the social spectrum that Felluga distinguishes in his theoretical separation of New Historicism and Cultural Materialism. It thus insists upon the relationship between the empowered and the powerless, between the architects of ideology and those who live under it, and between ideology as a cultural narrative and modes of artistic expression that destabilise it. By covering the span of subject positions, it moves away from the suggestion of any independent relationship between social and subject position, and aligns its critical practice with the synchronic text of cultural systems that Montrose identifies.

Where this thesis must part ways with Montrose, however, is in its due articulation of the continuing production of cultural texts in relation to particular contemporary ideological functions. Thus the anthropological, cultural and historical texts that will be used to support textual and dramatic analysis, as well as the objects of textual and dramatic analysis themselves, will be set against the dominant subject positions through which they are enabled to perform within twentieth-century Irish culture, suggesting that these various cultural expressions remain tied to dominant ideological positions even as they attempt to subvert them.

In order to legitimise the broad practical scope that the application of this critical strategy will demand, it is useful to turn to Michel Foucault, whose philosophical project establishes him in many ways as the forerunner, if not the originator, of New Historicist thought and Cultural Materialism, as well as the key originator of post-structuralist philosophy.

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[16] Ibid. Louis Althusser most famously defines the changing function of 'ideology', in a much-cited essay 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' anthologised in Rifkin and Ryan ed., 2004. The specific nature of Althusser's argument about ideology will be fully extrapolated in Chapter One of this thesis. Suffice to note at this juncture the modifying function of Montrose's use of 'apparently' as an adverb which places emphasis on the suspect sense of a shared value system in its existence as a discursive practice.

For Foucault, the most rigorous, effective intellectual pursuits - be they archival, anthropological or artistic - operate through a transdiscursive process of investigation, which applies an interdisciplinary critical framework to a common object of study and/or a set of common terms and ideas.[17] Rather than merely encouraging an interdisciplinary approach that operates *within disciplines*, Foucault calls for an approach that operates *across discourses*, subjecting the disciplines from which it draws its methodology to equal scrutiny as systems of representation governed by specific rules and practices. Such an inclusive position, Foucault believes, allows the myriad relations of forms and discourses that govern human experience to be revealed in all their complexity. It allows critical frameworks to be freed of the burden of the unified/unifying truth systems which have historically limited the discourses that have so far expressed the world to us in particular forms. The transdiscursive position allows the "tangle of superimposed discontinuities"[18] that governs the social world - and human subject positions within it - to rise to the surface, rather than simmer underneath a superimposed layer of stability that, in masking the complexity of world systems, masks the fundamental instability of any critical or ideological position.

While the term "transdiscursive" first arises in Foucault's essay 'What is an Author?'[19] this approach permeates his writing throughout his career, and the writing of those he inspired. In fact, it informed Foucualt's own methodology in his varied writings, as well as the various schools of thought that have been influenced by his prolific body of work. Foucault himself worked as a structuralist, a phenomenologist, a sociologist, and an historian, operating within (and influencing) the fields of literary studies, political science, philosophy, history and anthropology, and dramatically enhancing the importance of ideas like power, epistemology, subjectivity and ideology within these disciplines. For Foucault, life is a series of relations, and so any investigation of life in its various manifestations should be encouraged to take account of the other layers of influence in the world that contribute discretely to the structure and formation of thought and behaviour that a transdiscursive methodology enables. This more rigorous method of analysis allows the multiplicity of hermeneutic possibilities, as well as the

[17] Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' in Faubion ed., 2000, 381.
[18] Michel Foucault, 'Return to History' in ed. Faubion, 2000, 429.
[19] Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author' in Faubion ed., 2000,

multiplicity of discourses that influence our understanding of the world, to get their due attention.

Foucault invokes his transdiscursive methodology as a responsible history, and it is relevant here for two reasons. Firstly, the oppositional dramatic models of the Irish Catholic family that is the subject of this thesis are directly engaged in rejecting the "universal relation of causality. . . the harmonic science of totality"[20] that the constitutional model of the Irish Catholic family proposed as a working model in Irish society. The plays propose an alternative relation of causality, if not necessarily a more rigorously represented reality, and their development as a growing *dramatic* discourse reinforces the continual need for interrogation that Foucault alerts us to; when examined as a body of work with its own particular ideological intent, the plays veer dangerously close to repeating the totalising narratives of the ideological discourses they reject.

Secondly, the idea of a transdiscursive method of analysis suits the interdisciplinary nature of this thesis, which relies on (and deconstructs in particular cases) sociological, historical, anthropological, canonical, and literary material. While aligning itself with the schools of New Historicism and Cultural Materialism, this thesis more specifically supports Foucault's desire to "bring out the different layers of events . . . some being visible . . . and other events that are invisible, imperceptible for the contemporaries"[21] which contributed both to the creation of a particular ideology of the Irish Catholic family and to the dramatic resistance to this ideology that takes place on the twentieth-century stage. The model of the Irish Catholic family that this thesis interrogates, as Chapter One will discover, is not ahistorical, and by reading it against a dramatic model of the Irish Catholic family we can bring out an interesting dialogue between theatrical and ideological domestic discourses. The Freudian-inspired literary concept of the uncanny home which will be explored in relation to the dysfunctional Irish Catholic domestic models on the twentieth-century stage may operate on a universal level throughout twentieth-century culture, but it is also culturally specific with an implicit ideology worth due investigation.

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[20] Michel Foucault, 'On the Ways of Writing History: Interview with Raymond Bellour, 15th –21st June 1967' in Faubion ed., 2000, 281.
[21] Michel Foucault. 'Return to History' in Faubion, 2000 ed., 427/428.

Although these preliminary methodological notes have, for convenience, subsumed the dramatic texts at the heart of this thesis within a wider rubric of definition as cultural texts, this thesis will always try to distinguish the importance of their function within the theatrical process as performative rather than literary. By making reference to metatheatrical elements in the plays, their essential performative capacity and their capacity in production, this thesis aims to draw attention to the essential qualities of the plays as theatre texts rather than merely dramatic literature. What it will not do, however, is neglect their synchronic function within the wider cultural system, which can often have a more important effect than the singular act of their theatrical performance.

Double Worlds and Dramatic Realism

The plays that will be discussed in this thesis provide an important diversity through which the full implications of the Irish Catholic family as an ideological and dramatic model can be explored. While the historical development of the ideological model of Irish Catholic family and the conditions that enabled its ideological infiltration into the Irish Constitution will be duly explored in Chapter One, this thesis is fundamentally concerned with the *disparity* between the Irish Catholic domestic ideology set forth in a constitutional framework that aimed not just to regulate Irish society but "to hold out the values which society would aspire to"[22], and the domestic models represented on the twentieth-century stage.

For this reason this thesis will focus in particular on playwrights writing in post-independence and contemporary Ireland, specifically Brian Friel, Tom Murphy and Martin McDonagh. While Irish American playwright Eugene O'Neill will prove anomalous to the continuum of specific deconstructive function that will be isolated in the Friel, Murphy and McDonagh plays, the Irish Catholic families represented in his plays will provide an important dramatic prototype through which we can trace a certain theatrical - if not an ideological – continuum. O'Neill's plays thus provide a good starting point for investigating the dramatic function of the uncanny home on the twentieth-century stage.

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[22] Fr. Paul Tighe quoted in Joe Humphreys, 'Constitution move on same-sex marriage is rejected', *The Irish Times* (22nd April 2005).

A short production history of O'Neill's plays on the Irish stage provided in Brian Fallon's 1998 book *An Age of Innocence: Irish Culture 1930 – 1960* gives a valid defence for the inclusion of his plays as seminal works in the development of an Irish Catholic domestic model in twentieth-century Irish drama. Fallon's book takes a post-revisionist[23] defence of Ireland's cultural history between 1930 and 1960 as its starting point. In his account of Irish cultural history in the early Free State, Fallon notes that O'Neill's plays were frequently mounted and argues that they had a "special power . . . over Irish audiences."[24] He connects this special power to "elements of Catholicism and guilt . . . and the almost claustrophobically Irish family sense"[25] that permeates O'Neill's major plays. It is the particular Irish Catholic sensibility that can be identified in O'Neill's plays that makes them useful for beginning an exploration of the Irish Catholic family in twentieth-century drama in the post-independence period of the 1950s and 1960s, when an entire generation of disillusionment saw similar theatrical models of domestic dysfunction appear upon the Irish stage.

In his seminal article, 'Double Worlds',[26] Fintan O'Toole suggests that Irish theatre can be read through three distinct phases. The first phase, O'Toole states, was the Revivalist phase, whose defining feature was its imagination of a single uniform society; despite their often critical relationship to unifying ideals of Irishness, the "idea of a single, an essential, Ireland lies behind the form and nature of these plays."[27] The second phase, O'Toole argues, is characterised by the imagination of Ireland through the metaphor and dramatic strategies of doubleness; informed by the "constant clash between the traditional and the modern", O'Toole asserts that in this phase the idea of "a single Ireland, self-

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[23] Fallon argues that the early Free State had a more vibrant cultural life than popular revisionist history of the 1970s and 1980s suggested. He uses the prolific production of plays by Eugene O'Neill during this period as a key example of this thesis. Between 1927 and 1953, the Gate Theatre mounted eleven productions of plays by Eugene O'Neill, while the Abbey Theatre produced three, most famously *Long Day's Journey Into Night* in 1959. Irish language versions of his plays, meanwhile, were performed at the Taibhearc theatre in Galway.

[24] Brian Fallon, *An Age of Innocence: Irish Culture 1930 – 1960* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1998), 145-146.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Fintan O'Toole, 'Double Worlds' (*The Irish Times,* 16th November, 1991a) reprinted in *Critical Moments: Fintan O'Toole on Modern Irish Theatre*, ed. Julie Furay and Redmond O'Hanlon (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2003), 288-292.

[27] O'Toole, 1991a, 289.

sufficient and bound both in its culture and its economy"[28] disappears. O'Toole closes his essay by signposting what he saw as the latest developments in Irish theatre, a transitional period suggesting a third phase of Irish drama in which the double worlds of the second phase would give way to singular isolated worlds responding to, and celebrating, the fragmented nature of human experience in the post-modern world.

The plays of Brian Friel and Tom Murphy exist in a critical relationship to the totalising narratives of Irishness. The double vision of plays like *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*, *Conversations on a Homecoming, The Gigli Concert* and *Faith Healer* problematise the unified cultural and social ideologies that have shaped subject formation and subject performance in Ireland, rooting them firmly within O'Toole's second phase of Irish drama. In the plays of Martin McDonagh, meanwhile, the double worlds of the Friel and Murphy plays give way to the singular self-contained world that O'Toole predicted, encapsulating in a single site a continuum of context and content through which the double worlds of the Friel and Murphy plays can be subjected to the same processes of interrogation that their doubleness begins. Instead of merely criticising the totalising narratives through which subject positions are negotiated, however, McDonagh turns his critical lens inwards to dramatic, rather than ideological, function. By challenging the canon (as definitional) and the dramatic and thematic strategies of the plays themselves, McDonagh undermines the status of Irish drama itself, suggesting that totalising dramatic narratives can serve to shape subject formation within the plays just as much as exterior ideological forces.

What all three playwrights share, and what is important for the purposes of this thesis, is their inheritance in the first instance of an ideological legacy of a particular Irish Catholic domestic model, and in the second instance, of a theatrical legacy through which this model of Irish Catholic familial experience has been mediated and deconstructed on the twentieth-century stage. What is particularly important is that the work of the three playwrights was largely generated during key periods of social change in Ireland. Friel and Murphy, for example, began writing for the theatre in the 1960s when Ireland was experiencing the crucial infrastructural and industrial modernisation that would

[28] Ibid.

rescue her failing economy from the stasis of economic isolationism that de Valera had instituted. Even so, emigration numbers were at an all time high and rural poverty was widespread. Ireland was moving into an era of rural migration, industrialisation and mass urbanisation, in a phase that would change the physical and psychic landscape of Ireland and ultimately inflict a highly charged conflict between tradition and modernity.[29]

Martin McDonagh's first play, meanwhile, was staged by the Druid Theatre Company in Galway in 1996, when Ireland was experiencing the beginning of the boom that has become popularly known as the Celtic Tiger.[30] Coming off the back of a deep and dark economic recession that had lasted almost twenty years, the Celtic Tiger saw the pace of life and potential wealth accelerate to such a degree that Ireland became one of the most desirable locations for multinational businesses seeking a European base and one of the wealthiest societies in Europe. However, the benefits of the economic boom did not reach across all levels of Irish society; the phenomenal growth of the middle-classes facilitated by the Celtic Tiger merely widened the poverty gap between rich and poor. Furthermore, while Irish emigrants began returning home, migrants from European countries and African states began to seek economic and political refuge in Ireland, creating a new set of tensions between traditional concepts of national identity and its evolving modern reality.[31]

It is also significant that the plays that will be discussed here are set almost entirely within the framework of the domestic realm or within a context that offers itself as a substitute environment for the home. The representational strategies

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[29] For a concise historical analysis of the social and economic processes of Ireland's modernisation see J.J. Lee, *The Modernisation of Irish Society, 1848-1918* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1973) and *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) which argue that the physical, infrastructural and economic processes of modernisation in Ireland were transitional rather than completely disjunctive, but that the reluctance of narratives of Ireland to modernise themselves resulted in the fractured experience of the particular structural changes that occurred in the late 1950s and early 1960s. For a cultural exploration of similar issues see Conor McCarthy, *Modernisation, Crisis and Culture in Ireland, 1969-1992* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000).

[30] For a full account of the social and cultural impact of economic developments in Celtic Tiger Ireland see Colin Coulter and Steve Coleman, *The End of Irish history? Critical Reflections on the Celtic Tiger* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003) and Peader Kirby, Luke Gibbons and Michael Cronin, *Reinventing Ireland: Culture and the Celtic Tiger* (London: Pluto, 2002).

[31] In July 2004, for example, a community in Connemara - where the real Leenane that gives McDonagh's trilogy its name - succeeded in their legal action to prevent non-Irish speakers purchasing property in a new development in the Gaeltacht area, and the dilution of the cultural importance of Irish to the community.

through which the playwrights invoke the domestic Irish Catholic ideal, and the particular audience responses elicited by their various oppositional representational strategies, suggests that the same message, mediated in the same language, can have a different meaning depending on the historical circumstances in which it is articulated. This potential difference-in-sameness is particularly important when linking the second and third phases of dramatic representation that O'Toole identifies through Friel and Murphy to Martin McDonagh, where the similarity of their dramatic language is completely upturned by the differing audience interpretation and critical reception that accompanies the plays in the historical moment of their theatrical enunciation. It also further validates the methodological process of this thesis as laid out above.

Interrogating Realism

The particular plays that best suit the nature of this thesis also deserve due clarification. While the theatrical site of the Irish Catholic home will be investigated in light of its resistance to an official ideology of the Irish Catholic family, it will also be explored in light of its resistance to an accepted *dramatic* model of home - consistent with this ideology - already extant on the twentieth-century stage. The country-kitchen domestic model that the plays in this thesis challenge was a prototype for much of Irish theatre through the 1930s, 1940s and "the fatal fifties"[32], particularly as it was represented in the repertoire of the Abbey Theatre. Although significant steps have been made to widen contemporary appreciation of the diversity of Irish plays during this period,[33] the dominant template for theatrical experience during the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s can be loosely defined as a country-kitchen realism, which was typified in the

[32] Michael MacLiammoir cited in Christopher Murray, *Twentieth-century Drama: Mirror up to Nation* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), 147.

[33] Fallon's study has been particularly vocal in suggesting an alternative model for discussing Irish culture throughout this period (Fallon, 1998), but it is significant that much of the work that he cites as ground-breaking was European or American, rather than Irish, in origin. Christopher Murray's study of twentieth-century drama, meanwhile, attempts to revaluate the work of playwrights like T.C. Murray and Padraic Colum, but he fails to significantly redress their inherent traditional conservatism (Murray, 1997).

work of playwrights such as M.J Molloy. Even Brian Fallon concedes that much of the Irish work being produced in Ireland during this period – especially at the Abbey under the conservative management of Ernest Blythe – was small-town, puritanical kitchen-sink farce, with the provincial petit bourgeoisie as its subject and "a Dublin audience which was often no more than a generation removed from the countryside"[34] as its target audience. Defined by its 'PQ' or peasant quality – that is, its rural domestic setting - this dramatic form was so predominant throughout the 1940s and 50s that Tom Murphy, when beginning to write his first play, vowed that it wouldn't "be set in a fucking kitchen, that's for sure!"[35]

The irony, of course, is that even as the plays that will be discussed in this thesis aim to destabilise this accepted country-kitchen construction, they actually take place within a realistic theatrical reconstruction of the home, and this is the key to their inclusion in the project. (The exception to this rule is Murphy's *Conversations on a Homecoming*, which is set in a pub, but the site of action serves a dual function as an actual home for the Kilkelly family and as a substitute home for the male characters in the play).

Catherine Belsey draws on Aristotle's *Poetics* to define what has become a widely accepted critical model for discussing modern dramatic realism, which, in its simplest historical terms, is the faithful representation of human life on the stage through the use of historically accurate settings and details, and an emphasis on causal, motivated exposition and inner psychological motivation in the construction of subjectivity. In theatrical terms, Belsey's model also draws attention to the framing device of the proscenium arch and the principle of the fourth-wall illusion, which constructs the theatrical world as a self-contained world in which the internal controlling mechanisms of the drama are figured within the dramatic action itself.

The model that Belsey elucidates is "characterised by illusionism, narrative which leads to closure, and a hierarchy of voices which establish the 'truth' of the story."[36] It relies on recurrent narrative patterns which hinge on "the

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[34] Fintan O'Toole. 'Going West: The Country Versus the City in Irish Writing' in ed. Seamus Deane *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing: Vol II* (Derry: Field Day, 1991b), 664

[35] Fintan O'Toole, *Tom Murphy: The Politics of Magic* (Dublin: New Island Books; London: Nick Hern Books, 1994a), 22.

[36] Belsey, 2002, 64.

creation of an enigma through the precipitation of disorder . . . but the narrative moves inevitably towards closure, which is also disclosure, the dissolution of the enigma through the re-establishment of . . . . the order which is understood to have preceded the story itself."[37] Moreover, although it is characteristic of the action of the story to disrupt subjectivity, the narrative itself is defined by the "consistency and continuity of the subject" which "provides a conceptual framework"[38] that is restored alongside the idea of unified subjectivity by the end of the play.

Una Chaudhuri has observed that the relationship between the realist representational model that Belsey describes and the domestic stage space in particular "contains the history of a process, begun in the nineteenth century . . . of a locational stage practice, a way of filling the signifying space of the theatre with an *environment*" whereby "placement becomes available to rational understanding and explanation."[39] If we take the realist model understood in this way as a starting point for discussing the O'Neill, Friel, Murphy and McDonagh plays, the realist domestic stage space in the plays becomes the key to audience interpretation of the stage action; a straightforward acceptance of historical dramatic realism. However, as the realist domestic stage space becomes the key determining factor in the thrust of the stage narrative, it complicates the crucial principles of illusion, narrative closure and subjectivity that are the key conceptual principles of realist drama, and it is in this paradoxical use of the representational form of realism, while simultaneously subverting its conceptual framework, from which the O'Neill, Friel, Murphy and McDonagh plays take their theatrical cue.

Before looking at the ways in which this double-edged use of the realist form is enacted theatrically in the plays, broadening a discussion of the historical model from its aesthetic form to its ideological function (that is its function as a reassurance of the certainty of logic, knowledge, truth and order)[40] allows us to begin understanding the simultaneous function/subversion of dramatic realism in the O'Neill, Friel, Murphy and McDonagh plays as an oppositional representational strategy that is integral to the wider deconstructive reading of the plays. The site of dramatic realism in the plays (the reconstructed domestic space)

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[37] Belsey, 2002, 69.
[38] Belsey, 2002, 68.
[39] Una Chaudhuri, *Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 6.
[40] Chaudhuri, 1997, 29.

thus create an appropriate site for deconstructing an Irish Catholic domestic ideology that was encoded in form and content with the principles and philosophies of hegemonic discourse.

Belsey's discussion of realism accommodates this reading, when it suggests that the function of dramatic realism is displaced by an interrogative mode of realism when the fundamental truth-function of realist drama is destabilised, not so much to undermine realism (and therefore be non-realist) as to *interrogate* the fundamental ideologies on which realism is established, while remaining within a familiar representational pattern that can be identified with realism. Thus, while the illusionism of the realist narrative may be destabilised through the self-conscious rupture of illusionist function (in the use of metatheatrical narrative, for example), and the unity of the realist ideology of subjectivity may be betrayed by refusing narrative closure (leaving the realist identity crisis unresolved), the fundamental signifying tenets of classic realism (the theatrical set, for example) still inform the interrogative construction.

According to Belsey's model, this dual strategy of subverting the conceptual principles of realism while exploiting its representational strategies, allows interrogative realism to hold "what Althusser calls an 'internal distance' from the ideology in which it is held"[41], thus projecting both the ideology of realism and its critique in a form at once outwardly recognisable but internally strange. Disrupting realist form in this way allows the deconstruction and resistance of ideological forms through performance, and it is through this dual representational commitment - to a realist presentation on stage and a manipulation of expected realist practices to destabilising ends – that the O'Neill, Friel, Murphy and McDonagh plays, as we will see in Chapters One and Two, begin to take on an uncanny effect for their audience.

The plays that I will focus on in this thesis thus follow the particular dual-representational strategy of interrogative realism by establishing themselves within a realist mode of representation while interrogating its ideological basis (and the audiences' expectations) through a variety of dramaturgical techniques. The signifying power of place that the realist set encourages is of particular

[41] Belsey, 2002, 85.

importance to this subversion, as the domestic space in the plays begins to take on the qualities of what Raymond Williams calls 'high naturalism'; that is naturalism not as a "technique among others, a particular staging effect among other varieties of spectacle" (as in the staging practices of the Théâtre Libre, for example, which Williams calls a 'technical definition' of naturalism)[42], but as "a dramatic form in which the production of a social environment, symptomatic or causal, is not just the setting for the action but the action itself."[43]

High naturalism, as Williams defines it in order to distinguish it from the technical definition of naturalism, thus lends realist recreation of an environment on stage not merely the signifying power of the representation of real life, but the power for determining the narrative thrust of the dramatic life on stage, where "what is there physically, as a space or a means for living, is a whole shaped and shaping history."[44] The world physically created on the stage is thus "not a world which is a background or an illustrative setting; but one which has entwined itself in the deepest layers of the personality"; not only have "the lives of the characters have soaked into their environments . . . the environment has soaked into their lives."[45]

While the naturalist emphasis on environmental/psychological determinism does not *break* the fourth-wall illusion of realism, it shifts the veil of illusion of the traditional realist play, where the emphasis on the environmental determination of individual psychology creates an inescapable fate outside of individual control and thus outside the realist impulse towards restoring the unities of character on which it depends. The emphasis on causality outside of individual motivation also denies the natural dramatic closure of the realist play by shifting

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[42] Of course, the early Abbey Theatre was strongly influenced by the naturalist staging techniques developed by writers like Emile Zola and Maxime Gorky throughout the 1870s, and brought to extremes by the Théâtre-Libre, founded in 1887 by Andre Antoine, which demanded the extremes of realist representation on stage. The Théâtre-Libre's quest for authenticity in representational practice was best expressed by the use of real carcasses on stage in the stage setting of a butcher's shop, which has passed into anecdotal history. The early Abbey embraced such stage practices in their own quest for authenticity as they strove to "bring upon the stage the deeper thoughts and emotions of Ireland." (Lady Augusta Gregory. 'Our Irish Theatre' in ed. Norton. *Modern Irish Drama*, 378-9) In terms of stage practice, this authenticity was produced in representational form as the company "scoured the Weat for *real* three-legged stools to place beside the fire-side, *real* creels of turf, genuine spinning wheels and guranteed Aran cowskin pampooties." (O'Toole, 1991b, 656)

[43] Raymond Williams, 'Social Environment and Theatrical Environment: The Case of English Naturalism' in. *English Drama: Forms and Development,* ed. Marie Axton and Raymond Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977a), 208.

[44] Williams, 1977a, 217.

[45] Ibid.

the fulfilment of dramatic closure to a signifying world beyond the observable social world on stage (the world of Fate, Nature, or the Gods) and foregrounding the philosophical idea of fatalism.

In the O'Neill, Friel, Murphy and McDonagh plays, as the ensuing chapters will reveal, the technique of high naturalism is merely one way in which the representational form and ideologies of realism are destabilised. The realist fantasy of total illusion is also undermined by the use of metatheatrical devices, for example, or the postmodern foregrounding/fetishisation of stage objects usually used as realist signifiers. Crucially, however, the plays that will be discussed over the next several chapters still maintain an allegiance with dramatic realism in the physical representational form of set construction so that the key notes in the plays' ideological deconstruction can have a greater impact on their audiences; it is only by virtue of the familiarity of the worlds on stage that the domestic disruption can achieve its subversive effect.

The particular plays I have selected for this project thus highlight the importance of the theatrical site by creating a sense of the permeability of the theatrical boundaries that the plays seem to operate within. Home is not just a determining factor in the plays' development, but a determining factor in the development of individual identity within the plays. In the plays that will be examined, this identity is primarily a male identity, and while my exclusion of plays with leading female roles may appear to mimic critical and theatrical strategies that have excluded women from the Irish stage, the reality is that women *have* been largely excluded from participation in the theatrical and ideological discourses of the Irish Catholic family. Despite the important female roles in plays like *The Playboy of the Western World* or *The Plough and the Stars,* feminist scholars of Irish theatre have often noted the symbolic importance of even these significant roles. The status of women throughout these plays is as "bearers not makers of meaning"[46]; they are "enabling subjects of male discourse . . . construct(ing) their identity."[47]

While the Irish Catholic family model that will be theorised fully in Chapter One placed the mother at the heart of, and largely in control of, the

[46] Ann F. Kelly, 'Bodies and Spirits in Tom Murphy's Theatre' in *Theatre Stuff: Critical Essays on Contemporary Irish Theatre,* ed. Eamon Jordan (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2000), 160.
[47] Anthony Roche, *Contemporary Irish Drama: From Beckett to Mc Guinness* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1994), 181.

domestic experience, her power was actually limited to its cultural, social and symbolic weight as it was defined by patriarchal figures and the Catholic hierarchy. It can be argued, then, that the neglect of women in dramatic representations of the twentieth-century Irish Catholic family reflected a dominant discursive reality, and despite their oppositional ideological objectives, the domestic dramatic models that will be discussed in this thesis did not prioritise gender issues.

In the dramatic Irish Catholic families, anyway, matriarchal responsibility within the home is largely shifted to the patriarchal forces that created the ideological model of the Irish Catholic home. Mothers are largely absent from these particular plays, and their absence not only signifies the breakdown of the model, but places the responsibility for this breakdown onto the failure of patriarchy in the plays. By displacing the mother's position within the home, the plays' failed patriarchal models act as a container for a wider ideological critique concerning the very patriarchal forces that have shaped the predominant narrative ideologies that the plays are involved in resisting.

Within the work of the playwrights that I have chosen to focus on, however, there are several works with leading female characters which initially appear appropriate for inclusion. Murphy's *Bailegangaire*, for example, merits a strong case for discussion, but Murphy himself has admitted that it was written only to appease criticisms of his exclusion of women from his dramatic discourses.[48] His 1998 play *The Wake*, meanwhile, features a leading female character caught in the same existential and domestic crises as the male characters in the Murphy plays that will be discussed, but such a primary female focus is hardly representative of his work. Even the exclusively female crisis in Murphy's most recent play *Alice Trilogy* appeared to give more solid expression to a peripheral male metaphysical crisis than the crisis of its eponymous heroine.[49]

Brian Friel, meanwhile, has several plays that feature leading female characters. *Dancing at Lughnasa*, with its narrative of the gradual dissolution of a

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[48] Michael Billington, 'An Interview with Tom Murphy' in *Talking About Tom Murphy*, ed. Nicholas Grene (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2002), 109.

[49] *Alice Trilogy* explores the disintegration of Alice's mind under the pressures of domestic life. Expressionistic in form, its pseudo-realistic opening set is quickly reformulated as the parameters of Alice's own mind. However, in its central movement 'By the Gaswork Wall', the onstage appearance of a former lover enduring a similar existential crisis pulls the focus away from Alice to her male counterpart in moving dramatic terms.

close-knit family, is the most obvious play that might merit inclusion. However, it is the only play by Friel that takes the identity of women within a disintegrating Irish Catholic family model with the same measure of depth applied to male characters within his other family dramas.[50] Furthermore, the play is mediated through the memory of a male narrator whose nostalgic recollection of the Mundy sisters' lives is subject to circumspection.

There are also plays selected for discussion here that actually break the parameters of selection by providing significant roles for women. *Long Day's Journey Into Night* is the most significant of these exceptions, but Mary Tyrone's pivotal role in the dramatic narrative is matched in significance by her role in constructing the identities of her sons and supporting the constructed identity of her husband. The presence of two main female roles in Martin McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, meanwhile, does not actually break the frame of discussion already established, as McDonagh's plays tend to exclude any committed interrogation of subjectivity by virtue of the parodic particularities of their dramaturgical construction and his plays demand a different strategy of discussion altogether, as we will see in Chapter Five.

In line with these arguments, the plays that will be examined here are *Long Day's Journey Into Night* and *A Touch of the Poet* by Eugene O'Neill, which manipulate a meticulously detailed realist setting for tragic effect through the use of the naturalist association of environmental determinism of character, so that the inability of the male characters to find a place for themselves within the dominant controlling narratives of their dramatic worlds represents their inescapable predetermined fates. *A Whistle in the Dark, Conversations on a Homecoming* and *The House* by Tom Murphy, offer a similar dramatic enhancement of traditional realist form by invoking similar modes of naturalist representation, particularly in character construction and narrative conclusion, to destabilise the domestic experience in the plays, as well as the wider ideologies that the dysfunctional domestic experiences in the plays subvert. *Philadelphia, Here I Come!, Living Quarters* and *Aristocrats* by Brian Friel, meanwhile, are plays that ostensibly

[50] *Molly Sweeney, The Loves of Cass Maguire* and *Faith Healer* all offer leading female roles but none of these plays bear significant implications to Friel's dramatic considerations of the Irish Catholic family, particularly as their primarily monologic form suggests a different set of interests to his pseudo-realistic dramas.

establish themselves physically on stage within the boundaries of realism, but through the use of the various framing devices of metatheatricality and memory they participate in a theatrical experience that interrogates the limited frame of both the realist form and the ideologies that support it. Martin McDonagh's *The Leenane Trilogy* will provide the main focus for discussion in the final chapter of this thesis, which will examine the way traditional realist modes of representation are destabilized by postmodern strategies of intertextuality, commodification and a focus on the performativity of identity allow him to deconstruct both traditional realist dramatic form and the interrogative mode of realism in the Friel and Murphy plays that *The Leenane Trilogy* absorbs into its dramaturgical fabric. McDonagh's fourth 'Irish' play *The Cripple of Inishmaan* will be alluded to as necessary, as will other of O'Neill, Friel and Murphy's plays which, while excluded from detailed discussion, serve a function in reinforcing the main purpose of my argument nonetheless.

While this ostensibly suggests a primary interest in the topographic construction of identity – that is the structural relationship between place and identity – such an identitarian privilege of purpose is misleading. For the focus of this thesis is less on the typical identity politics that Gerry Smyth has identified as the key feature of strategies of the postcolonial literary project[51] than on the "historical politics" that David Lloyd has identified as the inevitable result of competing narratives of identity in post-independence Ireland.[52] That is, the primary focus of this thesis lies in the way in which the plays' identity politics point to a wider crisis driven by the conflict between the official ideology of the Irish Catholic home and the reality of the characters' experiences.

Patterns and Progression

This thesis will follow a straightforward, thematic and temporal logic. My first chapter will introduce the main working methodology for my project, establishing an historical and ideological background within which my thesis will operate. I

[51] Gerry Smyth, *Decolonisation and Criticism: The Construction of Irish Literature* (London: Pluto Press, 1998).
[52] David Lloyd, *Ireland After History* (Cork: Cork University Press in association with Field Day, 1999), 99.

will then turn to an analysis of the dramatic texts that provide an alternative version of the Irish Catholic family. As suggested above, the plays of Eugene O'Neill will provide a starting point for much of the dramatic analysis in the later plays. With reference to the main body of the arguments that follow, however, the works of playwrights Brian Friel and Tom Murphy will be discussed in Chapters Two, Three and Four, while the work of Martin McDonagh will be the focus of discussion in Chapter Five. Although the three Irish playwrights were writing throughout the 1990s, and continue to write now,[53] the Friel and Murphy plays are shaped by a particular generational ideology indebted to their experiences in 1950s and 1960s Ireland from which their first plays arose; Martin McDonagh's plays, meanwhile, emanate from a late twentieth-century context, and it is for this reason, as well as for the fundamental differences reflected in the context in which the plays have been received, that they merit discussion in separate chapters.

In Chapter One I will concentrate on the social conditions of the Irish family, thus providing a sociological exploration of how a fixed Catholic domestic ideology was created in twentieth-century Ireland. I will discuss how the existence of an alternative reality to this fixed familial model was exiled to the fictional realm of theatrical experience, and how this very disjunction - between individual experience and the hegemonic ideal – created a paradoxical logic that will be used later in the chapter to set this disjunction within the discourse of Freud's uncanny.

By beginning with an ideological and philological discussion of the concepts of home, this first chapter aims to establish a historically specific ideological framework from which to begin a discussion of the Irish Catholic family. In order to discuss the specific process of ideological formation in Irish society, I will introduce an original concept called mythory. This concept will allow me to historicise the uncanny as it functions in dramatic representations of the Irish Catholic family by introducing the central conflict that informed the contradictory creation of an Irish Catholic domestic discourse. Mythory refers directly to a discursive fusion of history and mythology that allows the creation of

[53] Friel's *Give Me Your Answer Do!* was produced at the Abbey Theatre in 1997, the year in which Martin McDonagh's *Leenane Trilogy* was transferred to the Gaiety Theatre in Dublin for a four week run. An original full length play by Brian Friel, *The Home Place*, premiered at the Gate Theatre in 2005. In 1998 *The Wake* by Tom Murphy received its premiere at the Abbey Theatre, while *The House,* one of the plays which will receive extensive discussion here, premiered at the Abbey Theatre in 2000.

cultural fictions for political (or ideological) ends. Mythory departs from the universals that Barthesian model of myth offers and the generalisations that Richard Kearney's politically-informed understanding of myth suggests, and moves towards a solidly historicised reading of the Irish Catholic home as an ideological creation that allows myth and history to function in an interchangeable relationship of synonymy that negates the authenticity or validity of both.

This chapter will then go on to discuss the evolutionary vision of a unified community through the process of cultural nationalism. Using John Hutchison's seminal text on cultural nationalism, I will begin to examine the modes through which the processes of culture-making were manipulated by cultural nationalists for the production of a cultural discourse of homogenised national experience, and how these discourses in turn facilitated the foundation of the independent Irish state, which then became the ideological conditioner of these discourses. Hutchinson's text *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*, the texts of various revisionist historians and the 1937 Irish Constitution provide my main source material for this discussion of the historical conditioning of the Irish Catholic family model.[54]

My attention will then turn to the particularity of the operations of the Irish Catholic family within this discourse, setting the stage for the discussion of the plays of O'Neill, Friel, Murphy and McDonagh within the framework of Freud's uncanny. I will first return to Freud's original model for the uncanny

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[54] While the use of revisionist histories from the 1970s to the present day may appear problematic from the outset, the transparent ideological purposes of my thesis should absolve my argument from adding to or participating in the various academic controversies that have surrounded revisionist projects since the 1970s. Revisionist history can be loosely defined by its concern with modern state institutions; or, as Lloyd identifies as the "shift of focus from heroes to bureaus" (Lloyd, 1999, 82). The key to the controversies surrounding historical revisionism in Ireland as set out by George Boyce and Alan O'Day in their introduction to the edited collection of essays compiled as *The Making of Modern Irish History: Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy* (New York: Routledge, 1996) has been the basic "political purpose" of early historical revisionism in Ireland; that is its aim "to change, not uphold, currently existing ideologies" by a "practiced irony that juxtaposes incidents and phrases in ways calculated to convey an ultrascepticism, even cynicism, about the national tradition." (Boyce and O'Day, 1996, 10) Boyce, O'Day and other critics of the revisionist project found a firm foothold for their criticisms in the methodological practices of the revisionists, criticising them for their attempts at putting forward what it claimed to be a value-free approach to Irish history. Contemporary revisionist historical practice overcame this criticism as early as 1983 when Roy Foster described history as "narrative with an interpretive level" (Brian. P. Murphy, 'Past Events and Present Politics: Roy Foster's Modern Ireland' in *Reconsiderations of Irish History and Culture*, ed. Daltun O'Ceallaigh. Dublin: Léirmheas, 1994, 78), embracing the post-structuralist philosophy of critical transparency cited earlier; that is it embraced its own historicism - its use of history as a guide to the present – by wearing its own, contemporary values on its sleeve.

home, the Victorian family, examining the changing structures in Victorian domestic life that were natural and widespread consequences of modernisation processes and that also had significant impact on social development in Ireland. I will then turn specifically to the Irish Catholic family and, through a deconstructive use of the seminal text of anthropologists Arensberg and Kimball, *Family and Community in Ireland*, will examine the working model of the Irish Catholic family exemplified in their study, while simultaneously demonstrating how the partiality of their ethnographic methodology was collusive in bolstering mytho-historic discourse.

Following this clear cultural contextualisation, this chapter will then move towards a discussion of the oppositional tension between home and 'not home' that defines Freud's idea of the uncanny. The tensions we can identify in theatrical representations of the Irish Catholic family complement the preceding discussion of the tensions between ideology and actual experience that operated within post-independence Irish society. The operation of such tensions on a domestic level makes the concept of Freud's uncanny, which itself centres on the home, a clear and pertinent lens through which to begin examining the contradictions between ideology and experience in the dramatic site of the twentieth-century Irish Catholic home which will be followed through in Chapter Two.

Having isolated the methodological model on which the rest of my thesis can take place, my dissertation can move towards a discussion of the varying ways in which the plays of Friel, Murphy and McDonagh work against the established ideological model of the Irish Catholic family. By substituting an alternative dysfunctional dramatic domestic site for the ideological model of the Irish Catholic family, the ensuing chapters will examine how the playwrights manage and manipulate this tension between ideology and individual experience, and how this tension is manifested through the defamiliarising logic of Freud's uncanny as it works towards different ends and on different levels of text and performance in the works of the four playwrights.

Chapter Two will thus begin to examine the workings of the uncanny home within the plays of Eugene O'Neill, Brian Friel and Tom Murphy. Using the Tyrone family in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* as a dramatic template for the

discussion of the dysfunctional Irish Catholic family, this second chapter will proceed to discuss the ways in which Brian Friel, in *Aristocrats* and *Living Quarters,* and Tom Murphy, in *A Whistle in the Dark* and *The House,* create competing discourses of home that allow the concept of the uncanny to breathe through their plays in a dynamic way that encourages discussion of the plays through a similar critical discourse, but that also invites investigation of the particularities of the individual dramatic families. This allows us to resist, temporarily, a totalising narrative of the dysfunctional dramatic Irish Catholic home that merely sets itself up against the totalising narrative of the ideological model of the Irish Catholic family.

By establishing the heavily Victorian-influenced Irish Catholic family in the O'Neill plays as a frozen model of dysfunctionality, this chapter will move towards a discussion of the more dynamic models offered in the Friel and Murphy plays. Although O'Neill's play does derive much of its domestic dysfunction from the central matriarchal failure in the figure of Mary Tyrone, the deconstruction of patriarchal discourse, patriarchal authority and the male identity of the patriarch figure in the play, as well as the identity crises of the Tyrone sons, will be the key focus in the discussion of the play. By bringing out the similarities between the plays and drawing attention to the differences in representational strategies and dramatic implication, this chapter can examine how the uncanny changes and develops throughout the plays, taking us from the evasive mechanics of the O'Neill play, to the effacing mechanics of memory in the Friel plays and the violent resistance of the Murphy plays.

A number of defining features, however, still unite the plays within a single dramatic discourse, in which the workings of the uncanny create a dramatic expression of the Irish Catholic home as a site of exile, rather than a site of belonging, for the Irish Catholic family. The physical location of the home within the specifically established dramatic landscape and the social position of the family within the wider social landscape suggests a collective dramatic fate for the Irish Catholic family, and a collective fate for the individuals within the homes, which will be the focus of Chapter Three.

Chapter Three will apply the logic of exile on an individual psychological level to the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays, suggesting that the physical exile of the

dramatic families from the wider social world serves as a defining metaphor for the spiritual condition of both the family unit and the individual characters within the family home. Using the concept of geopathology offered by Una Chaudhuri in *Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama,* this chapter will discuss how the uncanny is manifested in psychological terms within the plays of Friel and Murphy. While Chaudhuri defines her concern as the "problem of place and place as problem"[55], in the generic capacity of twentieth century drama her argument can be refined to complement the cultural specificity of this thesis, allowing an interesting structure to develop through which the problems of identity development, as it is reflected in the psychic exile of the individual within the dramatic site of the Irish Catholic, can be effectively explored. Chaudhuri's inclusion of the structural developments from realist to postmodern drama will also prove useful for the concluding chapter of my thesis.

Following an analysis of Chaudhuri's theory of geopathology, Chapter Three will adopt the concept of the exilic consciousness to the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays, whose individual characters experience an uncanny sense of psychic exile within the family unit. One of the particular manifestations of this problematic psychic position itself is in the split personality syndrome that defines the position of the central character in the plays. This chapter will examine how this dramatic schizophrenia is represented in various obvious and oblique ways through specific dramaturgical devices. It will also explore how the metatheatrical metaphor of performance is used by the playwrights as a healing act that facilitates the characters' maintenance of a public persona, allowing them to operate within the shared public sphere of the home and in the public sphere of the outside world, even as their interior psychic landscape is split between the ideological imagining of their existence as part of the Irish Catholic family unit and the reality of their experiences in the wider social world.

Chapter Four will continue this discussion of exile in its physical manifestation, by looking at the configuration of emigration as a physical exile that complements psychic alienation in the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays. It will follow Chaudhuri's trajectory in tracing the idea of place as problem through to the

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[55] Chaudhuri, 1997, 55.

natural logic of departure from the home (manifested in the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays as emigration). It will explore, however, how departure is offered as a failed means of resolving the problematic psychic issues attendant with the individual's difficult relationships within the Irish Catholic family. While discussing emigration as a common theme for the playwrights, and a common uncanny experience for the characters in the plays, this chapter will also examine ways in which particular developments of the uncanny in the plays are similarly manifested by this particular approach to the theme of physical exile.

This chapter will maintain a two-fold approach to exile, discussing how the relationship of dependency between ideas of home and exile in the plays maintains the tension that contributes to the individual characters' experience of the world - as well as the audiences' experience of the dramatic world - as uncanny. The conditions For and the consequences of, emigration within the plays will thus be explored in their coterminous and paradoxical relationship, with the ideological model of the Irish Catholic family being further compromised by the reality of home as both a site of, and a catalyst For exile.

Chapter Five will diverge from the structure established in Chapters Two, Three and Four, by concentrating the issues raised in the earlier chapters into one single chapter focussing on the plays of Martin McDonagh. This chapter will focus on the evolution and operation of the dysfunctional Irish Catholic family in *The Leenane Trilogy*. The structure of the argument in this chapter will follow the structure of the dissertation at large, moving from a discussion of the working of the uncanny within the plays to the operation of the concept of exile and the manifestation of these issues on a psychic and physical level for the characters within the plays.

The postmodern pathologies at work in the McDonagh plays, however, demand a two-fold exploration: one which operates within the same reactionary critique as the Friel and Murphy plays by insisting on a dramatic representation that undermines official constructions of reality (and we can apply this reading on both a social and an academic level), and one which questions the dramatic canon in which it is also working in and contributing to. Chaudhuri's geopathic framework will allow the transition from the discussion of O'Neill, Friel and Murphy's work to the work of McDonagh to take place smoothly, although the

conclusions that are offered in this transition provide a troubling, if fitting, addendum to the deconstructive purposes isolated in the conclusion offered of the Friel and Murphy plays.

The troubling questions that the McDonagh plays throw up, however, allow the implications of the thesis to extrapolate naturally beyond their immediate dramatic concerns. While the main body of this thesis may involve a close reading of the various challenges that twentieth-century dramatic representations of the Irish Catholic family have posed to contemporary ideological constructions, it will also uncover the processes of cultural construction at work in the plays themselves. For while these plays have worked to destabilise traditional narratives of the Irish Catholic family, so they have contributed to a similarly authoritarian cultural construction of a dramatic Irish Catholic family model which the plays of Martin McDonagh take on with their postmodern representational strategies that present oppositional ways of interpreting the dramatic narrative that it plays out on stage. These oppositional ways of reading McDonagh's plays emanate from his dual exploitation of the continuing social and aesthetic legacy of the ideological model of the Irish Catholic family, providing a fitting reminder at the conclusion of this thesis that the narratives from which we construct our cultural value systems, our histories, our entire sense of national culture, and even our dramatic tradition, represent only a single side of the story. For, if the Irish Catholic family model, as the next chapter will show us, was constructed in line with a particular and limited set of political beliefs, so McDonagh's plays in the final chapter of this thesis will show us that the Irish dramatic canon, constructed around representations of the dysfunctional Irish Catholic family, is implicit with its own ideological essentialism.

Chapter 1

Making Mythory: Family Fictions and the Irish Catholic Home

> Home *(noun)*: a village or town, a collection of dwellings; a house or household, where one lives or where one's roots are.
>
> Home: an environment offering affection and security; the place of one's dwelling or nurturing; where important decisions are made.
>
> Home: a place, region or state to which one properly belongs; where one finds refuge, rest, or satisfaction; where you are stationed; where missions start and end.
>
> To feel at home, to be at home, to come home to, to hit home, to be home-made.
>
> To the fullest extent, to the heart, to a vital sensitive core.
>
> Home: the place in which one is free from attack; the point which one tries to reach; the goal.[56]

Drawn from a variety of lexical sources, these meanings are all consistent in their relation to the personal or private spheres, offering home as a "felicitous space"[57], a physical, spatial, and environmental entity as well as a spiritual or mental frame of mind. Home is associated with intimacy, comfort, the personal, the familiar. It is both origin, where one starts from in mind and body, and destination, the final resting place, where our greatest desires can be fulfilled.

Divorcing language from its ideological function, however, is impossible, and the assemblage of ideological associations in the definitions offered above delimits both the word itself and its field of connotations, establishing home as a *discourse* rather than simply a site of occupation,[58] a discourse whose shifting meanings can be impossible to pin down without ignoring recent, modern ideological change or essentialising historical difference.

In order to provide a background to the Irish Catholic families that present themselves for representation in twentieth-century drama, it is important to

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[56] Definitions from the Compact Oxford English Dictionary and Webster's Complete English Dictionary.
[57] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), xxxi
[58] Chaudhuri, 1997, 6.

examine the wider ideological and structural changes that effected the construction of a particular model against which twentieth-century drama finds its deconstructive purposes. For if this survey of the dysfunctional dramatic families is to have any wider value than reflexive significance, it must be approached by way of the oppositional sociological and ideological discourses of home that provide the conflict through which the various family dramas are played out. Thus, in order to begin discussing the implications of the theatrical representations of the Irish Catholic family it is first necessary to historicise the instances through which the individual dysfunctional experiences arise, by examining the conditions for and the development of a particular collective ideology of the Irish Catholic family.

While Gaston Bachelard and Rosemary George have argued that the modern home was "constantly re-imagining its reality"[59], in post-independence Ireland the idea of the Irish Catholic family was rooted in tradition within the limited bounds of its ideological definition. Rather than sharing the surplus of meaning offered in the philological examples that began this chapter, the Irish domestic model existed within a narrower definitional construct, which fixed home within a site defined by a particular domestic model of Irish Catholicism.

Locating the culturally-specific site of the dramatic home against an opposing national ideology of the Irish Catholic family opens up the conflict between the public and private functions of home that are masked by the broad definitional construct offered at the beginning of this chapter; that is the contradictions whereby the functions of the family as a social unit and as a series of private relationships that foster individual development pulls the site of home in opposite directions.

Within the Irish Catholic domestic model, this public/private disjunction reflected wider, more deeply rooted disjunctions between the function of ideology on a social level and actual social reality. It is this conflicting obligation - between the family as a unit of political value and the site of the family home as a site for individual development - that results in the representational dysfunctionality of the theatrical Irish Catholic family. For the narrative of the Irish Catholic family, disseminated in political and social discourse, functioned more as an ideological

[59] Bachelard, 1969, 17. Also see Rosemary George, *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

value system immersed in issues of cultural and political nationalism than as a reality of either belonging or existence, locating it within a narrative of national fiction rather than objective history (or widespread social experience).

The Beginnings of Mythory

The function of the Irish Catholic family as an ideological discourse was deeply rooted in complex issues of cultural and political nationalism that were defining the social status quo in Ireland during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While undoubtedly informed by the puritan aspects of Victorian culture and the changing nature of feudal society that will be explored later in this chapter, the Irish Catholic family model was primarily influenced by the political and cultural climate of nationalism from which it arose. The configuration of the nation as an imagined political community[60], however, placed a particular pressure on the representational forms through which the social reality of the Irish nation was expressed.

It is now widely accepted in historical scholarship that most of what functioned as the 'authentic' history of the Irish nation was a deliberate construct directed towards particular political ends.[61] While revisionist historians may admit that there remains "a factual core to some beliefs of the nation", it is generally understood that official historical constructions of much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are "embedded in a wider context that is not reliable."[62] Contemporary historical practice is thus concerned with revising this unreliable wider framework and reclaiming the boundaries between fact and invention that have been so dangerously blurred by these wider contextual concerns.

Recent Irish historiography has accordingly revealed that Ireland's official national history was constructed from a combination of historical facts and mythical idealism, which brought both together in a single ideological process hereafter referred to as mythory.[63] Mythory refers to the discursive fusion of history and mythology in a narrative of ideological assertion, which has facilitated

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[60] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Melbourne, Australia; New York: Wiley, Halsted Press, 1992).
[61] See Gerard Delanty and Patrick O'Mahoney, *Rethinking Irish History: Nationalism, Identity, Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).
[62] Delanty and O'Mahoney, 2001, 190.
[63] Adjective: Mytho-historic.

the creation of cultural fictions for specific political ends in historical discourse. Mythory allows the contradictions between cultural realities and political motivations of a specific historical time to be subsumed in a single ideological discourse, a mytho-historic discourse, which serves as the organising principle through which both historical and present experience can be unified for specifically envisioned ends.

Mythory is fundamentally ideological - a value-laden discourse reflecting the social needs and aspirations of a culture at a particular time. In Ireland these particular aspirations were directed towards the national independence movement, which co-opted ideas of the past and authenticity for this aspirational function, and allowed history and lived experience to be manipulated as malleable narratives in which present imagining could invest its projected conceptions of an ideal future.

The function of mythory as a value-based ideological discourse can be linked to the binary operation of Althusser's thesis on the function of ideology and ideological state apparatuses, in which ideology is conceptualised as both "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence"[64] and as a material reality itself. Althusser's first clause suggests an obvious critical point of view in which ideology can be examined as a specific world outlook that bears no more narrative authority than myth; that is it is largely imaginary and should be examined in the same way that an anthropologist may examine the myths of a primitive society.[65]

However, while ideology may not 'correspond to reality', its *relation* to reality must not be overlooked; thus the critical responsibility to ideology is to uncover the relationship between the imaginary and the real of ideology, "to discover the reality of the world behind their (ideology's) imaginary representation of that world."[66] It is at this point of narrative interpretation that Althusser's second clause, defining the material existence of ideology, gains its force; the relationship between the imaginary of ideology and the reality behind it

[64] Althusser, 2004, 294.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.

is sustained only because ideology has a material existence in a supporting apparatus, in actual state practice, or social practices.

This identification of the binary processes structuring ideological narratives allows Althusser to expound his central thesis: that ideology interpellates the individual as subject. What Althusser essentially means by this is that ideology recruits subjects among individuals, or transforms individuals into subjects, by naming them as subjects. One of the effects of ideology, however, "is the practical *denial* of the ideological character of ideology by ideology"[67] and, by extension, the denial of the ideological nature and function of the individual as subject – and henceforth the individual's complicity within this process.

This conclusion supports the binary structure that Althusser identifies in the ideological narrative; in fact, it allows the imaginary of Althusser's thesis to be transformed into its material reality. The function of the imaginary as a material system that names the subject in an unacknowledged relationship of interpellation lends ideology its capacity to commit to certain value systems despite their often tenuous relation to exterior reality; and the subject, enabled to perform by the ideology that names it as subject, and which it in turn performs, becomes complicit in this restructuring of reality to ideological ends.

Althusser names this restructuring of reality "the great ideological mystification"[68], and in nationalist and post-independence Ireland this ideological mystification was linked to the way in which the historical past and contemporary reality was reconfigured in representational discourses. Seamus Deane has suggested that this process did not involve the repositioning of myth *as* history but the creation of myths *of* history[69] and it as at this juncture, where myth and history are forced together in mutual ideological alliance, that the concept of mythory becomes a valuable lens through which the truth-function of both representational practices can be unpacked to deconstructive effect.

In his semiological account of myth, 'Myth Today'[70], Roland Barthes discusses the way that myth functions and perpetuates itself in society. Barthes assigns to myth a fundamentally motivated form: myth is never arbitrary; it is

[67] Althusser, 2004, 301.
[68] Althusser, 2004, 296.
[69] Seamus Deane, *Celtic Revivals* (London: Faber, 1985), 29.
[70] Barthes, 2000.

deliberately produced in accordance with the particular social values of a particular historical time. Myth seizes an image (let us say, for the purposes of our argument here, that of the Irish Catholic family), which has a whole system of working values. It then empties this image of its established signification, refilling it with a single meaning, whose hermeneutical possibility is suspended by its predetermined social value. What myth is, then, essentially – although Barthes neglects to name it as such - is an ideology distilled into, and contained by, a single image. While this image naturalises the purposes at work in its construction, allowing myth to transform history into nature[71] without drawing attention to its function as such, Barthes neglects the *specific* motivational processes by which myth gains its function in *specific social contexts.* By refusing to uncover the fundamentally ideological allegiance of myth in its shared commitment to particular value systems, Barthes naturalises myth itself (and, thus, ideology) as an inevitable process of historical discourse.

Myth has, Barthes asserts, an essential social usage; however, mythory names this social use as ideological, and thus insists that it is inherently bound up with the specific contextual processes of motivation at work in the construction of historical narratives for specific ideological ends. Mythory takes on Barthes' structural analysis of myth, but absorbs the motivational and investment processes of its ideological basis into the fabric of its discursive function; that is, it insists that both myth and history function as narrative manifestations of the implicit value systems of ideology. While myth, as Barthes defines it, establishes itself structurally as "a *story* at once true and *unreal*"[72], mythory is framed within the ideological fabric and practice of the nation and can thus be defined as an *imaginary* that is both *true and real*, in a theoretical paradox that echoes Althusser's insistence on the material reality of ideology's imaginary representation of the world.

Barthes describes myth as "interpellant speech." Like ideology, it constructs its subject as it is constructed by it, but Barthes neglects to name the self-consciousness and the problematics of this process. Myth is thus a 'frozen' speech which "suspends itself, turns away, and assumes the look of a

[71] Barthes, 2000, 128.
[72] Barthes, 2000, 128 (emphasis added).

generality."[73] The assumed neutrality of the singleness of its signification process enables and permits its perpetuation, but this neutrality also contains within it a narrative inclination towards the truth-function with which the imaginary of ideological thought that Althusser theorises asserts itself.

It is in this implicit danger – the potential truth-function that myth adopts as its narrative strategy - that Barthes finds it necessary to identify the need for the continuing reinvention of both the signs and values encoded in myth in accordance with historical progress and changing social values; that is, the continuing reinvention that Althusser's ideology struggles with in order to keep subject and author in the unitary process of intention necessary to sustain both. Barthes insists that there is "no fixity in mythical concepts"[74] and that myth can only survive through multiple reinventions. Mythory's distillation of history and myth into a single ideological process, however, defies the multiplicity that Barthes identifies as an essential means through which myth can perform its social function. Mythory asserts itself, then, through a discourse of permanence; where myth acts merely as a "semiological system, which has the pretension of transcending itself into a factual system"[75], mythory institutionalises this pretence as cultural and historical truth and it is this institutionalisation that David Lloyd has identified as the key moment in ideological formation of the modern Irish state.[76] It is also in this institutionalisation that mythory is most fundamentally problematic.

In his formative essay 'Myth and Motherland', Richard Kearney locates myth in a "sacred time"[77] where the past and the future exist conterminously for the purposes of the present moment. The fictional narrative of origin that is created in this process, however, elides the reality of both history and the present moment, as present experience is arrested at a particular make-believe moment of cultural truth that denies the naturalised processes of myth and the specificities of history in favour of an ideologically motivated concept of authenticity.

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[73] Barthes, 2000, 125.
[74] Barthes, 2000, 121.
[75] Barthes, 2000, 134.
[76] Lloyd, 1999, 37.
[77] Richard Kearney, *Myth and Motherland.* (Derry: Field Day Theatre Company, 1984), 3.

While mythory sees itself reflected in the sacred time of Kearney's myth, it simultaneously situates itself in the historical time of present experience. Thus, as Kearney aligns myth with the genealogical location of the *past*, mythory is aligned firmly with the political motivations and requirements of the *present*. It is thus fundamentally ideological, not historical, reflecting the social needs and aspirations of a culture at a particular time, despite the orientation of these needs towards the future. In Foucauldian terms, mythory fulfils the truth-function assigned to ideology as a "discourse which poses for the truth and holds specific powers."[78] In mytho-historic terms, these powers are specifically exercised within the ideological workings of the state and are manifested in various narrative models - of which, for our purposes of explication here, the Irish Catholic family model is one such particular form. Kearney's ideas about myth (as he later refined them) may give "symbolic expression to the institutions it (the state) *might* have had in reality"[79], but the ideological force pertaining to mythory provides an institutional solution to issues that were not necessarily resolvable on a social, political or economic level, even if mythory gave them an ideological solution.

The Irish Catholic family existed in late nineteenth- and twentieth- century Ireland as one such institution, constructed through and supported by mytho-historic discourse. Having been seized for the ideological purposes of mythory, invested with a particular system of meaning and enshrined in the constitutional fabric of the Irish nation, the Irish Catholic family model was thus a mytho-historic construct defined by exterior influences of cultural politics and political nationalism, which, as we will see in the following section, were informed more by the comforts of fantasy than the reality of actual experience.

Cultural Nationalism and the Evolutionary Vision of Community[80]

It was largely through the processes of cultural nationalism that the fundamental truth-difference between myth, history and actual experience was elided and the

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[78] Michel Foucault, 'On the Ways of Writing History: Interview with Raymond Bellour, 15th –21st June 1967' in Faubion ed., 2000, 281.
[79] Kearney, 1997, 109.
[80] See John Hutchinson's definition of cultural nationalism in *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1987), where he assigns to cultural nationalism the function of providing an evolutionary vision of community or a means through which a community's future can be imagined.

mytho-historic imagination of the nation, of which the Irish Catholic family model was an important ideological unit, was born. Following Gellner's thesis on nations and nationalism (or Kiberd's thesis, in specific relation to Ireland), Ireland's movement of cultural nationalism invented the idea of an heroic nation by transposing the self-conscious construct of a glorious heritage, not necessarily grounded in historical fact, onto the landscape of present experience.[81] By insisting on the past as a cultural exemplar in this way, mythory became an embedded discourse through which a post-colonial Irish identity could be expressed in the political rhetoric, consciousness and fabric of the Irish Nation.

If England, in accordance with postcolonial interpretations of Irish history and literature, created Ireland as a dystopian site into which her deepest fears could be read,[82] Ireland, in accordance with the national drive towards political independence, recreated herself through the process of mythory as a utopian paradise in which her future ideals could be given expression. In the words of Seamus Heaney, Ireland became a nation "mythologically grounded . . . in art time, in story time, in the continuous present of a common, unthinking memory life."[83] But this memory life too was mytho-historically grounded and predicated on the invention of a past through a fusion of history and myth that belonged less to the once upon a time of history than to the never-never land of fairytale.

The way in which this process of national identity formation became common ideological currency can be traced through the history of Irish cultural nationalism, which manipulated official historical discourse and institutional practice in late nineteenth century and early twentieth-century Ireland. The development of Ireland's national self-conception is charted by John Hutchinson in *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State*, which provides a theoretical, as well as descriptive analysis, of the process of cultural nationalism in Ireland since the 1700s. For Hutchinson, cultural nationalism constructs "new matrices of collective identity at times of

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[81] See Ernst Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983). Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: Literature and the Modern Nation* (London: Cape, 1995).

[82] See David Lloyd. *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-colonial Moment* (Dublin: Lilliput, 1993); Roy Foster, *Paddy and Mr.Punch: Connections in Irish and English History* (London: Allen Lane, 1993) and Kiberd, 1995.

[83] Seamus Heaney, 'Correspondences: Emigrants and Inner Exiles' in *Migrations: The Irish at Home and Abroad*, ed. Richard Kearney (Dublin: Wolfhound Press,1990), 23.

social crisis"[84] and this collective identity was imagined in the shape of a national community grounded in the shared historical memory of an idealised and idolised ancient Gaelic Ireland. The politics of identity that cultural nationalism invoked, however, was neither "securely aligned with social interest" nor securely reflective of social experience, thus containing within its own ideological construction the potential for destabilising the society that it aimed to secure.

By historically tracing the three key periods of intense cultural nationalism in Irish history, Hutchinson argues that Irish history from the late 1600s can be read in terms of alternating cycles of cultural nationalism and political nationalism. These cycles pass through common phases of "preparation" (whereby historical memory is invigorated), "crystallisation" (where it becomes a currency of the people) and "socio-economic articulation" (where it becomes embedded in the discourse and practices of society, economy and institutional life, of which the family played a large part on all levels).[85] It wasn't until the third Gaelic revival, however, that the interests of the cultural nationalist movement coalesced with wider objectives of political nationalism in a *successful* bid for national independence and, through that success, that the nationalist inflected cultural ideals were transposed into the ideological fabric of the state.

Hutchinson's dominant concern in *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism* is the investigation of the third revival's material success; that is, how the ideals of the cultural nationalist movement mobilised the nation's drive for political independence, and how these ideals manifested themselves ideologically within post-independence state practices (specifically, in Hutchinson's terms, its socio-economic articulation). For our purposes here this goal can be reformulated as an investigation into how mythory began to shape the lives and beliefs of Irish people by way of institutions like the Irish Catholic family.

In order to substantiate Hutchinson's identification of the corroborative relationship between creative cultural nationalism and state practice, it is necessary to follow Hutchinson's own methodology, by unpacking the origins of Irish cultural nationalism and the means through which it facilitated the

[84] Hutchinson, 1987, 9.
[85] Hutchinson, 1987, 49.

transformation of cultural ideals into an ideology that governed state practice in twentieth-century Ireland. This involved the transposition of a (fictional) past into a (volatile) present, furnishing the nation with a unifying history more suitable to political ends of self-definition than to the ambiguities of actual historical or present experience. While reflecting occasionally on the first and second Gaelic revivals, I will focus largely on the third Gaelic revival that Hutchinson identifies in the period of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Ireland, which, as Hutchinson suggests, was the most formative period of cultural nationalism in Ireland; for it is in this particular period of Irish cultural nationalism that political and cultural aspirations coalesced to the ends of national independence.

Hutchinson makes an historical distinction between different periods of cultural nationalism in Ireland, and he refers to these historical periods as graduated phases of the Gaelic Revival. The first phase of cultural nationalism that Hutchinson identifies begins in the late 1600s in the years following the Penal Laws of 1690. These laws officially established the social and economic ascendancy of Britain in colonised Ireland, provoking widespread class conflict and religious sectarianism among the colonising and native population.

The revival of native Irish or Gaelic culture at this time of social crisis was undertaken by scholars such as Charles O'Connor, Sylvester O'Halloran and Charles Vallency at Trinity College Dublin, and, later, by scholars at the Royal Irish Academy,[86] who constructed images of heroic national solidarity in their writings with an implicit goal that was less political than conciliatory, a means of reconciling the conquered population with its conquerors. Their explicitly revivalist project was aimed less at recovering a distinct cultural tradition from the Gaelic past than at unifying native and British traditions and guiding Ireland towards a golden future that would benefit both colonised and coloniser.

This productive first phase of Gaelic revivalism took place over more than one hundred years, but was superseded by the practical aims of political nationalism, in which class conflict was directly addressed by the indigenous middle classes and the ascendancy, who were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with their exclusion from participation in the body politic. This frustration

[86] Hutchinson identifies the foundation of The Royal Irish Academy as the establishment of a "permanent centre for the diffusion of the sacred values of the Irish nation." (Hutchinson, 1987, 57)

culminated in the 1798 Rising, which was inspired by a select group of political aspirants (the United Irishmen) who were vying specifically for electoral reform. The inevitable defeat of the rebellion, however, resulted in the full political and economic integration of Ireland into Great Britain through the 1801 Act of Union, provoking a social crisis that sparked off the second phase of cultural nationalism in Ireland.

The second wave of cultural nationalism in Ireland was driven by two separate impulses: one, an impulse towards a scientific reconstruction of Celtic civilisation for historical ends; the other, a moral imperative to "recover all aspects of the Irish experience as a coherent identity in space and time, and to recreate it as a living reality in the present."[87] As advocated by George Petrie and Eugene O'Curry, the second phase of the Gaelic revival, like the first phase, envisioned a synthesis of English and native Irish culture, rather than a replacement of one by the other. The romantic ideals that these intellectuals promoted, however, were of primary interest to the Protestant Ascendancy classes. Like the advocates of the first revival, they failed to disseminate their ideals among the rural Catholic majority. Their appeal, and their effect, then, was largely rhetorical and they failed to reconstruct a creative Irish spirit on a wide level.

Nonetheless, their rural populist vision did inspire a new strand of romantic political nationalism led by the Young Ireland group, whose political ambitions superseded the intellectual ideas of the cultural nationalist movement. Even as they were antagonistic to the English-oriented liberal ideology that formed the basis of the ideals of the cultural nationalist movement, they were committed to a distinctive and integrated Irish society similar to that cited by the Anglo-Irish revivalists, although they aimed to bring their aims about by political agitation rather than spiritual regeneration.

While the economic disaster of the 1845 famine diluted the political impact of the Young Ireland campaign, the subsequent drive in favour of assimilation by the British government - eager to create a progressive middle class that could participate in rebuilding the country and consolidating the ever-expanding empire - provided the impetus for the third wave of Irish cultural nationalism. It is in this third phase that Hutchinson identifies the key

[87] Hutchinson, 1987, 87.

crystallisation of the cultural nationalist movement in popular national movements like the Gaelic Athletic Association (1887), the Gaelic League (1893) and the Irish Literary Theatre (1899), through which the socio-economic articulation of nationalism's cultural and political ideals were made possible.

Culture Making

Within the third revival, Hutchinson identifies a certain tension between the *Anglo-Irish* revivalism of the 1890s and early twentieth century that took shape in literary institutions like the Abbey Theatre, and the *Gaelic* revivalism that mobilised the Catholic majority and enabled the coalition of cultural and political desires that resulted in the formation of the Irish Free State in 1921. While the success of the third revival was predominantly due to the populism of the Catholic-led Gaelic movement, Hutchinson does not underestimate the importance of the Anglo-Irish tradition, with its intellectual ideals of Celticism and authenticity, in the formation of Irish cultural identity.

One of the key texts produced, as part of the movement, was Douglas Hyde's 1893 essay 'On the Necessity of De-anglicising Ireland' [88], which embodies many of the complexities bound up with ideas of authenticity within the movement of cultural nationalism. Despite his privileged Anglo-Irish intellectual position, Hyde was one of the key figures responsible for the merging of cultural ideals and political aspirations that resulted in the successful drive towards Irish independence.[89]

Hyde's essay argued that the colonial influence (on social structure, language, culture etc) was breaking the continuity of historical Irish life, which he invoked as a deeply spiritual heroic tradition of personal sacrifice for the common land. The purity of Ireland's spirit, he argued, was being polluted by the modernising impulses of British colonialism, destroying the native language of the people and with it their capacity to express their pure spirit.

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[88] Douglas Hyde, 'On the Necessity of De-anglicising Ireland' excerpted in full length in *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing: Volume 1*, ed. Seamus Deane (Derry: Field Day, Cork: Cork University Press, 1999), 527-533.

[89] Hyde was rewarded for his commitment to the cultural and political cause when he was inaugurated as the first president of Ireland in 1938.

Hyde's ideals achieved popular acceptance and celebration in such institutions as the Gaelic League and the Irish Literary Society. They were also expressed in specific literary texts, like his own essay or like W.B. Yeats' *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, whose illusive allegorical mode of expression reinforced prevalent cultural and historical myths - including those of home and family - in social and national life. The evolution of the movement of political nationalism in the early 1900's, however, with its emphasis on the creation of a modern Irish state, saw Anglo-Irish traditionalism, like Hyde's and Yeats', "gradually ossified into . . . antiquarianism."[90]

The problematic nature of the traditional ideals that they espoused is implicit in the texts themselves. In 'On the Necessity of De-anglicising Ireland', for example, Hyde equates his own personal memories with authentic Irish experience, even as his anti-modern stance ignored the realities of actual Irish experience in favour of a primeval tradition that was largely a construct of his own (privileged) imagination. Further complicating the authenticity of his vision was his invocation of a traditional Irish past in which he relied on Anglo-Irish, rather than Gaelic, constructions of history (such as that of Davies and Moore), whose notions of the primitive Irish past and her potential glorious future were also superimposed on historical fact and the contemporary present rather than generated from a native Irish culture.

Meanwhile Yeats' later career suggests a belated recognition of this idealised cultural commitment and an ambiguity about the political commitment that early plays, like *Cathleen ni Houlihan,* expressed and provoked, and that can be possibly mapped onto the development of the Abbey Theatre in the post-1916 period, when its initial political concerns began to be subsumed by more aesthetic enterprises. [91]

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[90] Hutchinson, 1987, 164.

[91] The evolution of dramatic form in the career of W.B. Yeats, it could be conjectured, echoes the development of Anglo-Irish cultural nationalism as it broke from the more practical cultural and political aims of the Gaelic revivalists. The allegorical political statement of plays like *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894), *Countess Cathleen* (1889–92) and *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (1902) gives way during the first decade of the twentieth-century to the experimental dance plays and the symbolism of plays like *The Dreaming of the Bones* (1919), *The Cat and the Moon* (1924) and *Purgatory* (1938). A line from his poem 'September 1916' suggests a change in the tenor of his literary ambitions: "Did that play of mine send out/Certain men the English shot?' (W.B. Yeats, *Collected Poems*, 393) which, it could be argued, was reflected in the Abbey's artistic development during the same period as proposed above.

Hutchinson argues that the space left by Anglo-Irish cultural nationalism in the post-Rising, post-Civil War fallout was filled by a more progressive, more modern and specifically Gaelic movement of cultural nationalism, as espoused by journalists like D.P. Moran and Arthur Griffith, for example, and social activists like Padraig Pearse and James Connolly. While their ends were directed, like Hyde's, towards creating a distinctive Irish identity and an independent Irish state, they saw a *modern* Irish future, as opposed to a primitive bucolic past, as the key to realising and maintaining independent nationhood. These modernising nationalists, however, also adapted history to suit their own ends and were equally involved in the perpetuation of propagandist ideas in the form of a distinct cultural identity.

J.J. Lee is particularly vocal on cultural formation during this period: "Far from being *prisoners* of the past," he argues, the Gaelic revivalists "*created* the past in the image of the future"[92] through historical ideals that were as tendentious and fictitious as Hyde's self-formulated myths. The distinct cultural identity they proposed was predicated on a creative interpretation of the Irish past and an idealistic projection of an ascetic, sober, industrious and urban, middle-class Irish future. However, their historical and future ideals extended beyond the urban centres where they were developed "even into the conservative countryside" [93] where rural based organisations (like the GAA) disseminated their cultural ideals and, crucially, their political ambitions. Hutchinson's argument maintains that it was the support of this traditional rural majority that provoked the "powerful revolutionary separatist movement, which succeeded in waging a successful war of independence against the British state."[94]

Hutchinson also recognises the crucial importance of the diasporic movement in the initiation and success of the third Gaelic revival, particularly in America among emigrant Young Ireland-ers who formed the organisation of the Fenian Brotherhood in the 1860s. While Hutchinson declines to explore the representational specificities of the cultural nationalist movement in favour of its

[92] Lee, 1973, 141 (emphasis added).
[93] Hutchinson, 1987, 200.
[94] Ibid.

ideological dissemination, historian J.J. Lee investigates the process of national identity formation at this particular stage in Irish history.

Lee traces historically what he sees as an important double process necessary for the self-conscious construction of Irish identity. He separates the processes of national image-making temporally, positing two separate periods of national identity construction in the post-famine and post-independence periods of Irish history. While recognising the different contemporary political imperatives that defined each historical period, Lee deduces that both their purposes and their results may be interpreted in a similar fashion; these image-making processes were responsible for the creation and perpetuation of a national cultural ideal of an authentic ancient Gaelic past which was looked to as a sacred spiritual homeland. Crucially, however, Lee argues that while these ideals may have been the product of an intellectual elite, their perpetuation and transformation into ideological discourse and accepted historical narrative could not have been facilitated without the collusion of the Irish people.

The post-famine image-makers that Lee identifies were Ireland's post-famine émigrés (the diasporic population that Hutchinson identifies as crucial to the third phase of the Gaelic revival). The natural example that Lee draws from, as Hutchinson does briefly, is the United States, which was the greatest recipient of Irish immigrants during the nineteenth century. The heavy influx during and after the famine, however, put a large stress on an American economy that had already subsumed a large Irish community prior to the 1845 crisis and was struggling itself to adapt to the dictates of its new economic mode of capitalism.

While post-famine Irish immigrants arrived full of the hopes that emigration - and American capitalism - generated, the hostility of the American, and the existing Irish communities, to the post-famine influx of Irish families resulted in the ghettoisation of the newly-arrived emigrants. While keen to be absorbed into the cultural and economic landscape of their new home, the ongoing discrimination, economic hardship and everyday trials of poverty saw the necessary localisation of the new immigrant community in order to ensure their survival.

In this process of separatism-as-survival the maintenance of the community's cultural identity was paramount as it provided them with a means of individual and communal self-preservation in the foreign host culture. In

corroborating this process, existing institutions like the Catholic Church were strengthened, while new ones like 'the Irish Catholic family' were created to fill crucial voids. Consoling historical ideals of Irishness and community were created and situated within an image of a family-based culture of primitive spiritual purity that coincided with the creation of new discourses of home. For as Richard Kearney has suggested, the widening of horizons predicated a more intense focus on home, both by those who were leaving Ireland and those compelled to stay, a focus that centred on Ireland as the homeland and home as the ultimate site of consolation.[95] These ideals provided security of origins and affiliation where the future of the exiled community was otherwise uncertain, and the identitarian ideals were perpetuated on a widespread basis by the constant dialogue between the immigrants' new home and their idealised homeland: Ireland was the place they aspired to return to, despite the fact that their own recent experiences in Ireland contradicted this image - and the possibility of such an Ireland existing in the near future.

While on an official level these cultural ideals helped to sustain a reassuring and distinctive cultural identity for the Irish people during key moments of historical change, allowing a cohesive attempt at political independence at a later historical moment to take place, the conflict between these ideals and the reality of Irish lives precipitated a social crisis reflected in the representation of the Irish Catholic family on the twentieth-century stage through an oppositional discourse akin to Freud's literary model of the uncanny as this chapter will later elucidate fully. For as this particular conception of an Irish Catholic family began to be subsumed into nationalist discourse it became a site of cultural strength that eventually found institutional expression in the social basis of the post-independence national constitution as an ideology informed by myths of history; that is, as mythory. However, before discussing how the ideological and dramatic models of the Irish Catholic family interact with, and react against, each other, this chapter must first examine in close detail the development of domestic structures in Ireland during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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[95] Richard Kearney, 'Introduction' in ed. Kearney, 1990.

The Victorian Home and The Fall of the Public Man[96]

We must turn to the Victorian family to begin our formulation of an historical model of the Irish Catholic family against which we can measure the mytho-historic domestic model that operated as an ideological stronghold in twentieth-century Ireland. While the Victorian family model identified by Nina Auerbach, Vincent and Prost and Richard Sennett[97] focuses primarily on the life of the middle class family, their meticulous documentation of the privatisation of domestic life in line with industrial and economic change in the nineteenth century provides valuable evidence of the changing nature of the meaning and ideology of home in a wider European context.

Within the standard Western feudal economic system, the nuclear family was the main economic unit of society. Industry (primarily craft and agriculture) was controlled by individual family units who contributed to the material and physical sustenance of the family through their particular roles. With the dawning of industrial modernity and widespread urbanisation in the nineteenth century, however, the material and ideological unit of the family began to develop in new ways that differed radically from the feudal model of the past.

The flux of environmental/social conditions and mass industrialisation in the Western world, beginning in the early 19th century, was symptomatic of the steady transition of pre-modern feudal societies to modern capitalist societies in a short space of time. Juliet Mitchell describes the structural changes as simultaneously economic and ideological: "The peasant masses of feudal societies had individual private property; their ideal was simply more of it. Capitalist society. . offer(ed) more because it stressed the idea of individual private property in a new context."[98] Capitalism offered the old values of individualism as its chief ideology, but offered a more appropriate means for its realisation on a material level. The realisation of this ideal in concrete form, however, depended on the "maintenance of an old institution: the family." The family, Mitchell continues,

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[96] From the title of Richard Sennett's book, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York; London: W.W. Norton, 1992).

[97] See Nina Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 1982). Antoine Prost and Gerard Vincent, *A History of Private Life, Vol 5: Riddles of Identity*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1991). Sennett, 1992.

[98] Mitchell, Juliet. *Woman's Estate*. (New York: Random House-Vintage, 1973), 154.

> changed from being the economic basis of individual private property under feudalism to being the focal point of an idea of individual property under a system that banished such an economic form from its central mode of production - capitalism.[99]

Capitalism, then, offered a certain amount of ideological continuity but while working within certain traditional social structures of feudalism (the family unit, for example) the material realisation of these changes undermined and collapsed the traditional aspect of traditional structures.

Prost and Vincent agree that these historical changes "gave rise to a new concept of family life (home)", whose new form "lay in the economy, not in the domestic realm"[100], despite the fact that these very changes divorced the family from its feudal economic basis. The middle-class Victorian family model prevalent in Britain and the United States, and existing in a particular cultural Catholic form in nineteenth century France, resituated the family unit in a realm separate from public life. It still remained deeply tied to civic values and the goals of the larger political culture, however, not least because its domestic structures were completely dependent on economic survival for their maintenance. Although working class and peasant families were slower to develop in this privileged way, by the twentieth century rapid industrialisation had begun to change the individual and collective significance of roles both within and outside of the family realm on all levels of society. These changes were, in fact, of particular significance for the working and peasant classes for whom, traditionally, the functions of home as place of rest and place of work were interchangeable.

Thus, as the nineteenth century progressed and industrial development continued, the social sphere became separated from familial purpose so that "the public functions of the home dwindled and the ideal of family life became more leisure centred and privatised."[101] Richard Sennett articulates the effect of modernisation on traditional life as a two-fold process of structural change (industrial capitalism) and spiritual change (the experience of human existence as individual difference) whose practices and effects are indivisible from each other. Like Prost and

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[99] Ibid.
[100] Prost and Vincent, 1991, 547.
[101] Prost and Vincent, 1991, 590.

Vincent and Mitchell, Sennett argues that these changes differentiated social spaces in economic and ideological terms, dividing life into two separate but coterminous spheres of experience. Where once work, family and the wider social community functioned contiguously, this material specialisation of life into private and public spheres was ideologically problematic in its wider implications, and individually traumatic in its specific manifestation. The necessarily coterminous interaction between the separate spheres of private and public life blurred the boundaries between them, and these boundaries were further compromised by the dual and conflicting responsibilities of each social sphere.

The development of individual identity was unduly affected by these changes in the nature of home, both as a physical space and as an ideological construct. The rise of technology, the increasing use of machines to fulfil functions of human production, and the decline in traditional rituals such as marriage, all led to a further complication of a modern identity that was becoming increasingly compromised as it became less and less defined by roles and duties. Personal identity replaced social identity as the marker for personal development, and where once individual identity had traditionally been developed in accordance with social function, it now became the preserve of the home.

The ideological location of male responsibility in the workplace confined women largely to the domestic realm, where the responsibility for the development of individual identity, in the face of the decline of public roles, was now situated. The mother thus became the primary architect of private identity. Cultural materialist Joel Pfister asserts in his reading of the material conditions shaping Eugene O'Neill's psychological dramas that the privatisation of the family was accompanied by the natural intensification of emotional dependencies, which also impacted upon personal identity development; without their productive functions, the family was necessarily reconceived outside of "social agency . . . as a self-absorbed psychological unit. . . the privileged, multi-layered, mysterious space where one's true self is located, hidden or buried."[102]

However, despite this privatisation of individual identity construction and consolidation, it was ultimately the public, social world in which the *expression* of personal identity gained final authority in its social performance. Although the

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[102] Joel Pfister, *Staging Depth: Eugene O'Neill and the Politics of Psychological Discourse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 28.

private space of the home was defined as the site where the individual eked out his autonomous existence, this private space was also "the public space of the household"[103], provoking conflict between the family as a unit and the new individual. Thus, as the private and public spaces of the Victorian home existed conterminously, so the psychic and physical spaces were at constant variance and in constant competition with each other; the home-identity binarism of modern life was not a sufficient framework for individual survival outside of the home.

While the newly industrialised world offered immense social and economic opportunity away from the family, there was no structure within the continually developing social framework to compensate for the loss of stability that the individualised domestic model offered in its privatised function as the container of individual identity. Harris suggests that by containing intimacy and identity development ideologically in the domestic sphere, when the ultimate arbitration of identity actually lay outside of the home, the individual is forced to place demands on the family that it cannot meet. "As a result," Harris continues, "we feel the family to be suffocating and we seek to escape into a public world only to find it impersonal and sterile."[104]

The absence of social structures capable of containing concepts of individual identity once provided by well-defined social roles forced the individual to look towards home again, beginning a cycle that suggests a suffocating dependency of the individual on external legitimation. Individuals thus depended on the family to provide the stability that the impersonal environs of outside society could not, and on the wider social world to provide the comforts and security lacking in the home environment. The individual was thus constantly drawn back to their home in a way that re-defined home as an ideological structure that equally failed to provide the necessary structures for individual identity development in the modern world.

This concurrent physical *independence* and emotional *dependence* saw identity formation become increasingly problematic. James Cote refers to the individual psychic complications issuing from this excessive familial dependence

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[103] Prost and Vincent, 1991, 62.
[104] C.C. Harris, *The Family and Industrial Society* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1983), 165.

as the condition of "arrested adulthood" [105], which he characterises as the failure to make the transition from adolescence to maturity as these periods of development are structured in the modern world. According to Cote, the failure of the domestic structures to provide the necessary spiritual requirements for coherent identity formation is reflected in the fractured identity of the individual, which we will observe as a standard experience for the characters in the dramatic Irish Catholic homes of twentieth-century drama.

The Irish Catholic Family

The development of the industrial world and the resultant social changes were undoubtedly reflected in the changing structure of Irish life during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While cultural nationalism in Ireland at this particular historical moment insisted upon maintaining a public discourse of primitive rural simplicity and a collective identity of heroic self-sufficiency, in reality Ireland was slowly being engulfed by the industrial and social changes in neighbouring Victorian cultures. And even though the experience of modernisation in Ireland *was* different to modernisation processes generated elsewhere - being largely instigated by the parallel industrialisation of her neighbour and colonial ruler, England, rather than generated from within - the effects of industrialisation did manifest themselves in the structural, if not the spiritual, development of pre-independence Ireland. Social historian Tom Inglis and revisionist historian J.J. Lee agree that once the post-Famine nationalist movement began in earnest, Ireland's incremental material and social modernisation was rejected by contemporary ideology in favour of social constructions that privileged tradition over progress, thus privileging the past over both the present and the actual possibilities for the future.

The Irish Catholic family, as an important operational constituent of the social fabric, was also caught up within the boundaries of mytho-historic discourse that denied the experience of modernisation. Evolutionary possibilities of the familial model were refused on an official level, even as the familial structure *was* evolving away from the traditional models of experience that the

[105] James Cote, *Arrested Adulthood: The Changing Nature of Maturity and Identity* (New York; London: New York University Press, 2000).

mytho-historic model suggested. Diane Stubbings similarly argues that it was the historical specificity of Ireland's colonial position that necessitated the particular domestic structural ideal created in line with conventional Catholic beliefs. The "internal economic and social upheaval which the Great Famine occasioned, the land agitations that erupted in the 1870s," Stubbings argues, "reinforced the need to *represent* home as inviolable space"[106], just as the movement of cultural nationalism needed to represent Ireland in terms of a narrative of Gaelic primitivism.

Representation is a key concept here, for the Irish Catholic domestic model was actually a national cultural invention that existed in tension with the proposed cultural ideals. The Irish Catholic family provided a particularly useful social function for promoting the superiority of these ideals over experiential reality, as it offered mythory a fixed site (the physical site of home) that was capable of containing its cultural functions when co-opted to its ideological ends. The Irish Catholic family model thus projected home as a site of refuge in the midst of constant change, providing the institutional stability necessary for perpetuating these ideologies in contemporary cultural narratives. The committed maintenance of these narrowly defined mytho-historic ideals was, as J.J. Lee argues, just one instance of Ireland's "heroic capacity for self-deception"[107] in the face of the progress of history.

Contrary to the mytho-historic inflection of popular historical assumption, then, by the late 1800s Ireland was already transformed significantly by Western modernising processes and these were reflected in the transformation of social structures at the time, including parallel development in the structure of the Irish Catholic family. In *The Modernisation of Irish Society 1848-1918*, for example, Lee charts the rise of a professional - if not industrial - urban middle class and explores the shifts in patterns of economic subsistence, marriage and inheritance systems necessary for the re-stabilisation of rural society following the devastating effects of the Great Famine. Meanwhile, in *Moral Monopoly: The Rise and the Fall of the Catholic Church in Ireland* Tom Inglis asserts that some of these

[106] Diane Stubbings, *Anglo-Irish Modernism and the Maternal* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), 23 (emphasis added).
[107] See Lee, 1990.

structural developments actually preceded the famine, even if they were not solidly cemented on a wide social scale until after the famine.

Inglis' social documentary of the Catholic Church in Ireland isolates the Irish Catholic family as an important container of, and enabler of, the ideological dominance of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Discussing the Irish family within the framework of Catholicism is not only necessary but inevitable. As an ideological unit the Irish family was defined almost entirely by the parameters of the dominant religious discourse through which the Catholic Church governed the various social networks of Irish life. Inglis links the dominance of the Catholic Church in the various social aspects of Irish life to the parallel growth in institutionalisation and moral discipline that were a pre-requisite for the modernisation of society in the first decades of the 19th century. Inglis traces Catholic control over the Irish modernisation process to the failure of the civilising processes of colonialism; with the failure of the Penal Laws to take effect in Ireland, the British government gradually began to hand the moral education of rural Ireland to the Catholic Church - any control, even Catholic, was preferable to anarchy. The subsequent link established between religion and civility saw Catholicism become "an important part of symbolic capital"[108] and a force of social, cultural and economic legitimation that held particular authority in the social, education and health services where their material power lent them further political authority, if not yet in the statutes of law.

Inglis suggests that the widespread structural transformation of the Irish Catholic family in the devastated post-famine period was indebted to the encouragement and intervention of the Catholic hierarchy. The adoption of the Western European stem-family system changed systems of inheritance within the Irish family system so that one son inherits all the land, and this helped reduce the strain on economic resources and improve impoverished standards of living for the family. By conforming to the church's economic advice and its moral teachings, the Irish Catholic family realised that it could increase its social and economic status.

It was through the force of moral education that the Catholic Church extended its influence to an ideological power over the family. The church

[108] Tom Inglis, *Moral Monopoly: The Rise and Fall of the Catholic Church in Modern Ireland* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987), 11.

produced "specific Catholic ways of being religious and ethical"[109] and they saw the home as the site in which these Catholic ways could be monitored in the private sphere. By situating the development of religious and ethical responsibility within the home, they co-opted the institution of the family to their own institutional ends, and developed an ideological alliance with the family's structures through which the behaviour and development of the individual was continually monitored through the lens of Catholic morality.

The legalist orthodox religiosity of the Catholic Church (Inglis refers to it in places as fundamentalist), and its ideological reinforcement in the private space of the home, created an obedient subject defined by ideologies of spirituality, frugality and celibacy completely subjugated in private life (at home) and in public life (in society). It also enforced a coterminous, interchangeable relationship between the institution of home and the institution of the family, which, as already mentioned, was reflected in the construction of the Irish language version of the Constitution.[110] This ideological slippage, as Finola Kennedy has argued, "contain(ed) within itself another link, that of the family with dependency" [111] which, as we have already seen in the Victorian model, suggests a problematic identity development for the individual within the home that will be reflected in the dramatic models of the Irish Catholic home that will be discussed in Chapters Two, Three and Four.

This relationship of legitimation, however, was not one-sided: as the family relied on the church for social legitimation, the church depended on the family for the consolidation of its own power, not least for the recruitment of new members to the clergy. Through their control of the educational system the church may have been able to supervise the individual within the public sphere, but within the domestic sphere they depended on the figure of the mother. The specialisation of private and public life that Prost and Vincent track is corroborated by Inglis in an Irish context, where the mother functioned as the domestic authority within a family unit which was structured as a "Catholic

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[109] Ibid.
[110] p.p. 5
[111] Finola Kennedy, *Cottage to Crèche: Family Change in Ireland* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 2001), 8.

adaptation of the Victorian patriarchalism" that confined women to the home and emphasised the duties rather than rights of citizens.[112]

As the moral guardian of the domestic order, then, the Church accorded the mother a central place in Irish society. Even if she "only had access to the cultural, social and symbolic power" accorded by the church, her dependency on this influence for her authority within the home reflected the symbolic dominance of the church within the Irish Catholic family. Inglis argues that the Irish mother thus became a "major force behind the modernisation of Irish society"[113] and a key force in maintaining the power of the church.

The power of the mother was vested through the same means as the power of the Church, through the psychological strategies of emotional dependence and social legitimation. In fact, as Inglis suggests, " . . . . through engaging in the same humble tasks of moralising children . . mothers began to attain a similar perspective on the world to that of priests." Furthermore, Inglis argues, "it was through an imitation of their celibate lifestyle, their bodily discipline and morality, that the mother inculcated a sexual and emotional repression which was crucial to the attainment of postponed marriage, permanent celibacy and emigration"[114] which the social institution of the family actually depended on for survival during prolonged periods of economic recession in Ireland throughout the century. However, the matriarchal power that Inglis accords to women in the consolidation of Catholic power was merely symbolic within a wider framework of Catholicism that was governed by the discourses of patriarchy thus reflected in the working structure of family relations in the Irish Catholic home.

Supported and regulated by the Church, the Irish Catholic family was structured along the same lines of authoritarianism and patriarchy that the religious order followed, advocating collective obedience and self-abnegation among its members. The ideologically-inflected Irish Catholic family model similarly depended on "outward shame and internalised guilt"[115] as the primary controlling mechanisms of individual behaviour and individual subjectivity, which, if nothing, else provided a coherent discourse within which the operations of the

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[112] Delanty and O'Mahoney, 2002, 67-73.
[113] Inglis, 1987, 187.
[114] Inglis, 1987, 193.
[115] Kerby. A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 115.

family could be regulated and measured. The very structures of family life were like the structures of Irish Catholicism, as Kerby Miller has noted; they were "designed to include a sense of duty and emotional dependence rather than individuality or self-reliance." [116] By emphasising ideals of passivity and conformity for the individual they limited the field of independence for the individual within the home, and for the family unit within society, thus ensuring complicity and compliance with the discourses of mythory and strengthening a relationship between Church and State in Ireland that was to become particularly close in post-independence Ireland.

The Complexity of Cultural Anthropology

The direct contribution of the Catholic hierarchy to the 1937 Constitution of Ireland cemented the relationship between church and state in Ireland. Before turning to the Constitution's fundamental concern with defining an Irish Catholic family model on which the Irish Free State could base its moral foundation, it is important to investigate the social reality of the Irish Catholic family in contemporary Irish society of the 1930s. A contemporary ethnographic study by American anthropologists Arensberg and Kimball is particularly illuminating of the particularities of family life in Ireland at the time when the ideological model of the Irish Catholic family was being inscribed into the Irish Constitution as a domestic expression of the public interests of mythory. However, the methodological shortcomings of their study *Family and Community in Ireland* also suggest an interesting parallel between Arensberg and Kimball's project and the project of cultural nationalism, implicating the ethnography within the processes of mythory, even while its anthropological detail can be firstly used to subvert mytho-historic ideals by suggesting an operational function that complicates the simplistic moral-based model of the constitutional definition of the Irish Catholic family.

Using the rural community of the town of Ennis in County Clare as their primary unit of analysis, the main focus of Arensberg and Kimball's ethnographic project is the analysis of kinship structures in Ireland. Their exclusionary proposal

[116] Miller, 1985, 115.

of Clare as "representative 'in microcosm' of Ireland as a whole"[117] immediately denies the finality of universal authority to their account of community and family structures in Ireland, both within its own discipline[118] and within the wider framework of Irish history; for their extension of their particular field of study to the wider community functions of the entire island ignores key issues such as burgeoning urbanisation, which revisionist historians, like J.J. Lee and Diarmuid Ferriter, have identified as defining factors in Ireland's post-independence development as a modern nation.

Arensberg and Kimball's elision of the dynamic quality of Ireland's modernising processes is a conscious methodological decision that allows them to construct a simplistic portrait of Ireland that allowed them to fulfil certain cultural expectations projected from within nationalist Ireland and conditioned by their own outsider perspective. This is not, of course, to dismiss their entire study as ideological fabrication, for their research is undoubtedly based upon empirical evidence; however, their application of their rural paradigm on a nationwide level is obviously problematic. While not necessarily drawing a direct link of collusion between the methodological processes at work in *Family and Community in Ireland* and the ideological processes of selection involved in mythory, the same self-fulfilling production of a homogenous discourse reduces the complexity of Irish life to a simple fabled bucolic dream that is fundamental to both.

From the early nineteenth century to the late twentieth-century in Ireland, the family was the principle unit of organisation in the wider agricultural economy in Ireland. While late nineteenth century industrial capitalism in the United States and Great Britain brought the individual to the centre of life, in Ireland modernisation was primarily agricultural, not industrial, and the nuclear family remained central to the structure of economic life. With the economy so rooted in agriculture and the land so rooted in the family it is no surprise that "the sentiments of place, farm and family became so inextricably intermingled as to be

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[117] Anne Byrne, Ricca Edmonson and Tony Varley. 'Introduction' to Arensberg and Kimball. *Family and Community in Ireland.* (Ennis: CLASP Press, 2001), XLVII.

[118] The introduction to the third edition, by Byrne, Edmonson and Varley in the 2001 edition of *Family and Community in Ireland* provides a rigorous account of the methodological debate surrounding Arensberg and Kimball's 'functionalist' anthropological methodology, which has been traditionally criticised in line with the development of anthropology's theoretical models for its inability to handle conflict and change.

almost one"[119] to the detriment of individual independent function, as we have already seen in the contextualisation of Catholicism in the Irish family hierarchy and which we will further identify in the dramatic representations of Irish Catholic domesticity on the twentieth-century stage.

The community and family structure described in *Family and Community in Ireland* is thus similar to the post-Romantic feudal family system described by Prost and Vincent. This model was based on "interpersonal obligation"[120]; the sacrifice of personal preference for the well being of the people among whom one lived. The family system worked along the lines of a corporate economy, valuing the individual only in relation to a familial role that was assigned by virtue of the individual's position in the family. The family operated on patriarchal and gerontocratic lines and the general etiquette and rules of primogeniture dictated property dispersal at late marriage to the eldest son, ensuring the position of the patriarch at the head of the family system. While the marriage of the eldest son could signify an important advance in family and community status, it did not necessarily involve an advance in the individual's personal status within the family hierarchy.

Marriage was constituted as "a regular social movement" for the individual, "changing radically and necessarily their old family membership", but even this movement was usually restricted to the family heir, who was still confined "within the web of interest and sentiment"[121] of the family despite the considerable advance in his personal status. While a newly married heir may have become the new official head of the farm, the father still maintained his patriarchal power as the head of the household, while the new bride was always answerable to her mother-in-law.

The system of primogeniture in Ireland favoured the male line so that the eldest son generally inherited all. It also meant that non-heirs of the male line were generally without the means of improving their status. They "could not marry without an alternative source of income and if they did not emigrate" - which would allow disinheritance without severely disrupting domestic stability - "or follow a religious vocation, they had to remain...in the family" as subjugated

[119] Arensberg and Kimball, 2001, 145.
[120] Byrne, Edmonson, Varley, 2001, LXXXII.
[121] Arensberg and Kimball, 2001, 147.

members of the system. [122] The key trend that these structural mechanisms illustrate is that *even after* marriage or emigration the (male) individual does not leave the family but "stay(s) within the bonds of kinship."[123]

Entrance into adult procreative life, then, was, if not severely delayed, often impossible. The promotion or necessity of prolonged cohabitation through primogeniture meant the subjection of children to adults even when adulthood/maturity had been passed. The higher social position of the elderly and their almost dictatorial rule therefore ensured that "sociological adulthood ha(d) little to do with physiological adulthood" [124], which in turn had significant implications for psychological adulthood as we will see manifested theatrically in the schizophrenic experiences of the characters in the dramatic Irish Catholic homes of the twentieth-century stage.

Where Prost and Vincent's feudal family model allowed for progressive structural changes within the family, whereby the feudal family was slowly transformed by the specialisation of private and public places, Arensberg and Kimball's model inscribes the peasant family of their anthropological model in a classic portrait of stability that reinforces nationalist and post-independence ideologies of the Irish Catholic family. Despite the reality of shifting historic, economic and sociological circumstances in the newly independent Irish state, Arensberg and Kimball invoke a static community "viewed through the spectacles of its own hegemonic bloc", [125] a community that appears to exist outside of history. The social reality of the familial structures proposed in *Family and Community in Ireland*, then, can be contrasted with the essentialising nostalgia with which it invokes the rural model as the primary unit of a wider society, whose complexity it refuses to acknowledge.

Family and Community in Ireland thus allows its nostalgic rural lens to reinforce the hermetic discourse of the mytho-historic home, complying inadvertently with the objectives and ideology of the newly formed Irish state. It is an interesting and perhaps provocative fact that Arensberg and Kimball's book was published in 1940, three years after Eamon de Valera's Constitution of Ireland inscribed the same selective, rural values into the fabric of the Irish nation

[122] Arensberg and Kimball, 2001, 5.
[123] Arensberg and Kimball, 2001, 103.
[124] Arensberg and Kimball, 2001, 59.
[125] Byrne, Edmonson, Varley, 2001, LXIV.

in his conceptualisation of the Irish Catholic family as the fundamental building block of the future of the Irish state. There is no direct link between the anthropologists and the Constitution, but the value-systems projected by and implicated in Arensberg and Kimball's construction of an ethnography on the one hand, and the legal constitution on the other, suggest a similar ideological interest in the unit of the Irish Catholic family.

Deconstructing de Valera: Constitutions and Contradictions

Gaston Bachelard's argument that the ideological model of home in the twentieth century was constantly re-imagining its reality has already provided a framework for the discussion of the fixity of ideological constructions of home in twentieth-century Ireland, whose particular Irish Catholic construction was rooted in historical tradition and then set within the limited bounds of its constitutional definition. Eamon de Valera, leader of Fianna Fail, the leading political party following Irish independence, was a key figure in the institutionalisation of the (fictional) Irish Catholic family model, which happened, as we have seen, in tandem with the increasing dominance of Catholicism in social and ideological affairs since the late 19th century.

This relationship between Church and State was not entirely unproblematic, particularly in the pre-independence period, when the tension between the Marxist-progressive view of Catholicism, which favoured universal Christian interest over national concerns, and the militant mobilisation of the locally concerned nationalists were manifested nationally in a public dialogue in various Catholic publications like *The Irish Messenger of the Sacred Heart* and *The Catholic Voice*.[126] The final confessions of the condemned 1916 rebels on their deathbeds marked an ideological reconciliation between nationalism and religion that would bear huge significance on the future of the Irish Nation and the structural configuration of the future Irish state.

Furthermore, the sacrificial discourse that the nationalist movement borrowed from Catholicism in the aftermath of the Rising saw the ideology of the nationalist movement and the Church converge as it illustrated for the clergy the

[126] See Mary Kenny, *Goodbye to Catholic Ireland* (Dublin: New Island, 2000), 14-75.

powerful force with which the mass population could be moved, and for the nationalists the influential force that the clergy's support could wield. The ideological alliance thus proved to be more a case of nationalism adopting the Catholic worldview than the Catholic Church foisting its spiritual ideals and moral ideologies upon the nationalists.

It was in the 1937 Constitution, constructed by de Valera under the guidance of Father (later Archbishop) John Charles McQuaid, that these shared ideologies found their most powerful institutional expression. De Valera placed the Irish Catholic family at the very centre of his historical illusion and his vision of the future, conflating the social and personal functions of the home to political ends. He believed that a firm moral foundation was the key to upholding the integrity of the state; the family, he maintained, played a pivotal role in developing the moral personality of the individual and, therefore, in ensuring the preservation of the Irish nation. De Valera's politics were thus defined by the morality of the Irish Catholic family, while the Irish Catholic family, as we have seen, became defined by the political and ideological discourses of the Irish state.

The Ireland that de Valera imagined in the post-independence years was bound up with the cultural and political nationalist movements. De Valera believed that the public articulation of these ideals, through the Constitution, for example, was the means to securing their actualisation on a public level, even if the reality of Irish experience within the struggling Irish state complicated and contradicted his vision. The Irish Catholic family that de Valera imagined as part of this vision, then, was thus a construct informed by mythory, a construct that would help to sustain a unified ideal upon the divergent, modernising nation and to establish civic and historical harmony against the turbulent history of famine, land wars, and civil war that had defined the previous century of Irish life.

If we agree with Renan's definition of a nation as a group of people united by the common misconception about their origins,[127] it was under de Valera's leadership that these misconceptions were legitimated in the foundational Constitution of the Irish State. In this binding legal framework for the state, Ireland's national ideals became her official ideology, pushing Anderson's thesis on nations to its conceptual limits as it invoked the 'Éire' of the Constitution as an

[127] From Ernest Renan, 'Qu'est-ce qu'une nation? et autres écrits politiques', See Anderson, 1991

imaginary community[128] united by the shared misconceptions of mythory, rather than by the reality of Irish experience.

While the romantic ideal of an authentic, morally pure, Irish race had served Irish nationalists well throughout the development of its political and cultural movement, it was during the first years of Irish independence that these ideals became institutionalised and officiated in the workings of the nation. With parallel ideals of a moral-based family culture and patriarchal systems of authority and control, the newly aligned institutions of Church and State developed a close working relationship that consolidated their individual influence and complemented their individual ideological visions of an Irish future.

Desmond Clarke describes the symbiotic relationship between church and state in Ireland as an "informal consensus"[129] that allowed shared ideological convictions to infiltrate the institutional framework of the Irish state, and ethical beliefs to be codified into law. This informal consensus was reflected in the construction of an Irish Catholic family model as an ideological stronghold for both, recruiting the Irish Catholic family as an essential support system for the realisation of the ideological and institutional ideals of both Church and Nation.

The symbolic importance of the family to both ideological projects was recognised in the 1937 Constitution. The 1937 Constitution conceived of the Irish Catholic family as the key to the sanctity of the newly formed Irish Republic. As a legal document, the Constitution set down the procedures through which the Irish Free State would be governed and administered, establishing the courts and social institutions of the state and the frameworks by which those institutions would be run. As an ideological document, however, the 1937 Constitution institutionalised the state as the "guardian of the common good" [130], and thus saw its duty to provide moral guidelines to help shape civil society in the newly independent state. The Constitution thus described the reciprocal rights and duties of Irish citizens in line with the specific ideals of cultural and political nationalism that enabled its socio-economic articulation of these identities.

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[128] Anderson, 1991.
[129] Clarke, 1985.
[130] All ensuing quotes are taken from Article 41, *Bunreacht na hÉireann: Constitution of Ireland* (1937).

The central place ascribed to the Irish Catholic family in the 1937 Constitution, was accorded in line with a traditional configuration of the family based on marriage. It declared "the Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society and as a moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights antecedent and superior to all positive law." The family was "indispensable to the welfare of the nation and the state", and the State thus guaranteed to "protect the Family. . .as the necessary basis of social order" in a reciprocal gesture, which actually subsumed the family for its own ideological needs instead of actually providing the necessary structures that might enable it to develop within the modernising infrastructure of the state.

The 1937 Constitution thus ascribed a pivotal role to the Irish Catholic family in the development of the moral personality of the individual. The Irish mother was granted a particular responsibility, with a framework for her especial protection as the guardian of the moral fabric of the State provided by a separate clause of Article 41. This was a particular Catholic inflection that complemented the ideological dependence of the Church on women for consolidation of their power within the home; the real Irish mother fell foul of the same paradox, however, so that the limited symbolic power accorded to her in the Constitution actually reinforced the fundamental patriarchal nature of constitutional construction and constitutional concerns.[131]

The ideological incorporation of the Irish Catholic family into the political principles of the state thus reinforced the tension between the family as a social group and the family as a group of *individuals* that has been identified as a key factor in the wider European context of family change. Furthermore, while the constitutionally-inscribed Irish Catholic family model *discursively* provided for the future of the nation, a revisionist eye can identify that it was actually complicit in upholding the traditionalism of mythory, stifling both the individual within the family, and the family as a unit within the wider social world. The "self-enclosed space of consciousness" of the individual and "the circumscribed common space"[132] of the household were thus reinforced in the dependent but oppositional

[131] Ronit Lentin, ''Irishness', the 1937 Constitution, and Citizenship: a gender and ethnicity view' in *Irish Journal of Sociology* Vol. 8 (1998).
[132] Julie Adam, *Versions of Heroism in Modern American Drama* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 128

relationship that we will identify in the Irish Catholic families of twentieth-century drama that are the subject of the main body of this thesis.

By enshrining these historical and ideological ideals within the institutional framework of the nation (and the family was one such important component), de Valera had hoped to secure Ireland's status as a modern nation. What emerged instead was a "virtual monopoly" of the "historical mythology market"[133] guided by a Catholic belief system, and an idealised image of a puritan, bucolic Ireland that essentially functioned as an "ethnographic and historical denial of an entire population"[134]; Ireland's official image was simply not commensurate with actual living conditions at the time. Paradoxically, however, de Valera was also committed to the industrialisation and infrastructural development of the nation, but this ambition was untenable within the limits of the mytho-historic discourse of self-reliance under which the Irish nation gained articulation, as evidenced in the widespread economic and social poverty of the nation which depleted the quality of Irish lives until the mid 1960s.

As it was under de Valera's leadership that the idealised image of a moral-based family culture was absorbed into the fabric of the Irish state, so it was under his tutelage that the glaring exclusions of these mytho-historic ideologies came to light, as these ideals and the economic reality of the struggling Irish state were brought into constant conflict with each other. By the 1960s the pastoral, papist, puritanism of de Valera's Ireland was fading from the consciousness of the wider nation, despite its persistence in the official discourses, ideologies and history of the nation. By the late 1950s, however, with de Valera's graduation from the active political authority of Taoiseach to the symbolic position of Uachtarán na h-Éireann, some of the necessary economic and structural changes began to be initiated in an attempt to rescue Ireland from the deprivation that de Valera's economic isolationism had bequeathed upon the country; Diarmuid Ferritier refers to it as a belated and gradual "acknowledgment that ideals were not enough if there was not a concerted push for the creation of the social and economic

[133] Lee, 1990, 183.
[134] Gearoid. O'Crualaoich, 'De Valera's Other Ireland' in. *de Valera's* Irelands, ed. Gabriel Doherty and Dermot Keogh (Cork: Mercier Press, 2003), 155.

conditions in which they could be realised."[135] Mass emigration had been depleting Ireland of one of her most useful resources - her youth - while delayed marriage, and its subsequent spin-off effect of low birth-rates, was further exhausting a population that had been dwindling to historic lows since the 1930s. With the appointment of Sean Lemass as successor to de Valera in 1959, the economy began to gradually turn around to the benefit of both the economic and the social infrastructure. The pragmatic economic policies and infrastructural developments that Lemass instituted in his seven year term as Taoiseach was to significantly improve the standard of living and development in Ireland.

Lemass' adoption of T.K. Whitaker's First Programme for Economic Expansion saw a move away from de Valera's protectionist policies, and tax breaks and grants were provided to encourage foreign firms to set up industry in Ireland. A Second Programme for Economic Expansion was put in place in 1963, and by the time Lemass left office in 1967, unemployment had fallen by a third, widespread industrialisation and urbanisation had reconfigured the nature of social relationships, emigration numbers had reduced considerably, and, for the first time since the famine, the Irish population had shown signs of growth.

The impact of an international commercial culture and new wealth on a society that prided itself on its non-materialistic values was enough for the accepted ideological foundation of the country to collapse. The emergence of a modern welfare state through Lemass' economic, structural and social reforms "broke with the Church's preference for familial and voluntary solutions"[136] to social problems, and provided an alternative social system on which a different value system than the ethical, moral based value-system of Catholicism and nationalism could be formulated. Rationalism began to supersede romantic glorification, but it was some time before the historical and ideological narratives were able to contain the social, cultural and economic changes that demanded their reinvention in line with contemporary experience.

If the mytho-historic construction of the nation had up until then functioned as a macro-narrative that suppressed the plurality and flux of present experience in favour of a homogenising vision of unity that represented an entire value system, it had also crucially depended on the collective support of its

[135] Diarmuid Ferritier, *The Transformation of Ireland: 1900-2000* (London: Profile, 2004), 12.
[136] Delanty and O'Mahoney, 2001, 164.

individual citizens and the institutions that contained supporting micro-narratives, institutions like the Irish Catholic family. For ideologies "have to be shown to be functional over time for the maintenance of a state of affairs that consistently benefits *clearly defined interests* . . . they have to be institutionally embedded in stable configurations of meanings and of interests."[137] The changing nature of Irish interests during the late 1950s and 1960s thus necessitated a reformulation of the narratives, ideologies and institutions by which their interests gain expression.

As the economic and social developments of the 1960s saw a gradual move away from insularity and conservatism in Irish life, the institutional manifestation of these changes - in the establishment Radio Telefís Éireann or the gradual reform of the State education system, for example - saw the material manifestation of mytho-historic ideologies begin to shift, so that the 'real' that Althusser deems necessary for the 'imaginary' of ideology to take hold on a wider social level began to be absorbed into new institutions that contradicted, rather than colluded, with anti-modern narratives that had traditionally structured Irish lives.

However, as the imaginary of ideology requires performance in the material world, so the restructuring of ideology's material reality required new imaginaries to preserve the continuity of national narratives and the fulfilment of modernisation on a wider social, rather than merely institutional, level. Thus the persistence of mytho-historic narratives in light of the transformation of material conditions created a problematic that further impeded the development of both the imaginary narratives and the material conditions of Irish culture. Raymond Williams relates the enabling of this disjuncture between the imaginary and the ideology back to Althusser in his discussion of residual ideology, an ideology that may be "effectively formed in the past, but (it) is still active in the cultural process"; it may "not be expressed or substantially verified in terms of the dominant culture" but is "nonetheless lived and practiced on the basis of the residue - cultural as well as social – of some previous social and cultural institution or formation."[138]

However, this split between the authored ideology and its subjects placed undue pressure on the institutions that traditionally contained the micro-narratives

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[137] Delanty and O'Mahoney, 2001, 17.
[138] Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977b), 122.

that supported the prevailing ideologies of the Irish state. The ideological conflict was reflected in the Irish Catholic family model as a conflict between the private experience of family life on an individual level and the nature of family life articulated on a public level, and it is to the representation of this conflict on the twentieth-century stage that we can finally turn to for a reflection of these effects as they shaped the development of individual consciousness and individual experience within the Irish Catholic homes of twentieth-century drama.

Uncanny Homes, Uncanny Minds

It is against the exclusionary trends of the discourses of mythory as it perpetuated itself in the institution of the Irish Catholic family that the fictional Irish Catholic families of the twentieth-century stage experience a culturally specific domestic dysfunction. This domestic dysfunction threatens to destroy individual relationships within the home, the structures of individual identity development within the home, as well as the structures that define the mytho-historic construction of the home itself as an ideological container for wider social needs. The mytho-historic model of the Irish Catholic home that we have already established disintegrates on the twentieth-century stage, exposing both the problematic experience of this domestic model on an experiential level for the individual within the family unit, and for the family unit itself, as well as the problematic nature of such ideology as a narrative by which actual experience is measured and guided.

In this fraught context of ideological definition and experiential reality, it is productive to turn to Freud's essay on 'The Uncanny' [139], in which his decoding of the words *heimlich* (homely) and *unheimlich* (unhomely) to the effect of the uncanny provides a significant literary model for discussing the representation of the Irish Catholic family in twentieth-century drama as it provides a creative resistance to the political and ideological imposition of Irish Catholic discourse in

[139] Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol 17.* (London: Hogarth Press [for] the Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1966)

twentieth-century Ireland. While Freud's theory of the uncanny was generated from his observation of a wider European Victorian family model, the tension that defines it is evoked for our purposes in the conflict between ideology and actuality that defines individual experience and the experience of the Irish Catholic family unit in the dramatic homes of the twentieth-century stage. This is a conflict generated by codified cultural ideals rather than by any direct engagement with Catholic practice or tenets of belief. For the families in the plays that we will look at in the chapters that follow gain their specific Catholic frame of reference in an implicit structural way rather than in any ritualistic fashion; their lack of ritualised Catholic expression, in fact, suggests the playwrights' rejection of the mytho-historic Irish Catholic model as a reality of Irish life and their deconstruction of its codified ideological function in its constitutional/institutional form. The fundamental location of these oppositional binaries in the plays within the domestic environment itself also urges this identification of the dramatic model with Freud's literary paradigm.

As articulated theoretically by Freud, *heimlich* and its negation *unheimlich* are rooted, in etymology and contemporary usage, in the domestic environment of the home. Freud's *heimlich* (homely) belongs to the house or family and connotes a place of intimacy, comfort and pleasure; it is the "sense of . . . security, as in one within the four walls of his house . . . free from ghostly influence, familiar."[140] Freud's *unheimlich*, however, explodes the familiar connotations of home and domesticity; home *(heim)* becomes unhomely *(unheimlich)*. The natural environment of the home becomes uncomfortable, uneasy, uncanny. The security of origin is inverted so that home becomes the site where one does not know where one is when one should.

By deliberately approaching his definition of the uncanny by way of its opposite, Freud exposes the affiliations between the two. In this definitional deconstruction, he illustrates that among its different shades of meaning *heimlich* exhibits one that is identical to its negation *unheimlich*. This exemplifies the possible elision between the two opposing concepts, how one meaning slides into another, how the homely unfolds into the uncanny. The uncanny, thus, is "that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long

[140] Freud, 1966, 221.

familiar"[141], while *heimlich* and *unheimlich,* then, are two irreconcilable but dual representations of the same reality experienced differently.

Freud's uncanny offers a second context of meaning, which issues from the idea of *heimlich* as belonging to the home in its private function. Freud's identification of the association of *heimlich/unheimlich* through their oppositional properties allows the idea of *heimlich* in its private capacity to be developed for the purposes of the *unheimlich* as "something withdrawn from the eyes of strangers, something concealed, secret."[142] The uncanny in this context is the "name for everything that ought to have remained . . . secret and hidden but has come to light."[143] It is both a product of secrecy and revelation, and secrecy and revelation itself; thus the hidden thing, and the act of hiding, are both revealed through the definitional tension of the uncanny. For our purposes, it also operates as a structural mechanism, with the revelation of the unnamed/unknown providing both the dramatic tension and the dramatic denouement of the purposes of the play. This *unheimlich* is an unknown element for characters and audience, an element unexpressed within the context of the play and an element on which the context of the play is fundamentally dependent.

The two separate meanings for the uncanny work in tandem with each other, highlighting the function of home as both a physical and a psychic space and illuminating the interior psychological landscape of the inhabitants of the unhomely homes. The *heimlich/unheimlich* conflict that defines the characters' and the audiences' experience of the domestic environment as both familiar and frightening allows a site of metaphorical exchange to emerge, within which that which is unknown (the *unhemlich* that should have remained secret but has come to light) can emerge. The *unheimlich* of the familiar turned frightening thus allows, or necessitates, the *unheimlich* of the unnamed secret to materialise on stage; having emerged into the dramatic discourse, the dramatic device of the secret can be transformed for the purposes of the dramatic climax or deliberately left unresolved for the denial of dramatic closure.

The dual operation of the uncanny as both dramatic purpose and dramatic device illuminates the dual function of home as a physical and metaphorical site,

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[141] Freud, 1966, 220.
[142] Freud, 1966, 225.
[143] Freud, 1966, 224.

and the dramatic translation of the uncanny from a particular experience of home to a particular experience of the self. Raymond Williams reflects the collusion of dramatic realism in allowing the heightened determining capacity of the stage on character when he suggests the necessary dependence of naturalist representational strategies on dramatic realism to enable its theatrical effect of a stage environment as both familiar and strange, [144] and complementing the realist dependency of Belsey's interrogative dramatic model.[145] In his diagnosis of the transfer between the material space of the dramatic home to the psychic space of characters within it, Williams invokes the determining influence of the *heimlich/unheimlich* binary of the uncanny as a psychological dramatic force

This opens up a lacuna of collective domestic and individual experience, where personal reality is not being met by the discourse of reality that surrounds it, complementing our reading of the uncanny as two irreconcilable but dual representations of the same reality experienced differently, and our identification of the conflict between ideology and reality as the key conflict driving representations of the site of the Irish Catholic home on the twentieth-century stage. Furthermore, however, it forces an othering of identity that Freud refers to as a "doubling, dividing or interchanging of the self." [146] This is a psychic manifestation of the uncanny also familiar within the site of the dramatic Irish Catholic homes too, where the familiarity of the self is made strange by the uncanny environmental pressures that shape it.

This tripartite operation of the uncanny (as the familiar turned frightening of the physical landscape, the unnamed secret of the dramatic landscape, and the problematic identity politics of the psychic landscape) permeates twentieth-century representations of the Irish Catholic family. It bears particularly significant relation to the dramatic homes of the O'Neill, Friel, Murphy, and McDonagh plays, whose eerie and unnatural atmospheres, disrupted domestic settings, and replacement of familiar, comforting ideologies of the Irish Catholic family with representations of an uneasy reality, locate the domestic experience

[144] Williams, 1977a.
[145] p.p.21.
[146] Freud, 1966, 229.

within the theoretical framework of Freud's uncanny which can be appreciated in culturally specific terms for our purposes here.

Within the plays of O'Neill, Friel, Murphy and McDonagh that will be discussed in the successive chapters the varying aspects of Freud's uncanny are manifested in various forms. However, just as Freud's *unheimlich* can only be discussed by way of its opposite *heimlich,* so the Irish Catholic families of the twentieth-century stage can only be approached by way of the mytho-historic construction of the Irish Catholic family that provides a continual logic of opposition to the theatrical experience of domestic dysfunction. The plays invoke a particular domestic discourse (the mytho-historic family model) against which the individual experience of home within the plays can be set, creating a tension that echoes the *heimlich/unheimlich* of Freud's uncanny and is brought to bear on various levels in the plays.

The uncanny is experienced in the plays in various guises: untimely deaths and emigration break down the standard nuclear structure of the families (although the physical presence of either or both parents does not guarantee its regular workings); the natural hierarchical and hereditary schemes established in the plays' ideological subtext are interrupted by the disappearance of generations from family histories; the biological imperatives of heredity are disrupted by ideas of eternal recurrence; and the Irish Catholic domestic ideal that the characters are continually struggling towards is destabilised by the appearance of strangers, compulsive iteration and, most frequently, violence.

As the plays set themselves up within the paradigm of the stable nuclear family home, they quickly renegotiate the operational terms of this paradigm by subverting the inter-familial and inter-generational relationships, and deliberately undermining the stability on which the homely home is founded. The plays also destabilise the fundamental parameters of individual identity by defining it exclusively within the parameters of domestic relationships and by defining these domestic relationships through concepts of duty, dependency, shame and guilt. Individual identity is thus not an independent entity, but is doubled, divided, partial; characters are not complete or fully functioning, but are composites, relying on their place within the family or their relationships to make them whole.

Furthermore, the physical structures of the Irish Catholic homes in the O'Neill, Friel, Murphy and McDonagh plays are situated on the fringes of society

- the edge of a town, a farm in the countryside. This pointed geographical isolation, establishes home as a liminal site, marking the families out for their deliberate remoteness from the wider social world, while the domestic dysfunction marks them out for their remoteness from accepted ideology. The *individuals* within the family, meanwhile, are also marked as outsiders by their psychic separation or alienation from the communality of the family unit proscribed in the mytho-historic model, complementing the deterministic domestic function of the uncanny as it is translated from the physical to the psychic landscape of the plays.

The concept of Freud's uncanny as it is diagnosed within the theatrical site of the Irish Catholic home, therefore, is at once manifested on a social and an individual level; as the plays expose the disjunction between the implied communal experiences of the mytho-historic family and the actual reality of domestic experience, they deconstruct this ideology as an inadequate expression of the general social reality, while exposing the conflict between the implied communal experience of the family and the experience of the individual within the family unit at the same time. The uncanny thus allows the validity of such homogenising cultural narratives to be questioned by contradicting both their ideological foundations, as well as the ideologies they espouse.

In *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth Century Fiction*, Rosemary George argues that home "acts as an ideological determinant of the subject"[147] in twentieth-century literature. The complications of such subject identification arise, she argues, because of the variable status of both home and self as "negotiated stances whose shapes are entirely ruled by the site from which it is defined"[148] in light of both the postcolonial position and late twentieth-century mobility in the globalised world. Gerry Smyth, in wider cultural terms, traces the home-identity binary through the ontological philosophy of Heidegger, where home, as a culturally delineated modern place "provides the actual physical terrain as well as the abstract conceptual basis upon which the empirical and ontological dimensions of human experience meet, compete and compromise."[149]

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[147] George, 1996, 2.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Gerry Smyth, *Space and the Irish Cultural Imagination* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 3

Una Chaudhuri's book *Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama* develops a relationship between the twentieth-century uncanny home and the development of personal identity as it is mapped in the psychic landscapes of modern drama. Chaudhuri conceptualises the relationship between place and personality in modern drama through the term geopathology and her thesis allows us to suggest a link between the uncanny dramatic Irish Catholic home, as we have diagnosed it above, and the problematic identity development of characters within the family unit of the plays. Geopathology provides us with a theoretical framework through which we can trace the problematic psychic development of the individual characters in the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays to the site of their origin, the uncanny Irish Catholic home.

Una Chaudhuri also embraces such a site-specific conceptualisation of identity in her thesis of the geopathic phenomenon in twentieth-century modern drama, which she defines as "the problem of place - and place *as problem*"[150] in the formulation of human experience as it is reflected in the dramatic tradition. What Chaudhuri is interested in is the concept of "platiality"[151] - the signifying power and political potential of *specific* places - but she narrows her specific focus to the site of the modern home, which she identifies as the locus of identity formation in twentieth-century realist drama. This focus on the site of the home, makes her geopathic thesis particularly appropriate for exploring the relationship between the individual identity formation and the uncanny dramatic Irish Catholic home (or the unified dramatic settings - the pubs, shops, workplaces - that serve as substitute site for the domestic space of home) within the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays. Furthermore, the binary struggle that she identifies between home and identity echoes the *heimlich/unheimlich* binary uncovered in the dramatic representations of the Irish Catholic domestic experience as has so far been suggested in this chapter, as well as the binary struggle between ideological narratives and real experience that forms the wider cultural interests of this thesis.

In modern drama, Chaudhuri argues, the relationship between home and the individual is expressed in binary terms. Home is represented as a site of difference or dissension, and as a site of compulsion; it is both "the condition for

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[150] Chaudhuri, 1997, 55.
[151] Ibid.

and the obstacle to psychological coherence."[152] While home is represented as an ideal of refuge and security for the individual, it is also established as a place of entrapment from which the individual, seeking to escape and assert his independence, is ultimately bound by feelings of guilt and responsibility. Chaudhuri describes this experiential binary as a "contradictory conditionality"[153] that invokes not merely the *relationship* between place and personality, but the problematic relationship between place (home) and personality (the individual) in modern identity formation. The individual psychic manifestation of this problematic relationship is referred to as the geopathic consciousness; a self-identification that structures the individual's relationship with the home (and, by extension, with the outside world) through a simultaneous experience of belonging (to the home) and exile (from the home).

Chaudhuri establishes two principles of the geopathic consciousness: 'victimage of location', whereby place (or placeless-ness) positions the self/individual as victim; and 'heroism of departure', the shedding of victim-hood through departure and the attainment of final independence. These principles, she argues, structure the plot, as well as the plays' account of subjectivity and identity. The former principle (victimage of location) defines the dysfunctional home as the protagonists' fundamental problem and leads him to the latter, a recognition of the need for (if not the actual enactment) of departure.

While the ritual of departure is projected as a potential solution to the individual psychic crises, it is not always enacted as a plot resolution in the realist drama. The geopathic model, however, establishes alternative modes of acting home, whereby the psychic crises generated by the individual's site-specific victimage can be sublimated by various strategies of survival that the individual characters take on. The various addictions (alcoholism, obsession, compulsion) that define these crises can be understood as "a reaction, or even resistance, to the vicissitudes of home" [154], while performance (acting, dissimulation, self-deception) provides the characters with the means "to *occupy* spaces without *inhabiting* them"[155], enabling, in both cases, an emotional distance from the destructive

[152] Chaudhuri, 1997, 8.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Chaudhuri, 1997, 57.
[155] Ibid.

realities of home and thus a psychic distance for the individual from the trauma of their own geopathic condition.

The strategies of survival that Chaudhuri exemplifies, however, are also implicated within the self-destructive binary that defines the individual's relationship with home, *perpetuating* rather than resolving the individual's geopathic experience, and alienating the individual further from both their environment and the essential self that they have been searching for in their quest for independence from the home. The geopathic condition thus becomes both a causal and a symptomatic condition of the dysfunctional dramatic home in which the organic link between geopathology as it is effected in material and psychological forms by the suspension of self and space in a paradoxical tension of dependency echoes the *heimlich/unheimlich* tension of Freud's uncanny and threatens the survival of both place and personality.

By linking the uncanny home with geopathology, the dramatic consequences of the domestic deconstruction at work in twentieth-century representations of the Irish Catholic family can be given their full weight. Extrapolating these consequences to a wider cultural level, however, need not imply that the uncanny is used as a static theatrical device that the playwrights employ for their purposes, nor that it provides a uniform theatrical experience for the audience. By discussing the individual plays in detail, we can actually trace the various different ways in which the uncanny home is articulated theatrically in the family unit on a social and spatial level, as we will in Chapter Two, and on the emotional and spiritual level of individual identity, as Chapter Three will delineate. Beginning, as both chapters will, with the frozen model of dysfunctionality in Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, informed as it is both by the Victorian model offered by Freud and by inherited Irish Catholic ideals before their moment of mytho-historic expression in constitutional form in Ireland, we can appreciate the varying uncanny experiences offered in the later plays of Brian Friel and Tom Murphy, and, in Chapter Five, the plays of Martin McDonagh. From the disruption of realist form by way of metatheatrical narratives and nostalgia in *Living Quarters, Aristocrats,* and *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*, to the violent struggle both for and against environmental determinism and the mytho-historic ideal in *A Whistle in*

the Dark, A Crucial Week in the Life of a Grocer's Assistant and *The House*, and the ritualised pastiche of dysfunctionality in Martin McDonagh's *Leenane Trilogy,* the *heimlich/unheimlich* tension of the uncanny, and its psychic manifestation as geopathology, may be used for the same implicit ideologically deconstructive processes, but it is essentially a concept that is constantly at work in various ways and on various levels in the individual plays.

Conclusion

The culturally specific location of the dramatic home in a particular ideologically inflected model opens up the conflict between the public and private functions of home that are masked by the broad definitional construct offered at the beginning of this chapter. By exploring the function of ideology in the culturally specific terms of mythory, we can trace the evolution of the Irish Catholic family from a primary economic and social unit in society to a codified ideological model which could contain the ideals of the cultural and political nationalist movements, and the ideologies of the Catholic Church and the Irish Free State. The contradictory functions of the Irish Catholic family as a social and ideological unit, on the one hand, and a private enclave for the individual, on the other, pulls the physical site of home in opposite directions that are reflected in the representation of the Irish Catholic home on the twentieth-century stage through the lens of Freud's uncanny.

By identifying this alternative and oppositional process of representation in the Irish Catholic families of the twentieth-century stage, we can examine how dramatic representations of the Irish Catholic home deconstruct both the mytho-historic version of the Irish Catholic family, as well as the processes of mythory, whereby actual experience is co-opted for wider ideological ends. Furthermore, the similar binary tension of the uncanny, and its psychic manifestation as geopathology, provides us with a critical structure through which the plays of Eugene O'Neill, Brian Friel, Tom Murphy and Martin McDonagh can be examined on their own historically specific terms, beginning with the O'Neill, Murphy and Friel plays in Chapters Two, Three and Four and moving towards a discussion of the McDonagh plays in Chapter Five. By examining the work of the first three playwrights separately from the most recent work of McDonagh, we can investigate the function of the uncanny itself as a *dramatic* narrative implicit

with its own essentialising ideological assumptions, which really begin to take root at the moment when the narrative itself begins to stop questioning the processes by which it gains its own authority to speak.

This danger will be the key to unlocking the significance of dramatic representations of the Irish Catholic family on the twentieth-century stage and the significance of the twentieth-century stage as a medium in which the processes and functions of ideological construction can be deconstructed. For as we will see as the argument of this thesis unfolds, while theatre can perform a critical/subversive/deconstructive function capable of destabilising accepted versions of social reality, it is also capable of creating its own equally conservative and rigid discursive terms. The warning that the sage, school-teacher Hugh gives in the closing moments of Brian Friel's historical drama *Translations* rings out as we begin to examine both the function of the mytho-historic Irish Catholic family model and its subsequent deconstruction in the following chapters: "It is not the literal past, the "facts" of history that shape us", Hugh says, "but images of the past embodied in language . . . we must never cease renewing those images, because once we do, we fossilise."[156]

Hugh speaks to the nation with the benefit of historical foresight, while Friel speaks to the nation with historical hindsight, involved, as he is, like Murphy, O'Neill and McDonagh, in the deconstruction of these images of the past through the concentrated site of the home. It is a warning, however, that Friel himself, and O'Neill, Murphy and McDonagh, would be wise to heed, For as we will uncover in this thesis, it is not merely the images of the past that need renewing, but the narratives with which we choose to represent our present and our future.

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[156] Brian Friel, *Translations*, in *Brian Friel: Plays One* (London: Faber, 1996), 445

Chapter Two

Failed and Failing Families in the Uncanny Irish Catholic Home.

"All happy families resemble one another but each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way."[157]

In the dramatic homes of Eugene O'Neill, Brian Friel and Tom Murphy, the particular Irish Catholic quality is defined against the assumed conventional experience of Irish Catholic identity in nineteenth and twentieth centuries Ireland, particularly as manifested in the institutions created as part of the national state apparatus following Ireland's successful bid for independence. By basing the foundations of the family unit on an unspoken cultural heritage (a moral Catholic mentality) rather than an outward performative expression (rituals of the rosary/mass/confession/communion), the playwrights direct us towards the function of Irish Catholicism as a social ideology as well as a spiritual religion, a conclusion which our analysis of mythory in the previous chapter has already directed us towards. By invoking the particular Catholic quality of their dramatic families through a shared set of values and ideals rather than behaviours, the deconstructive purposes produced by the dramatic domestic dysfunction bring domestic ideals and domestic realities into collision in a manner that challenges the underlying structure of the mytho-historic Irish Catholic family model established in Chapter One.

This ideological deconstruction invokes the paradoxical framework of Freud's *unheimlich*. The Irish Catholic dramatic home becomes uncanny because it is both familiar and strange; it is only by invoking our assumptions and then undermining them that the foundations of our assumptions can be destabilised. The *heimlich/unheimlich* tension implicit in this ideological deconstruction is worked through as a structural element too, and bears both thematic and dramaturgical consequence to the self-contained world of the stage and its performative act in the theatre. The "dramatic action (what the characters say and do)" and the "dramatic

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[157] Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 1.

logic (what the play's spectators see and think)"[158] are equally affected, as their mutual cultural assumptions are interrogated by the *heimlich/unheimlich* shifts that renders both the characters' experience in the dramatic world, and the audience's experience in the theatre, mutually uncanny.

Physically, the concept of home in the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays is established within the familiar template of domestic realism. O'Neill's family drama *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, for example, trades on an accepted structure of modern dramatic realism, set in the living room of a middle class house in middle America and reproducing detailed stage directions that stretch to the naming of, and condition of, the books on the bookshelves in a staging gesture that William would call 'technical naturalism'.[159] Meanwhile, the detailed spatial recreations of the domestic environment in the Friel and Murphy plays assert their work within the well-established paradigms of the domestic dramatic tradition of the 1940s/1950s Irish stage. However, the dramaturgical technique employed by O'Neill, Friel and Murphy breaks the constraints of traditional dramatic realism. The apparent conformity to classic realism that the set construction suggests is subverted in the metaphysical use of space throughout the plays, while the dramaturgical devices that bring the plays towards catharsis - the use of heightened naturalist tropes of psychological/environmental determinism, the use of memory or nostalgia as a disruptive narrative, or the use of expressionistic or metatheatrical effects – further disrupt the realist boundaries established in the plays' physical conception on the stage; the familiar kitchen-sink drama turns frightening.

As a structural mechanism the rupture of realistic conventions introduces a binary of familiarity and strangeness that holds home and 'not home' together in oppositional tension outside of the uncanny experiences of the plays' characters. The ostensible realism of the plays allows the audience to assume a shared community of experience or singularity of vision within the theatrical context - that is, through the fourth wall convention which encourages audience identification with the world being presented on stage. The familiar reference of the realist home, meanwhile, encourages

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[158] Chaudhuri, 1997, 97.
[159] pp. 22-23

the audience to experience the theatrical world through a uniform lens. As the familiar realistic stage settings are subverted by the stage reality, however, darker, more oppressive, more complex versions of domestic life are revealed, exposing a conflict between various versions of home in the plays that reinforces the contradictory logic that defines the uncanny on an ideological level.

As the metaphorical significance of this domestic conflict is thus extended on an ideological level, so it can be extrapolated to encompass the discursive dialogue of ideological tension brought into focus in the previous chapter as mythory. The 'double worlds' that O'Toole identifies in the second phase of Irish drama as the "constant clash between the traditional and the modern" can be reformulated to identify a clash between the world of ideological idealism (mythory) and the world of reality (the actuality of experience in the play) where the idea of "a single Ireland, self-sufficient and bound both in its culture and its economy"[160] and the idea of a single, unified historical narrative indeed disappears. This oppositional logic finds its microcosmic expression in the dramatic Irish Catholic home and reveals the characters' experiences of the dramatic world on two levels - how it should be and how it really is – further heightening the uncanny experience of the dramatic world for both the characters and the audience.

This chapter will discuss how the binary *heimlich/unheimlich* opposition that defines the dramatic homes of the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays defamiliarises the accepted mytho-historic model of the Irish Catholic family. This ideological model of Irish Catholic domesticity serves as a governing ideal against which the theatrical reality of the fictional families is constantly measured. By juxtaposing an alternative theatrical domestic model - as it is enacted on stage - against the mytho-historic model – as it is held forth as a national value system - the plays ensure that the essentialising assumptions of ideological discourse are interrogated and destabilised for both characters and audience alike.

This chapter will proceed with an analysis of the uncanny Tyrone home in Eugene O'Neill's play *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, which has been exemplified

[160] O'Toole, 1991a, 289.

by Una Chaudhuri as a standard model of domestic dysfunction in the twentieth-century tradition of dramatic realism.[161] Apropos to this project, the Tyrones are an Irish Catholic family resituated in America, and their cultural heritage allows us to connect their accepted dramatic status in the uncanny domestic dramatic tradition to the specific, historicised model at stake in this thesis. The earlier time frame of *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (it is set in 1912), and the diasporic origins of its genesis, will not undermine the wider framework of constitutional comparison that implies the ideological progression of the Irish Catholic family from cultural model to codified institution as established in Chapter One. Rather, the apparent anachronism of *Long Day's Journey Into Night* will redirect our attention to the processes through which cultural ideals 'crystallise' and find 'socio-economic articulation' despite the alternative realities that the play directs us towards, and which the Friel and Murphy plays will bring us into more forceful engagement with.

Although the argument will proceed from the particular paradigm of uncanny domesticity that O'Neill's play exemplifies, the different ways in which the playwrights approach and utilise the uncanny in their plays will problematise a static theorisation of dysfunction - either within its specific Irish Catholic manifestation or, indeed, in a wider sense - that might suggest that the uncanny is a fixed dramatic model. To paraphrase Tolstoy, the uncanny Irish Catholic families of O'Neill, Friel and Murphy are each unhappy in their own particular way, and their homes are uncanny in their own particular way as well.

"To the outer world we maintained an indomitably united front and lied and lied for each other. A typical Irish family"[162]

In *Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama*, Una Chaudhuri uses *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, "O'Neill's classic of unhomeliness"[163], as a model through

[161] See Chaudhuri, 1997, 56-60.
[162] Eugene O'Neill, 'Letter to Eugene O'Neill Junior' (7th May 1945) in *Selected Letters of Eugene O'Neill,* ed. Travis Bogard and Jackson Bryer (New Haven, Connecticut; London: Yale University Press, 1988), 569.

which to discuss the problematic relationship between domestic spaces and identity formation in twentieth-century modern drama. Working from a translation of the *unheimlich* as unhomely - that which does not pertain to the characteristics of the home - rather than with the full implications of strangeness associated with Freud's *unheimlich* model, Chaudhuri's argument that the Tyrone home "exemplifies an enduring and deep-seated conflict in modern drama between a kind of 'poetry of progress' . . . and the magnetic power of place"[164] attributes a universality to the psychological study of the Tyrone family that has ensured its endurance over time.

Thierry Dubost sees the Tyrone home in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* in the context of the nuclearisation of the Victorian family. Dubost argues, however, that while the Tyrone family "is above all a nuclear structure"[165], it is a nuclear structure made "sadly deficient"[166] by the cultural context of exclusivity that defines the kinship structures in O'Neill's plays and leaves no room for the development of the individual within the domestic configuration. Dubost argues that the domestic deficiency which he identifies emanates from a structural surplus; that is the dramatic structure is ruptured by the presence of a second domestic discourse, which haunts both text and character throughout the canon of O'Neill's plays, most particularly the Tyrone home in *Long Day's Journey Into Night.* For against the domestic dysfunction of the Tyrone home "an imaginary family structure is being upheld which is both a source of comfort...and a cause of frustration"[167] for the individual characters and the collective familial function, creating a double level of experience that complements Freud's diagnosis of the uncanny as two irreconcilable but dual representations of the same reality experienced differently.

Dubost's identification of a double dramatic domestic discourse complements Chaudhuri's analysis of the theatrical home as a "self-displacing place"[168], allowing two different versions of home to be understood in relation to

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[163] Chaudhuri, 1997, 250.
[164] Chaudhuri, 1997, 56.
[165] Thierry Dubost, *Struggle, Defeat or Rebirth: Eugene O'Neill's Vision of Humanity* (Jefferson, N.C.; London: McFarland, 1997), 9.
[166] Chaudhuri, 1997, 59.
[167] Dubost, 1997, 12.
[168] Chaudhuri, 1997, 59.

O'Neill's dramatic representation. This double-existence of home as an imaginary ideal site into which the characters project their desires for a unitary self on the one hand, and as a real, dysfunctional place in which their material and spiritual needs consistently fail to be satisfied on the other, reminds us of the disparity between rhetoric and reality that we have identified as the primary deconstructive impetus in the representation of the Irish Catholic family on the twentieth-century stage.

Although the characters do not *perform* rituals that might connect them transparently to an Irish Catholic context, by situating O'Neill's dramatic study within the context of the Tyrone family's Irish Catholic cultural heritage – made clear within the play - the dysfunctionality of the domestic environment can be understood as an underlying conflict between ideal expectation and real experience which has already been theoretically anchored to the *heimlich/unheimlich* tension that defines the uncanny. By foregrounding the cultural context of the Tyrone family in line with the mytho-historic model of Irish Catholic domesticity, the domestic experience in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* can be examined as a double conflict; a conflict experienced first on a collective level, whereby the family unit struggles to meet the cultural ideal of the Irish Catholic family, and secondly, on an individual level, whereby the power struggles within the family unit itself as it battles with its collective insecurity denies the *individual* development within the family unit, a sacrifice of the individual to the whole that echoes the essentialising impulses of mythory.

This conflict is also experienced by the audience as uncanny, as the physical conception of the Tyrone home on the stage - painfully detailed by O'Neill in the stage directions [169] - establishes the play within familiar bounds of middle-class domesticity that are then disrupted by the dramaturgical strangeness of the play's theatrical denouement. The play's ostensible realist frame is disrupted by high naturalist technique where the physical environment recreated on stage becomes a determining factor in the drama. The physical and psychological metaphor of fog also

[169] In the opening stage directions of *Long Day's Journey Into Night,* the living room of the Tyrones summer home is described in intricate detail, from the positioning of furniture to the identification of specific books in the bookcase which must "*have the look of being read and reread.*"(Eugene O'Neill, *Long Day's Journey Into Night.* (London: Nick Hern Books, 1999), 1.

"sends tremors up and down the otherwise solidly mimetic edifice of realism"[170], interrupting the fourth wall logic of total visibility that Chaudhuri defines as a key condition of traditional realist drama. Futhermore, while fog serves to heighten the theatrical environment as it is experienced as an *atmosphere*, it also defamiliarises the physical environment of the home and the characters' experience of home within their domestic environment. Meanwhile, as the metaphor of fog heightens the characters' individual sense of isolation within the home, it also heightens our awareness of the collective isolation of the family from the wider social world of the New London community; the foghorn that announces its arrival serves as a continual reminder of that world, even if it only succeeds in reminding us of the family's alienation.

The fog-metaphor also invokes the miasma of drug and alcohol addiction in the play and the possibility of escape from reality that its veiled experience induces. The fog promises a similar possibility of self-erasure for the characters and an end to the "pathology that reveals life to be a matter of discrepancy between people and places"[171] by erasing traces of place, and with it the uncanny home in its physical form and psychological effect.

The domestic experience in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* is essentially problematised by the rootless-ness of the Tyrone family. Defined and dislocated already by their emigrant family history, the Tyrones are condemned by James Tyrone's career choice to a lifetime of wandering through second-rate hotels and summer homes, which serve for the family as temporary, but inadequate, substitutes for home. However, without a fixed and stable physical site in which to ground their communal experience as a family unit, the family members are condemned to an individual and collective experience of the home as uncanny. Thus, while the family's past is a history of departures, and their future a peripatetic promise, their present is a state of suspended arrival characterised by the absence of a fixed (physical) site in which the individual or the collective family unit can ground their (psychic) experiences.

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[170] Chaudhuri, 1997, 58.
[171] Chaudhuri, 1997, 60.

While Chaudhuri argues that the nomadic condition involves an opening out of physical space and possibility beyond the space of the home, it simultaneously involves a shrinking of spiritual space for the characters, whose relationship with the world is defined through their relationship with their home. Without a physical place of belonging (an actual site of home into which their ideals and relationships can be projected), the individual members of the Tyrone family are reduced to a self-destructive and stultifying dependency on the other family members, whose own similar circumstances prevent them from offering the spiritual sustenance that the other characters might need. Their itinerancy alienates them from identification with a wider social community, reinforcing their failure to integrate after the first historical event of their departure – emigration - but it also forces the family to look inward for the resolution to the family's cycle of failure, while simultaneously underlining the flawed structures that refuse them the means to their liberation from the pathology of their placelessness and the pathology of place itself.

The shared family and cultural history of emigration and exile, combined with the touring demands of Tyrone's acting career, make the family's present a collective nomadic reality of dislocation that defines the parameters of placelessness within the play as pathological by establishing it as the pervasive quality that defines the family's interaction with each other and the wider world. Although the family's inability to adjust to their constantly changing environment (their effective homelessness) appears to impel their collective crisis further, it is actually the very nature of home itself - in its flawed conceptual idealisation, as well as in the dysfunctionality of its actuality - that provokes the individual crises in the play and perpetuates the cycle of domestic dysfunction.

The family's emigrant history and nomadic reality situates the Tyrone family on the cusp of the point of tension between the *heimlich* and *unheimlich* that characterises Freud's uncanny, and on the point of tension between two different and conflicting versions of home. Home is conceived in the play firstly as place of origin and belonging, an inherited cultural logic represented by the idea of Ireland as the homeland and the idea of the Irish Catholic home as the natural site of existence and self-fulfilment. Secondly, and in direct contradiction, the concept of home is asserted

as an individual or self-created process, a site conceived and created by the individual family unit to fulfil the family's immediate needs. The oppositional conflict between these ideals echoes the *heimlich/unheimlich* tension of Freud's uncanny, and while the main dramatic effect of this opposition is to render the characters' experiences uncanny, it also destabilises the workings of the Tyrone home within the Irish Catholic family ideal, as well as the very basis of the narratives on which this culturally specific conceptualisation is based.

The concept of home in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* is intrinsically informed by the Irish Catholic heritage of the Tyrone family and by the characters varying relationships with this heritage.[172] The characters are defined as *"distinctly Irish in type"*[173] in their physical and temperamental characteristics, while their particular conception of home in the plays is informed by inherited cultural ideals that can be traced back ideologically, if not confirmed performatively, to the Irish Catholic family model established in Chapter One. In a letter written to his son after completing *Long Day's Journey Into Night* O'Neill reflects upon his own experiences of family life as they helped to shape his largely autobiographical play: "the same loyalty occurs, of course, in all kinds of families, but there is, I think, among Irish still close to, or born in Ireland, a strange mixture of fight and hate and forgive, a clannish pride before the world that is peculiarly its own."[174]

It is against the double bind of cultural expectation and claustrophobic reality that the characters in the play measure their reality. While Chaudhuri suggests that the Tyrone home is a "sadly deficient home" that "exists in relation to a number

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[172] O'Neill criticism rarely draws attention to O'Neill's Irish-American influences outside of biographical discussion or the discussion of racial stereotyping in his plays. O'Neill, however, was not only influenced by Irish Theatre, most notably by the work of the Abbey Players which he saw in 1915 when the Players visited New York. His work was also undoubtedly shaped by his own cultural inheritance as the son of Irish emigrants. O'Neill's ambiguous relationship with the cultural and ideological heritage bequeathed upon him by his Irish roots is embodied most fully in *A Touch of the Poet*, but it can also be detected in all of the plays in which Irish characters feature, like in the relationship between the Tyrone sons and father in *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, or the relationship between Josie and Jamie in *A Moon for the Misbegotten.*

[173] *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, 2. While this particular description is applied specifically to Mary Tyrone, Tyrone's "*inclinations are still close to his humble beginnings and his Irish farmer forebears*" (2), Jamie "*possesses the remnant of a humorous, romantic, irresponsible Irish charm*" (6), while Edmund's "*big, dark eyes are the dominant feature in his long, narrow Irish face.*"(7)

[174] Eugene O'Neill, 'Letter to Eugene O'Neill Junior' (7th May 1945) in Bogard and Bryer ed., 1988, 569.

of other places"[175], it is an *imaginary* place - an idealised version of home informed by the exilic dialogue of Irish Catholic nostalgia discussed in Chapter One - that proves to be the most haunting and destructive presence in the play.

It is through the maternal figure of Mary that this idealised conception of home gets its fullest expression in the play, and it is also in the figure of Mary that its possibility is most fully destroyed. Mary's idea of home is deeply informed by her personal background, as a respectable second-generation immigrant of a "lace-curtain Irish"[176] quality. By invoking her own Irish Catholic middle-class background and her experiences at the Catholic boarding school that served as a substitute home for her during her teenage years, Mary manages to insulate herself from the unhappiness of her present experience. Yet despite her insistence on the observance of certain rituals that maintain the façade of domestic functioning (the ritual of shared meal-times, for example), Mary continually reinforces the family's failures by measuring them against the idyll of her Catholic childhood experience and the functional appearance of the neighbouring bourgeois homes.

Mary's loneliness is experienced most painfully as she sets the images of communality and kinship that issue from her childhood against the spiritual emptiness of her present experience. That the Tyrone family as a unit has not integrated into the social rituals of the surrounding community adds an extra layer of disaffection to the comparative logic within which Mary establishes her conceptual domestic ideals: "In a real home" Mary says, "you never get lonely."[177]

While Mary claims that she is "so sick and tired of pretending that this is a home"[178], she is actually avoiding any manner of pretence in her present experience in favour of escaping to the security of the past, where she can find a (substitute) domestic refuge that can avoid contamination with reality. Ironically, however, the morphine-elated hallucinatory digressions which allow her to escape to the past only

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[175] Chaudhuri, 1997, 59.
[176] See Kerby. A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).
[177] *Long Day's Journey Into Night,* 41.
[178] *Long Day's Journey Into Night,* 37.

heighten her insecurity, in a pattern which we will see repeated in various manifestations throughout the uncanny Irish Catholic homes of twentieth-century drama; her mechanism for coping with her domestic reality (her addiction) merely removes her further from the possibility of achieving her domestic ideal.

While it is against her childhood home that Mary measures the inadequacies of her present domestic experience, Tyrone later reveals that Mary's version of home is mythologised through memory.[179] Her version of home has been filed down through a process of selection influenced by the ideals and ideologies of her conservative Catholic upbringing and her own, desperate needs. While her application of this ideal, rooted as it is in past experience, is problematic enough, the mythic status of the past that she invokes doubles the impossibility of its realisation.

It is Mary's struggle with this impossibility, and the physical manifestation of her failure that Edmund's illness represents, that heightens her desperation and fuels her drug-enhanced fantasies. For Mary, *re-imagining* the present through the context of her ideals is not sufficient; the present must be *replaced* by these ideals, and her addiction provides the bridge to a fantasy world that she finds preferable to real life. Morphine allows Mary to escape into a past filtered by memory which provides her with the security that the present can not. The intrusion of the present into this fantasy can only contaminate her fiction-fuelled ideal, and it is this resistance to reality, as much as her desire to return to the world of her childhood, that really characterises her addiction.

Although her domestic ideals bear no connection to material reality, Mary conceptualises home in material terms, invoking measures of respectability and commodity that are deeply lacking in her present domestic experience as defining characteristics of the functional family. Although she equates the domestic dysfunction of their home with Tyrone's parsimony ("your father could afford to keep on buying property but he could never afford to buy me a home"[180]) her comparison of the material properties of home with the ideologically inflected emotional properties of home point the way towards her expression of (and her experience of)

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[179] *Long Day's Journey Into Night,* 83.
[180] *Long Day's Journey Into Night,* 41.

the inadequacies and failures of home as fundamentally psychological. The paradoxical equation and disjunction of the physical and psychological properties of home brings into stark relief the disparity between the symbolic conception of home and the actuality of its uncanny experience for the characters, prefiguring the disjunction between the mytho-historic ideals that will inform the dramatic construction of the Irish Catholic home in the work of Friel and Murphy and the dysfunctional lived experiences of the Irish Catholic family within it.

While it is primarily in the figure of Mary that the Irish Catholic domestic ideal is mediated, and through her drug-addiction that its impossibility is articulated, it is in the representation of patriarchal structures that the failures of the Irish Catholic domestic ideal are ultimately communicated. The failing patriarchal structures are embodied in the figure of James Tyrone, as both a symptom of his own spiritual homelessness and a condition of the continuing pathology of the family's dysfunction. Although patriarchy is represented as a failing structure in itself, the problematic nature of Tyrone's familial relationships individualises the problem on a dramatic level, exposing Tyrone as a victim, not merely a failure, of the patriarchal framework.

Tyrone's professional capacity "*shows in all his unconscious habits of speech, movement and gesture*"[181] and extends to his role within the household, involving the performance of optimism for his drug-addicted wife and the performance of denial for his sons, as well as for himself. His professional role thus infiltrates his personal life; husband and father become other aspects of a role he must play, even if he cannot inhabit them with as much authority as his stage roles. It is ironic, then, but quite true, that Mary should suggest that Tyrone doesn't "know how to act in a home."[182]

As Mary's displacement is expressed psychologically, so Tyrone's displacement is expressed materially. Having come from a background of domestic and patriarchal failure himself, Tyrone has inherited a history of exile and displacement that doubles a desire for domestic security which he conceptualises in material terms and actualises in his acquisition of property. However, in line with the

[181] *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, 2.
[182] *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, 37.

paradoxical logic that contributes to the experience of the uncanny in the play, Tyrone's quest for security for himself and his family merely ends up isolating him further.

While the concept of home in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* is predominantly haunted by Mary's middle-class Irish Catholic ideals, the dysfunctional reality of the family and their relationship to home is also expressed through a comparative logic of relation to other places by Tyrone, and by his sons too. However, the other places that home carries within its symbolic conception for the Tyrone men are *outside* places which are invoked as substitute homes in which they can find temporary relief from their existential insecurities. [183] Tyrone finds his comfort in the theatre, where he can act out a number of roles to a greater degree of success than his failing performances as patriarchal authority, while Jamie finds his measure of personal solace in the brothel, where he can find the mother-love that he is unable to find at home. Edmund, meanwhile, seeks solace in nature, where he can free himself from the limitations of human mortality.

These varying versions of the home exist for the male characters as potentially enabling sites of existence, where they can, temporarily at least, forget the reality of their actual domestic circumstances. The persona of the Count of Monte Cristo becomes a substitute self for Tyrone, his performance allowing him to maintain a semblance of authority despite his actual powerlessness to resolve the family's problems, Jamie can comfort himself in the arms of a kind-hearted prostitute, while Edmund's sea-journeys allow him to temporarily belong "without past or

[183] This function of an external community as a substitute home is unavailable to Mary. A reading inflected by feminist critical discourse could suggest that as a female character Mary is largely confined to the home and has no individual autonomy outside of the home on either a symbolic or a practical level. Such a reading might insist, as Chaudhuri does, that Mary is essentially trapped within the site of her failure and within her role as (failed) mother. This reading, however, would neglect to identify the experience of the male characters within the plays, namely the important revelation of failed patriarchal structures through the figure of James Tyrone, who in fact carries the weight of responsibility for the domestic dysfunction in actual and wider ideological terms. Furthermore the conflict between Jamie and Edmund's desire to depart and their paralysing dependency means that the Tyrone men are also - on a psychological level that supersedes the importance of the physical actuality in O'Neill's play - trapped within the site of home.

future...within something greater than my own life...beyond men's lousy, pitiful, greedy fears and hopes and dreams."[184]

Like Mary's ideal version of home, however, the substitute homes provided by such physical sites are an ambivalent comfort that is equally as transitory as Mary's memories, and, like her fantasies, they can only be sustained through self-delusion (in Edmund's case, the insistence that Mary has not turned to drugs again) and through addiction (in James' case to alcohol, and in Tyrone's case to material acquisition). The ambivalent nature of the ideals that they cling to thus complement the paradoxical nature of Mary's morphine-induced fantasies; while their illusions sustain them, they distance them further from each other, reality and the society they want to integrate into, and, most importantly, from the possibility of achieving their domestic ideal.

The closing moments of *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, are mediated in a static frozen tableau of impotence that suggests, as O'Neill does in his inscription to the play, *"deep pity and understanding for the four haunted Tyrones."*[185] However, no redemption is offered to the family within the domestic context that the play establishes in its self-enclosed vision of the dramatic domestic world; the different versions of home that the characters imagine remain impossible to reconcile or realise in a single contained image of an Irish Catholic family. In those final moments the men stand aside powerless as Mary drifts off further into her private and permanent unreality. Mary, lost in the past, "*stares before her in a sad dream. Tyrone stirs in his chair. Edmund and Jamie remain motionless.*"[186]

The tableau offers a dark family portrait whose ambivalence echoes the essential *heimlich/unheimlich* tension that has defined the experiences of the Tyrone family as we have discussed them here, providing a template of dysfunctionality for the dramatic representations of Irish Catholic families of the Friel and Murphy plays. However, Friel and Murphy use this dramatic domestic model to their own ends,

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[184] *Long Day's Journey Into Night,* 94.
[185] Inscription to O'Neill's wife Carlotta from the original script *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (1941), which he presented to his wife on their twelfth wedding anniversary.
[186] *Long Day's Journey Into Night,* 110.

infusing the static tableau of dysfunctionality with dramatic strategies of idiosyncratic difference that prevent the dramatic trope of the uncanny Irish Catholic home from freezing in historical time, particularly as the development of the Irish Catholic family from a cultural model to an ideological stronghold institutionalised through mythory allows a more forceful dramatic expression of the collision of discursive ideals and lived reality.

The following sections of this chapter, then, will explore how the Friel and Murphy plays follow O'Neill's conceptualisation of the Irish Catholic family on the stage, but it will also explore how they adapt this model to the deconstructive needs of their own historical moment in late 1950s and early 1960s Ireland and throughout the proceeding generations, when the disparity between mythory and reality became too much for the accepted ideologies of the Irish state to contain. Expressed in dramatic terms, the familiar environment of domestic realism that characterised much of the Irish drama being seen on the national stage in the post-independence years began to be defamiliarised by writers like Friel and Murphy, rendering the Irish Catholic domestic experience through a culturally specific version of Freud's uncanny which interrogated prevailing dramatic and ideological constructions of the Irish Catholic family.

"This family's gone to the dogs! Honestly, every time I come home I get depressed!"[187] *Violence and Romance in* A Whistle in the Dark *and* The House.

Tom Murphy's first full-length play *A Whistle in the Dark* is couched within the framework of dramatic realism. It is set in what appears to be a fairly normal middle class living room, but the "*play opens on a confusion of noise and movement*"[188] as Michael's well-dressed, well-mannered wife Betty, and his brothers Harry, Iggy and Hugo, are busy preparing themselves for the arrival of their father. During the scene that follows, crockery is smashed, bottles are broken and the domestic order of

[187] Tom Murphy, *The House* (London: Methuen Drama, 2000), 46.
[188] Tom Murphy, *A Whistle in the Dark*, in *After Tragedy: Three Irish Plays* (London: Meuthen, 1988), 3.

Michael and Betty's house is severely disrupted, as Michael's brothers, who have joined him in England to work, take centre stage.

While the cacophony of the opening scene is a disruption of both the symbolic domestic space and the actual theatrical space, it is firstly a psychic disruption for the audience, and nowhere has this proved more evident than in the play's first production at the Theatre Royal, Stratford East in London in 1961. The potential viscerality of the play's theatrical expression had in fact already led Ernest Blythe to reject it for production at the Abbey, but Kenneth Tynan's review on the play's opening night, which argued that *A Whistle in the Dark* was "arguably the most uninhibited display of brutality that the London theatre has ever witnessed"[189], certainly attested to the uncomfortable nature of the alternative domestic reality that the play exposed.

The audiences' ease with the dramatic world, then, is immediately disrupted in *A Whistle in the Dark* as the domestic discord at the heart of the play reveals itself through a series of brutal and abusive marital, fraternal and paternal relationships which are played out before us to their most destructive effect. The familiar structure of realism is shifted in the play by the invocation of the environmental determinism characteristic of high naturalism, which highlights a connection between the individual fate of the characters, the collective fate of the family and the physical environment of the home which they find themselves in (both in its manifestation in Mayo and in Coventry), leaving the narrative to move steadily, without resolution, towards its inevitable tragic ending. However, it is the tension between the ideal home this could or should be, as suggested in the opening image, and the destructive, disruptive home that it is which provides the backdrop against which the Carney's inter-familial and intra-psychic conflict is played out.

As in *Long Day's Journey Into Night,* the image of an ideal Irish Catholic family permeates the play on all levels; from Dada's ideals of the principles of behaviour on which a family should model itself, to Michael's romanticisation of Mayo as homeland and home; from the Carney brothers' collective, selective recollections of

[189] Fintan O'Toole, 'Preface', in Murphy, 1988, ix.

their childhood, to Michael and Betty's aspirations for their marriage. Although it is the juxtaposition of the ideal cultural construction of the Irish Catholic family against the self-destructive reality of the Carney's domestic experience that creates the dramatic conflict in the play, it is the aspirational commitment and unwavering faith that the characters instil in these ideals - backed by their institutionalisation in constitutional form as mythory - that creates the play's tragedy. The continual foregrounding of the mytho-historic ideal also makes the characteristic brutality and divisiveness of the interfamilial relationships more shocking, allowing the *heimlich* of the mytho-historic model to be constantly undermined by the *unheimlich* nature of the Carney home, creating an uncanny experience for both the characters and the audience alike as the idea of domestic harmony is subjected to relentless material and metaphysical abuse.

Despite the unity of the physical setting, *A Whistle in the Dark* actually centres around two versions of home. Firstly, home is conceived as a place of origin, represented specifically in the Carney family home in Mayo, and metaphorically in the conceptualisation of Ireland as the Homeland. In contradictory logic, however, home is secondly conceived as a self-created process, imagined in the play as Michael's marital home in Coventry where the action of the play is set, which has become a second tribal enclave for the Carney brothers.

Mytho-historic ideals inform the discourses that surround both these versions of home, despite their conflicting logic. The mutual commitment of both versions of home to traditional ideals reinforces their mutual allegiance to a common set of values. The encroachment of the family home upon Michael's marital home, however, suggests a supremacy of traditional ideals over real values which is reinforced by the eventual, inevitable eradication of one home by the other. The primacy of traditional ideology over actual experiences that this domination indicates, however, ultimately holds the force to destroy both configurations of home in the play and the potential for any kind of domestic resolution.

The mytho-historic ideals of the Irish Catholic family model evoked in *A Whistle in the Dark* centre on the inherited cultural ideals of family loyalty and family pride. The inherited Catholic code of 'honour thy father and mother before thyself'

defines the framework of familial relations in the play, while shame and guilt are used by family members as controlling mechanisms of each other's behaviours. Catholic-inflected ideals of collective responsibility, meanwhile, are evident in the expectations that the characters have of each other and of themselves, and they are also evident in the way in which the dramatic conflict will be played out, particularly in the clash between collective duty and individual responsibility that defines Michael's individual crisis in the play and marks the inevitable tragedy.

The pressure produced by the opposing constructions of home is evident in Michael's struggle to fulfil his obligations to both versions. Michael is torn between the two ideas of home. He is caught between his obligations to his family home and his duties to his marital home, between his responsibilities as brother and son and his responsibilities as husband, and he is disabled by his conflicting commitment to both. This conflict between past loyalties and present obligations has paralysed his future, and the ideological conflict that keeps him suspended between the two physical sites in which his ideals are invested is manifested in his psychological crisis, which threatens to destroy the possibilities of his performance in both versions of home.

Although Michael has left the family home of his childhood and founded his own home through marriage, he is obliged to fulfil his familial duties when his brothers arrive in England. While he accepts his material responsibilities as eldest brother by taking them in, he refuses to obey the laws of tribal loyalty they attempt to impose on him. His brothers then turn on him for refusing to defend their honour, both in spirit and in a specific moment of tribal violence. Michael's failure to physically perform his familial responsibility becomes the definitional battle in the inter-familial conflict that structures the play.

As the eldest brother, Michael feels a personal obligation to take care of his brothers despite their abuse of him. Murphy, however, deliberately establishes Michael's refusal to fight with a degree of equivocation. The real reason for Michael's reluctance is in fact not disapproval, but cowardice. Our inability to sympathise with him thus reinforces his paradoxical dual commitment and the impossibility of reconciling his opposing desires; like Betty, the audience also believe that Michael should fight to prove himself. Paradoxically, then, while it is Michael's

fulfilment of his familial duties that has created the tension in his marriage to Betty in the first instance (he offers his brothers a place to stay despite her reservations), it is his refusal to fulfil those duties in another instance (that of the Mulryan fight) that ends up destroying his marriage; by fulfilling his responsibilities to one family, he will betray the other, and Betty knows that, ultimately, she – and he - will lose either way.

It is the outsiders to the tightly knit tribal relationships in the play who vocalise the necessity of privileging family duty over personal desire in accordance with the mytho-historic model of Irish Catholic family function. Even Betty, who stands to lose as much as Michael himself, pushes him to fight and prove himself to the rest of the family (and, in a certain way, to her). Betty tries to convince Michael to take action, firstly by demanding that he make a choice between his conflicting loyalties, asking him to decide "Which comes first . . . your brothers or me?"[190], and then by pushing him towards what she recognises to be the only possible resolution of the crisis. "It doesn't matter what you believe at the moment," she says, "You owe them something...Fight. They'll think more of you. Respect you."[191] Mush articulates the crux of the issue succinctly: "I suppose he has no choice."[192]

Mush and Betty, however, are effectively disabled by their status as outsiders. While Mush is characterised as nothing more than a physical force that the brothers can call on as their tribal wars demand, Betty is the only female character in *A Whistle in the Dark*[193] and is thus doubly disabled from the domestic crisis that has encroached upon and taken over her home. In accordance with the constitutional construction of the family she is the supposed guardian of the domestic order, but this power is merely symbolic and she is excluded from the play's domestic discourse by virtue of both her gender and her isolation from the Carney's primal tribal concerns.

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[190] *A Whistle in the Dark*, 14.
[191] *A Whistle in the Dark*, 51.
[192] *A Whistle in the Dark*, 18.
[193] Interestingly enough, while Mrs. Carney (Mama) is absent from the stage, she is, nonetheless, an idealised presence in the play, a symbolic force within the family dynamic, but one that exerts no actual influence over the direction of events in the play, nor over the dynamic of the relationships between the male family members.

This exclusion makes the familiar environs of her home frightening, as she becomes the figure that is sacrificed to confirm the cohesiveness of the Carney clan as they provide a focus for Murphy's investigation of the patriarchal failure that lies at the heart of *A Whistle in the Dark*.

The patriarchal system in *A Whistle in the Dark* follows the template of failure established in *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, yet while O'Neill diluted the patriarchal tension at the heart of the Irish Catholic cultural inheritance that defined the family structure by focusing on Mary's addiction, Murphy concentrates the dramatic tension wholly on the failure of the patriarchal order within the ideological model of the Irish Catholic family and the failure of the model as a patriarchal cultural construction. It is in the figure of Dada that this tension is embodied. Dada's position as patriarch is weakened immediately in the play by the location of the action away from the site of his dominance, the Carney family home in Mayo, and locating it in England, where the eldest son Michael lives in his self-created marital home. Although the stability of the idea of home has already been disrupted by the relocation of the family to England, Dada's insistence on performing his patriarchal authority outside of its context heightens this disruption.

Dada's refusal to concede seniority to Michael in this new configuration of domestic relations is both an attempt to assert himself as patriarch of the household, even though it operates independently of him, and an attempt to re-establish his authority over his sons; what it achieves in the dramatic construction of the play, however, is the destabilisation of the play's domestic forces. As Dada's poor track record as family head is exposed as the play moves on, the symbolic authority that Dada holds over his sons is also increasingly weakened. It is at this moment of vulnerability, however, that Dada's own haunting insecurities begin to reveal themselves and that his crisis of identity begins to emerge; Dada may be outwardly committed to the familial values of mythory, but his inward refusal to acknowledge the failure of the mytho-historic domestic framework, and his own failures within the system, leads directly to the play's tragedy, while simultaneously exposing him as its greatest failure and its greatest victim.

As the play draws towards its tragic close, the disruptive environment of the home, which, in line with the chief characteristic of high naturalism as Williams has defined it, has taken on its own qualities as a shaping force in the action and pushes Michael and his brothers into a desperate reconciliation that pits them against the figure of their father. For all of their heroic idolisation and idealisation him, the brothers are forced to admit that Dada has not only failed them as a family but he has failed them as a father. While Dada is thus exposed as the primary engineer of the family's destructive fate he is also revealed as a victim of the pressures of mythory himself; the familiar figure of parental authority is uncannily revealed as the most troubled, while the patriarchal narrative of mythory is exposed in all its flawed impossibility.

The *heimlich/unheimlich* tension that creates the dramatic conflict in *A Whistle in the Dark* is carried through to similar effect in Murphy's 1998 play *The House.* Using similar tendencies towards violence and idealism to characterise the male protagonist's experience of his wider social world, *The House* is equally as concerned as *A Whistle in the Dark* with undermining the mytho-historic construction of home and with isolating such idealism as the primary contributing force to the uncanny domestic experience, in both its physical and metaphorical sense, within the play. Thus in a similar pattern of comparative logic which sets an ideological construction of home against an uncomfortable reality, Murphy establishes a tension between two opposing versions of home that echoes the *heimlich/unheimlich* tension of the uncanny and defamiliarises both the expected parameters of psychological motivation typical of classic dramatic domestic realism and the accepted domestic model proposed by mythory.

Where *A Whistle in the Dark* dramatises the opposing discourses of home as a struggle for supremacy, it echoes *Long Day's Journey Into Night* in its concern with a collective quest for a particular idealised version of the Irish Catholic family and the communal frustrations of its inadequate reality. In *The House*, however, Murphy transposes the drama from a collective quest to an individual obsession, presenting the audience (and the characters) with a material version of the mytho-historic

domestic model, in the shape of the de Burca family, against which the dysfunction of its ideological conception can be revealed; even the apparently ideal Irish Catholic home that the de Burca family symbolise disintegrates under the oppressive forces of social reality.

It is in the obsessions of the central male figure, Christy, that Murphy constructs the dramatic conflicts and deconstructs the ideology of the mytho-historic domestic ideal; for while the dramatic action reveals the disparity between Christy's idealisation of the de Burca home and its uncanny reality to the audience, Christy remains committed to the culturally-constructed ideal of home even as he witnesses, and participates in, its destruction. Interweaved with a narrative of exile and emigration - whose significance to the conception of home in the play will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four – the realist reconstruction of the domestic setting in *The House* is invested with the tightly constructed metaphysical significance of high naturalism that locates home beyond its physical reality as a condition and container for existential development. As Csilla Bertha has argued, the de Burca home is not just a realist setting, but a "metaphorical value-carrier"[194] in which Christy has embedded his personal, familial, cultural and historical ideals. As Raymond Williams' model of high naturalism would construct it, home is thus not a *site* of existence but a *condition* of existence. Christy's quest is thus psychological, rather than material, and the material means through which he attempts its realisation thus defines the fundamental conflict in the dramatic action of the play.

Christy's desire to belong to the de Burca family is revealed as the projected fulfilment of mythory's domestic ideals, and this desire carries the same conceptual limitations as the idealising processes of mythory. Christy's logic of personal fulfilment establishes itself within a discourse of permanence that echoes the essence of the mytho-historic imagination, with its value-laden ideology that claims to speak across time and historical difference. Christy's idea of self-fulfilment hinges on his insistence that "this place (the de Burca home) will never change"[195]; yet it is this

[194] Bertha, 2004, 78.
[195] *The House*, 6.

misguided resolve - the intransigence of his idealised conception in the face of the de Burca family's changing fate – that creates our awareness of the uncanny as a conflict between competing narratives and the primary force shaping the dramatic tension in the play. It also draws our attention again to the discursive dysfunction of mythory as it moulds the values and desires of the individual without providing a commensurate social reality in which these desires can be fulfilled.

It is through the figure of Christy, then, that the mytho-historic backdrop to familial relations in *The House* is explored and deconstructed. Christy's relationship with the de Burca family is the defining relationship in his life. He looks to Mrs de Burca as a mother-figure of his own and to the de Burca house as a substitute home, a place of refuge and security that allows him to forge a stable identity in the face of his own dysfunctional domestic background, an identity that he has constructed in resolute relation to the de Burcas' fate. Christy's relationship with the de Burcas is summed up by the childhood catchphrase remembered by Mrs de Burca from Christy's youth: "I'd like to be this family please."[196]

While the de Burcas do not enact performative expressions of their Catholic identity in the play, it is implicit in the value system of charity and duty by which they are guided in their relationships with each other, and, most significantly, with Christy. The indications of Catholic pressure on other of the characters in the play, as will be further explored in Chapter Four, confirm the structural mechanisms of Catholicism that inform the characters' behaviours and their constructions of self- and familial identity.

For Christy the de Burcas represent the perfect family and he imagines a place for himself within that structure, a place that he then attempts to construct by various means, including, as we will see, violence, romance and material acquisition. His various relationships with the de Burca daughters (sexual and otherwise), his decision to buy the de Burca home when he learns that it will be sold, even his eventual crime, are all misguided attempts to fashion a place for himself within the de Burca family structure, to possess, to experience, a piece of what he sees as an ideal domestic existence.

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[196] *The House*, 2.

The version of the de Burca home that Christy constructs around their lived reality represents the domestic values that he believes in, values that are as much a cultural inheritance as a product of his personal wilfulness. Christy's insistence that he can save the de Burcas from their inevitable decline projects a fate determined by history, then, but the ideological consequences are represented in personal terms through Christy as a move of self-preservation on the symbolic level bound up in a guise of material generosity. By attempting to save the de Burca home, Christy is actually attempting to preserve the values that he imposes on them; as these values are revealed as the ultimate force of the family's destruction, so mythory is revealed in all its narrative contradiction.

Christy's personal domestic background is established through a lens of dysfunction. His mother died of an illness when he was a child and his father, still alive at the time of the play's present, is an alcoholic who Mrs de Burca condemns for having brought Christy up in "half-measures"[197], denying him a proper education and a stable domestic existence on which to ground his identity. In the face of his own domestic disharmony Christy turned to the de Burca's for support, and they provided him with the comfort and security that he couldn't get at home. He thus imagines the de Burca home as a surrogate site for his existential fulfilment, and sees their history and future as inextricably entwined with his.

If the family themselves represent his ideas of self-fulfilment, then, the de Burca house is the physical site that embodies these values. Christy's physical position throughout the play until the auction reinforces the impossibility of his belonging to the family, despite his attempts at intervention in the physical upkeep of the house and his eventual purchase of it. What Christy refuses to realise, however, is that his material intervention in the de Burca's fate will not solve their problems. The de Burca family are not the perfect family that Christy has constructed as a symptom of his pathology; even they cannot conform to the mytho-historic dictates of the Irish Catholic family model that informs Christy's conception of home, and the inevitable dissolution of their ideal reality further undermines the possibility of mythory achieving its realisation beyond a narrative of ideological containment.

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[197] Ibid.

Audience members, meanwhile, are granted access to the family's reality outside of Christy's romanticised perception. Mr de Burca's absence, for example, is the first indication of the breakdown in the family structure. His death symbolises a lacuna in the patriarchal system, which we have already identified in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* and *A Whistle in the Dark* as reflective of a fundamental reversal in the proper functioning of the mytho-historic Irish Catholic family model. The vacant fifth chair at the dinner table in scene six is not merely, as Murphy notes in the stage directions, "*a mark of Mother's ongoing love for her late husband*"[198]; it also serves as a visual reminder for the audience of the important patriarchal absence in the family structure, while patriarchal failure is further reinforced by the impotence of the other male characters in the play.

Meanwhile, Kerrigan the lawyer informs us that the de Burca family "never fitted in here. . . They're - different."[199] This difference is never fully articulated by any of the characters, but in line with the narrative of idealisation through which they are described, both by Christy and the wider community, an assumption that this difference can be defined by their apparent adherence to mytho-historic form – their status as an ideal Irish Catholic family – is logical. However, the play's documentation of the family's fall from a state of unity (albeit one imposed only through a physical site of belonging) to a fractured state of exile suggests a fate that is not so different from the futures facing the various other characters in the play. The broken boundary wall, which becomes the focus of Christy initial attempts to intervene in the family's fate, is indicative of the collapse of both private and communal values that are implicated both in the de Burca's decline and Christy's disintegration.

Although our full awareness of the family's collective and individual difficulties is not awakened until Suzanne's death and the auction of the house near the end of the play, the understated revelation of the individual family members' difficulties (Suzanne's insecurity, Louise's unhappy marriage) subtly works the

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[198] *The House*, 46.
[199] *The House*, 25.

psychological and narrative implications of the family's demise into the symbolic and material texture of the play. The revelation of the family's domestic breakdown under the ideological pressures that Christy imposes on them complements the revelation of Christy's fate at the end of the play, where not belonging becomes the defining characteristic of his belonging in the wider social fabric where alienation is in fact the existential norm.

However, for all the metaphoric association of the auction of the house with the family's decline, the indications of domestic dysfunction and individual trauma are brought to bear beyond symbolic circumstance in the characters of Louise and Suzanne, who demonstrate difficulty with their individual domestic situations, their place in wider society and, as much as Christy, their own self-conception. Suzanne, for example, resists any idea of physical grounding at home in her defiant emigrant mentality. Her nonchalant pose, however, disguises a similar psychological quest to Christy's – an abstract quest for belonging - and even as she resists the conception of home offered by the mytho-historic discourse that permeates the play, a number of her outbursts reveal that it is indeed her dislocation from home, rather than her "*self-centred, self-absorbed, self-conscious*"[200] nature that is the root of her existential angst. "I get depressed too", she says, "I get lonely too . . .I am part of this family too - I hope - but I find I am becoming very left out . . . even if I'm away, I belong here. I'd like to have some - standing! Somewhere! . . . What else is there?"[201] Suzanne's question is a vocalisation of Christy's desperation to save the de Burca home and all it symbolises: beyond the home, as an ideological construct rooted in physical reality, there is no other way for them to define themselves.

Louise, meanwhile, who is married, with her own, second, self-created home, experiences the domestic breakdown of the Irish Catholic family model on two levels. Subjected to the violence of an unloving, alcoholic husband, Louise is caught up in an extra-marital affair with Christy that Christy is desperately trying to break. Characterised as all passion and "extremes"[202], Louise looks to Christy to ground her but he is unwilling to take her on. Mrs de Burca reminds Louise that there are rules

[200] *The House*, 26.
[201] *The House*, 51-52.
[202] *The House*, 24.

that govern both the familial and the social framework in which the individual operates, and that she must acquiesce or bear the consequences. Thus by deliberately flouting the established domestic framework of her marriage and the social conventions that govern her wider milieu, Louise leaves herself vulnerable to both social alienation and her husband's reaction, which comes, in the characteristic way of male representation in the play, in the form of violence.

When the house is auctioned at the end of the play and the family are packing up their things, Louise throws her childhood memorabilia in the bin - shedding her last material connection to the symbolic version of home that has been steadily destroyed throughout the play. By dumping her memories on the way out the door, she declares a sort of defiance against the romanticisation of home or memory, a move that suggests a measure of maturity, a measure of growth in her character. "Childhood things", she says, "Child-*ish* things!"[203] accepting the defeat of any possible happy ending. This revelation, however, does not release her from her inevitable victimised future.

As the auction date moves closer, the cracks in the collective family structure begin to show. Mrs de Burca's simultaneous resignation and refusal of defeat highlight the tension between the family as it should be and the family as it actually is; that is the tension that arises as the homeliness of the de Burca home becomes rapidly *unheimlich.* As Suzanne begins a characteristic lament about the demise of the family, Mrs de Burca, in defiance, says "Let it then! Fall down!", but her resolute nonchalance is followed by an outburst that reveals her true sense of loss at the forthcoming auction. "This house is not 'a place'", she insists, echoing Mary Tyrone's conception of home but without the self-destructive self-pity, "and I will not have it referred to as such around your fathers table! It was his dream! And mine! . . . It was our home, once."[204] Mrs de Burca's concession of defeat in her final submission to the past tense secures the family's future fate in line with the fortune of the house.

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[203] *The House*, 108.
[204] *The House*, 53.

The family's fate reinforces the symbolic investment in the physical structure of the house as an embodied representation of home. With its auction, however, the metaphoric associations of home are also being sold off and the de Burca's difference from the wider community is neutralised as the family are subjected to the same exilic fate as the other characters in the play. "Now we know what it is like", Mrs de Burca says, " . . not to belong to a place anymore. . . We're being sent into exile."[205] The material break with the physical space divests the de Burca home of its important symbolic qualities, and with the disappearance of its symbolic values dies the possibility of Christy's ideals ever achieving their embodied reality.

Ironically, it is Christy, who defends and desires home above all else, who ultimately ensures its destruction, in both its material reality and its symbolic ideal. The de Burcas may epitomise home for Christy, but he is prepared to, and does, kill Suzanne in order to achieve its realisation. Christy thus destroys his ideal as he tries to save it, and what he is left with at the end of the play is the shell of a house, not a home. That Christy cannot even articulate what it is that he desires beyond descriptive abstractions of landscape points towards the elusive nature of his ideals and the immaterial impossibility of their realisation. With the death of Mrs de Burca, however, Christy finally understands that his ideals will never become reality.

The static theatrical picture created as he sits down with Marie, staring out at the land that now belongs to him, provides a tableau of impotence that echoes that created at the end of both *Long Day's Journey Into Night* and *A Whistle in the Dark*. In *The House*, however, there are no tragic overtones, even if we are left with deep sense of loss; the violence in *The House* has destroyed the romance of Christy's ideal. For, unlike Dada in *A Whistle in the Dark*, who maintains his stance of desperate delusion throughout the closing moments of the play, Christy and his ideals are thoroughly defeated in *The House*. His physical position in the garden in the final scene reinforces the liminality that has defined his character since the beginning of the play; he may now be in possession of the material symbol that has embodied his obsession, but he still remains on the periphery, unable to achieve his desires. Marie's

[205] *The House*, 77-79.

insistence that "You belong here!" reinforces the irony of Christy's fate and his irresolvable state of alienation. Christy is at home only in the world of failed ideals and disappointed realities, a world of disillusion that he has contributed to himself; the familiar *heimlich* home that he has fought so hard to obtain is the site of his uncanny future.

"Cracked, that family. Bloody cracked. Always was."[206] *Betrayal and Decay in* Aristocrats *and* Living Quarters.

The Irish Catholic homes in Brian Friel's plays, meanwhile, act as similar sites in which the characters' futures are determined by a paradigm of dramatic domestic dysfunction. Friel determines an uncanny dramatic effect similar to that of the O'Neill and Murphy plays by juxtaposing the accepted mytho-historic domestic narrative against the uncomfortable reality of the theatrical family. This succeeds in defamiliarising accepted dramatic models of domestic realism, the ideological foundations on which this dramatic model is based, as well as the culturally specific ideological foundations on which the Irish Catholic family model itself is based. In *Living Quarters* and *Aristocrats*, the two Friel plays that best work inside this template, a greater degree of dramaturgical manipulation than the O'Neill and Murphy plays engage allows Friel to mask character and audience awareness of domestic dysfunction through the use of meta-narrative commentary and the nostalgic gloss of memory which actually enhances the *heimlich/unheimlich* tension at work in the plays.

Aristocrats chronicles the dissolution of an aristocratic Irish Catholic family by juxtaposing its eminent history against its present decline. The disparity between the various family fictions and the O'Donnell's reality creates the sense of a double world on stage which is reinforced by various audio devices in the play that both disembody the central patriarchal authority and disempower the individual characters. While the family's fictions allow the O'Donnell's to maintain control over their historical reputation and their individual and collective fate, the family's dual sense of

[206] Brian Friel, *Living Quarters* in Friel, 1996, 225.

'reality as it is' and 'reality as they wish it to be' allows the simultaneous co-existence and contradiction of ideals and reality to bring the *heimlich/unheimlich* tension that determines the uncanny to the stage with dramatic and tragic effect.

The premise of *Aristocrats* is established by a family reunion, where the O'Donnell children, scattered across Europe, return home for their youngest sister's wedding. They are joined at their home by Professor Tom, a visiting American historian who is documenting the family's history for a wider study of the Irish Catholic aristocracy. Tom initially appears to be the potential arbiter of the family's fate and their potential saviour. His inscription of the family's history for posterity suggests the salvation of the O'Donnell's standing, but Tom's function is undermined by the gradual revelation of the family's fictionalising tendencies, which tarnishes the accepted authenticity of their historical reputation.

While in *Living Quarters,* as we will later see, the figure of Sir maintains a functional authority over narrative production, in *Aristocrats* there is no such mediator. Tom may stand forth as an "honest recorder", but there are "certain truths . . . that are beyond Tom's scrutiny", and with the family itself as his central source, any version of their history will necessarily have the "authentic ring of phoney fiction."[207] As the deceptiveness of the family's version of themselves is exposed, so the falsity of their domestic ideal, its mytho-historic basis and the foundations of mythory itself are destabilised. The layers of history that support the apparent *heimlich* of Friel's aristocratic version of the Irish Catholic family (and they are deliberately established as a Catholic family, for the ends of supporting Tom's research certainly, but also to the ends of supporting the deconstruction of the particular Catholic domestic model) are thus slowly stripped away, reversing the anticipated realist resolution of narrative closure - the wedding that Friel maps out in the opening scene of the play - and replacing it with a different kind of ritual - a funeral.

With a symbolic weight already identified in *The House*, the significance of home in *Aristocrats* is invested in the physical site of the family's residence, Ballybeg Hall. Its situation on the top of a hill overlooking the village of Ballybeg is an

[207] *Aristocrats,* 256.

emblematic location that indicates the family's physical remove from the wider social community, and the individual and collective psychic alienation of the characters which is gradually revealed as the play progresses; For although the liminal positioning of Ballybeg Hall draws our attention, on one level, to issues of class – the unnamed difference associated with the de Burcas in *The House* is clearly defined for the O'Donnells as one of social standing - but *Aristocrats* has a greater concern that is rooted in the problematic relationship between individual identity, the collective historical legacy that the characters have inherited, and their present circumstances. This conflict places the codes of the Irish Catholic family model inscribed by ideological and historical discourse against the O'Donnell's present dysfunctional reality, creating a tension between the *heimlich* of their high standing and the frightening *unheimlich* of their actual relationship with home.

Materially the physical site of home also suffers under the weight of its historical legacy. "Badly weather beaten" and "about to collapse"[208], Ballybeg Hall is "a liability"[209], not just to the family's finance but to their fate. The disrepair of the house - meticulously detailed in the opening stage directions – makes metaphorical reference to the spiritual condition of the family within, and Friel's commitment to realistic detail in the mise-en-scene creates an atmosphere that both complements and enhances the present decline of the family home and its future fortunes. The infirm character of Father is hardly a figure that can be accorded much narrative authority in the play, but his expostulation that "We're all petrified in this place"[210] is perhaps the most succinct description of the physical condition of home and the spiritual condition of the characters within it.

In *Aristocrats* the effects of the family heritage are played out as a collective problem, confirmed by the play's ending with the family's collective decision to leave Ballybeg Hall to its natural, inevitable decline. The pressures of the *heimlich/unheimlich* tension in the play, however, are best explored in their individual manifestations; in the various dysfunctional circumstances of the individual members

[208] Brian Friel, *Aristocrats* in Friel,1996, 250.
[209] *Aristocrats*, 317.
[210] *Aristocrats*, 258.

of the family. From the long-dead, depressed mother who took her own life, to the sedated manic depressive youngest sibling Claire, the logic of dysfunction revealed in each character's personal relationship with the other family members and their family history at large indicates that, however the individuals are seen to have failed the family in their various ways as the narrative reveals, the family has also failed its children.

The O'Donnell's Irish Catholic heritage – their particular characterisation as an Irish Catholic family as our theoretical template lays out – is defined in general cultural terms, rather than in relation to the performance of any specific rituals. Their Irish Catholic familial form is implied in the projected value systems associated with domestic life against which the characters measure their domestic reality and which they use as a guiding ideology to shape the ideals that inform their fictions of the family's history. Their Irish Catholic heritage is also implicit in the family's individual relationships, through the sense of guilt, shame and collective responsibility that governs their interactions with each other.

However, it is the individual's neglect of collective responsibility - that is the sense of duty that elevates the family unit over the individual within it - that is first brought to our attention in the play. We learn through the authoritative interruptions of Father which punctuate the play, for example, that "Judith betrayed the family."[211] With an illegitimate child and a heavy involvement in the civil rights movement, Judith violated the family's code of respectability and responsibility on both a private and a public level. However, like Michael in *A Whistle in the Dark* and Helen in *Living Quarters,* as we will later see, Judith has had to choose between her responsibilities to her immediate family and the family that she wished to create herself. While Helen's psychological breakdown in *Living Quarters*, however, results from the guilt of privileging her own desires over the family responsibilities, Judith in *Aristocrats* does sublimate her own needs in favour of fulfilling her familial duties. Giving in to family pressure, she put her child up for adoption and has become nursemaid to the bed-ridden father that has been her chief oppressor; yet even these decisions come with their own set of associative guilt.

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[211] *Aristocrats*, 257.

Alice, meanwhile, eschews her responsibilities to both her immediate family and her marital family, forsaking the pressures of both homes for a haze of alcohol that, despite her best efforts, cannot actually provide her with the escape from reality that she desires. Haunted by the living ghost of her strict disciplinarian father, and trapped in a marriage with an idealistic upwardly mobile man who is motivated almost entirely in his relationship with his wife by the mytho-historic ideology that suffuses the narrative of the O'Donnell history, Alice longs for a different context – a different cultural context where mythory and its dysfunctional reality are no longer in constant competition - through which she can achieve self-fulfilment. When Father dies at the end of the first act and the creation of this context becomes possible, however, Alice fails to rise to the challenge. What Alice actually desires for her indeterminate future is something to fill the void of loneliness and displacement engendered by the *heimlich/unheimlich* tensions that have defined her experiences of both of her homes. While her invitation to George at the end of the play is a gesture towards the fulfilment of that possible future, unless the context of her dysfunctional marriage changes as well, the legacy of the uncanny Irish Catholic home will continue to determine the shape of her life.

The youngest sister Claire, on the other hand, is on the cusp of a new life context as the play opens. She is preparing to begin a second life as wife, and it is her impending marriage that provides the pretext for the (rare) family gathering that begins the play. While she appears to be marrying into a ready-made family, her fiancé is thirty years her senior, and is implicated more as a substitute father figure than as a potential husband. Claire's future domestic context is further complicated before its beginning by a sister-in-law who has already declared her refusal to yield domestic authority within Claire's future marital home. The *heimlich/unheimlich* of the O'Donnell home has become a pathological force that appears to determine the future of Claire's new relationship; it also suggests a pervasive culture of domestic dysfunction that can be traced back to its ideological roots as a symptom and a function of mythory.

It is in the male characters of *Aristocrats* rather than the O'Donnell sisters, however, that the dysfunctional domestic logic plays itself out in its full complication and contradiction. The primary focus on male psychology implicates the failure of patriarchal processes - both in their function within the home and in the function of mythory as a patriarchal narrative, as we have already seen in *The House* and *A Whistle in the Dark*. It is in the male characters, then, that the commitment to mythory in its domestic form is played out and it is in their fate that the family's future is determined. While the domestic pattern established in *A Whistle in the Dark*, and furthered, as we will later see, in *Living Quarters*, excludes outsiders to the family from the domestic narrative of the play, in *Aristocrats* Friel allows the *heimlich/unheimlich* tension of the contradictory versions of home to be explored through both an insider *and* an outsider logic in the figures of Casimir and Eamon. What Friel establishes as the central antagonistic difference between his two leading male characters, however, he also reveals as their key similarity; their commitment to the mytho-historic domestic ideal.

Casimir is described in Friel's terms as "different." His is an attitude that may appear "*'peculiar'. But what it is, is elusive*"[212] and this applies as much to the causes for his slippery relationship with the truth as it does to the consequences. When his memories are revealed as fabrications by the superior proclamations of Eamon and the pedantry of Tom, Casimir implies that he has willingly re-imagined the family's history to suit their expectation; Eamon and Tom hold a deep psychological commitment to the domestic fictions as historical evidence of the validity of their own deeply-held ideals. Like Christy in *The House* and Mary in *Long Day's Journey Into Night,* these ideals conceptualise home through a static lens of romantic idealism, and Casimir best expresses them on his own terms: "When I think of Ballybeg Hall", he rhapsodies in characteristic form, "it's always like this: the sun shining; the doors and windows all open; the place filled with music."[213] This static romantic image mirrors the mythology of Ballybeg Hall that he imparts to Tom, yet while complementing Tom's own ethnographic interests, this image also reveals Casimir's

[212] *Aristocrats*, 255.
[213] *Aristocrats*, 256.

deep psychological commitment to these ideals. The revelation of his memories as fictions, then, undermines not just the authority of the family's history, and the authority of the mytho-historic discourses that he calls upon to support his lies, but the authenticity of Casimir's public self as it is performed in his familial relationships and the private self that the audience in part bears witness to.

As much as Casimir has imposed his ideal version of domestic history upon the reality of historical events, Casimir himself has suffered under the rigorous expectations of the Irish Catholic family tradition. His refusal to follow the male line into the legal profession, his suspected homosexuality, and his physical and vocal eccentricities, for example, alienated him from his father's affections from adolescence, while his fabricated marriage is an attempt to fulfil social convention in his adulthood. His fabrications, however, alienate him from reality as much as they allow him to partake in wider public life; for Casimir's capacity for misrepresentation is not only manifested in historical narration, it is employed by him on a quotidian level that reflects his own deep desperate need to couch reality in idealistic terms. Although memory and the passage of time naturally create such elliptical versions of events, Casimir's process of selection is far more deliberate and not quite as naïve as his fragile personality suggests.

It is in this self-conscious capacity for reinvention that Friel's distinction between Casimir's eccentricity and his elusiveness is most clearly defined, and it is in Casimir's own words that this distinction is articulated:

> "at nine years of age I knew certain things . . . that the easy relationship that other men enjoy would always elude me; that- that- that I would never succeed in life . . . That was a very important discovery for me, as you can imagine. But it brought certain recognitions, certain compensatory recognitions . . . I discovered that if I conducted myself with some circumspection, I find that I can live within these smaller, perhaps very confined territories without exposure to too much hurt."[214]

Casimir's circumspection refers to the fictionalisation processes that he takes upon himself as a mechanism for coping with his own personal struggle with reality.

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[214] *Aristocrats,* 310.

Although his fictions represent an attempt to escape the domestic pathology that has defined him, his lies merely rework this pathology by replacing truth and actual experience with more comforting mytho-historic ideals.

In the character of Eamon, meanwhile, Friel undertakes a similar exploration of the function of mythory in its Irish Catholic domestic manifestation. While Eamon is the family's biggest critic, he is also its greatest defender, and he refuses to accept the family's resignation to their fate. Eamon is, like Christy in *The House,* an outsider figure who finds in the O'Donnell family the potential for the fulfilment of a certain set of ideals fostered by the cultural fabric and by the circumstances of his own upbringing. The O'Donnell's represent certain values that Eamon, as much as he scorns the individual family members, is unwilling to let go of. The O'Donnell's embody a mythology that Eamon was nurtured on all his life; an aspiration towards an Irish Catholic family and social ideal. If he is forced to accept that his own domestic background of dis-enfranchisement and emigration is the norm, his entire sense of self - based on such values and authorised, he believes, by his marriage to Alice - will collapse.

Eamon's attempts to revive Father following his climactic collapse in the doorway of the study at the end of Act One are symbolic attempts to revive the structures of patriarchy that have supported the domestic ideals that Eamon holds forth as his own, even as they have oppressed him in their public function in the local class system. Eamon is, physically and relationally, "the furthest away from him", but he is the only one who moves; "He runs to Father and catches him as he collapses so that they both sink to the ground together. . . Eamon screams . . as though his life depended on it."[215] Eamon's collapse beside Father is literal, in both physical and metaphorical terms.

With the collapse of the patriarchal structures, Eamon transfers his ideals to the symbolic structure of the family home. Like Christy in *The House*, Eamon invests his ideals in the physical site of Ballybeg Hall, but its material demise implicates the steady progress of its disintegration in real and symbolic terms. Eamon, however, clings to it as an embodied value system; "I know its real worth", he insists,

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[215] *Aristocrats*, 318.

"somehow we'll keep it going."[216] Its fate, however, is not for Eamon to decide or determine. In fact, his first gesture towards saving the O'Donnell's marks the moment when the family's dissolution is made certain. When Eamon attempts to catch Father as he falls to the floor, the O'Donnell children stand passively by, as if they understand that it is only in the complete collapse of the patriarchal structures that have supported their collective fate for so long – the death of their father – that their individual liberation will be made possible.

Similarly to *Long Day's Journey Into Night, A Whistle in the Dark* and *The House*, the failing, impotent structures of patriarchy are made significant in their failure by their juxtaposition with the ideal of the mytho-historic Irish Catholic family model. In *Aristocrats*, the physical absence of the patriarchal figure and the allusion to his paralysed condition evokes a discourse of patriarchal disintegration familiar from the O'Neill and Murphy plays, but the potential power of Father's patriarchal position is never far from the characters' consciousness throughout the first half of the play, despite his physical and mental infirmity. As a former district judge, Father symbolises the ultimate manifestation of patriarchal control: the authority of the law. For his children, to "see him lying there, so flat under the clothes . . . such a big strong man, with such power, such authority"[217] suggests a contrast between the symbolic power that Father still yields and his weakened physical condition, creating an uncanny disjunction between the reality of his patriarchal function and their perceptions of it.

Father's presence in the play is predicated on his absence from the stage. Having suffered a stroke, he is bed-ridden and he has lost most of his capacity for controlling his face and, indeed, his mind. Yet his patriarchal power is still felt in the house through the medium of the baby alarm, a device that at once signals the reduction of Father's state of being (he cannot feed himself or use the toilet, or even communicate without this infantilising device), while opening up a channel through which his patriarchal power can be extended despite his physical disintegration.

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[216] *Aristocrats*, 318.
[217] *Aristocrats*, 289.

When Casimir tells Tom during one of their interviews that "we weren't haunted . . . there was never a ghost in the hall. Father wouldn't believe in ghosts"[218], he fails to acknowledge that while Father may not have indulged his children's belief in ghosts, he has become one, haunting his children through an aural landscape that creates an eerie awareness of a double world existing in the house, which Casimir's stories have already metaphorically evoked. As Father's frequent expostulations echo through the baby alarm system, they recreate the patriarchal structure of the family at key moments in the play. Meanwhile, his circumstantial echo of the exchanges going on on-stage double the uncanny effect of his paradoxical 'presence' for characters and audience alike. As his voice resounds throughout the house "The judicial presence (is) restored."[219]

Father's physical death, however, signifies the end of everything he represents: historically, Irish Catholic ascendancy structures and Ballybeg Hall's Big House status, and symbolically, the mytho-historic misconception of the Irish Catholic family and the dysfunctional familial relations that its ideological failure has bred; "Somehow the hall doesn't exist without him."[220] Father's death, then, signifies the final dissolution of his patriarchal control and the physical and metaphorical release of the O'Donnell children from the pathology of the patriarchal structures of the Irish Catholic family.

The potential liberation of the characters at the end of *Aristocrats* subverts the static tableaux that close *Long Day's Journey Into Night, A Whistle in the Dark* and *The House.* While the O'Neill and Murphy plays find themselves resigned to a future of resisting the inevitable pathology of domestic dysfunction, in *Aristocrats* Casimir, the O'Donnell sisters, and even Eamon, celebrate the family's fate at the end of the play as promise of freedom. They do not seek the reincarnation of lost ideals in alternative spaces, nor do they seek the reclamation of the past as something which has been lost.

The individual futures of the family members, however, are ambiguous. Claire's impending marriage, for example, threatens to replicate the tradition of

[218] *Aristocrats*, 267.
[219] *Aristocrats*, 275.
[220] *Aristocrats*, 311.

unhappy homes, while Casimir will return to Germany to live a double-life that is never fully revealed in all its implications in the play. Alice, meanwhile, confesses that "I don't know what I feel. Maybe a sense of release; of not being pursued; of the possibility of- *(Short pause)* - of 'fulfilment'. No. Just emptiness. Perhaps maybe a new start"[221]; whether she can make this new start happen in the context of her marriage with Eamon is not made clear. It is Judith, anyway, that gets to make a real new start in life, even if it is a new start predicated on a return to the past. By reclaiming her child from the orphanage, as she hopes to do, Judith will make an overdue gesture that fully signifies the possibility of re-birth outside of the context of the dysfunctional Irish Catholic family.

The closing moments of the play, however, undercut such a simplistic reading of the family's future, reminding us of the problematic possibilities of fulfilment underlying the pathologies of the ideological Irish Catholic family model and of the paradoxical binary of home within its *heimlich/unheimlich* construction in the play. Now that they are finally free of the imperatives and necessities of the family, the O'Donnell siblings linger on in the study. According to the stage directions *"One has the impression that this afternoon- relaxed, relaxing- may go on indefinitely"*; the dysfunctional Irish Catholic family finds its ultimate fulfilment in the site of its oppression; imagining it outside of those parameters is, perhaps, as impossible as the characters' projected freedom.

A similar irony is at work in *Living Quarters*, where the opposition between the actuality of the characters' lived experience and their ideal version of historical events creates competing versions of home - as a *heimlich* ideal and an *unheimlich* reality - in experiential and ideological terms. The action of *Living Quarters* centres around a traditional understanding of Freud's uncanny as the divulgence of a secret - an instance of betrayal by Frank's wife, Anna - which "ought to have remained....secret and hidden but has come to light."[222] While the Butler household in the play is established within the mytho-historic framework of the Irish Catholic family ideal,

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[221] *Aristocrats*, 324.
[222] Freud, 1966, 225.

the dramatic thrust of Anna's betrayal reveals the secret of the family's uncanny reality to the audience, creating an *unheimlich* atmosphere that pervades the thematics, atmosphere and dramatic structure of the play. However, the essence of Freud's uncanny is also evoked in the characterisation of the Butler family through a series of problematic relationships and ideals, which suspend the drama on the cusp of the competing tensions of the *heimlich/unheimlich* even before the family secrets begin to come to light.

As in *Aristocrats,* the dramatic action of the play is predicated on an auspicious homecoming; in *Living Quarters,* a celebration of Commandant Frank Butler's triumphant return from foreign duty with his brigade. The "occasion atmosphere", however, is from the first instance plagued by "shadows" and "unease."[223] These shadows amount to a premonition of the tragedy that will be played out on stage; a tragedy which, despite (or perhaps because of), the characters' knowledge of their fate as the play begins, and the audiences' knowledge of the play's climax from Sir's opening soliloquy, is completely unavoidable. Sir's narrative commentary, as it guides the family through their story, may attempt to stabilise the unfolding action for the characters by insisting that they perform their roles as reality rather than history has dictated. However, their domestic narrative is a narrative of dysfunction that subverts the family's desire for a history that complements accepted domestic ideology. It also undermines their desire for an ideal future in which such domestic ideals can be fulfilled.

The dramatic foresight established in the play's opening creates an alienating experience of inevitability for the characters and an uncanny effect on audience expectations by subverting accepted theatrical form. *Living Quarters* breaks through the frameworks of realism by introducing Sir, a narrator who is "always in full control"[224] of the dramatic action and the future fate of the characters outcome in the play. The self-contained fictional world of the Butler household is disrupted by the displacement of character accountability onto the author-figure of Sir, who has been given the responsibility for arbitrating the events as they take place on stage. This

[223] *Living Quarters*, 188.
[224] *Living Quarters*, 175.

metatheatrical device creates an internal commentary as events unfold, removing the play's action from the realm of immediacy and realism that its physical setting suggests.

Sir's role in *Living Quarters* is to "impose a structure" on the characters' memories of the fateful day that their father, Commandant Frank Butler, took his own life. Acting as an "impartial referee", Sir decides how the story is told and what details are included for the audience. He is also the "final adjudicator"[225] of the family's collective past, the mediator who will ensure that the events that did happen take place on stage in the way in which the characters firstly attested; for history, even personal history, always contains within it the danger of recreating reality in a narrative shaped by the demands of the present more than the reality of the past.

The audience is further distanced from emotional identification with the characters and their past by Sir's revelation that the action unfolding onstage is actually the *re*-enactment of a family tragedy. The action of *Living Quarters* does not unfold, then, in present time, nor in the past, but in the suspended no-place of the family's memory. This framing device directs us towards the uncanny realisation that we are witnessing the characters play out their painful pasts, not necessarily for reconciliation or understanding, but because they have to; the figure of Sir protects the sober actuality of 'events-as-they-really-happened' from the vicissitudes of historical function - which might adapt events as they actually happened in light of the ideological necessities of its present moment – and from the characters' own manipulations.

Their appointment of Sir as guardian of the truth suggests the characters' awareness of the processes of mythory as conceptualised in Chapter One, while their subsequent battle against their original testimony provides a case in point. The characters' awareness of these processes is evident in the various flirtations at circumvention that they attempt throughout the play, proposing different possibilities of the past, knowing that a different version of the past would have been possible to them if they had chosen to write their narrative differently. Sir stands to see that this fixed version of the past is adhered to, as the characters have decided that the

[225] *Living Quarters*, 178.

malleable form of memory as history "isn't adequate for them"; "out of some deep psychic necessity"[226] they must stick to the facts, to the comforts and certainties of a truth encapsulated in the document as events-as-they-really-happened. While the characters may contravene the physical space in which they are trapped (*"none of the characters obey the conventions of the set"* [227]), they must *always* obey the conventions of their self-inscribed family history; their domestic dysfunction will not be absorbed by mythory into the model of the ideal Irish Catholic family, as they are trapped within the uncanny home that this conflict of ideals has created.

Yet even as Sir appears to hold the ultimate monopoly on the truth-function in the play, selecting and limiting the possibilities of the family's story in accordance with the script, the characters are actually acting out their destinies "in accordance with a pre-ordained structure of reality"[228] that is determined neither by Sir, nor by fate, but by the natural tendencies of the individual mind. The homogeneous version of the past contained between the covers of the ledger is a narrative, like mythory, that sticks to the comforts of a predetermined linear pattern despite the contradictions. However, while the ledger that Sir reads from inscribes a particular version of the truth for posterity, the characters' understanding of the events that happened will be replaced with more comforting alternatives by "the wishful thinking of lonely people in lonely apartments"[229] which Sir describes their future selves as.

While the metatheatrical strategy at once places the pressures of inevitability on the Butler story, Friel's decision to invoke a particular dramatic version of the Phaedra myth – Euripides' *Hippolytus* - in the play's subtitle draws the audiences' attention to a particular pre-determined narrative – and, more importantly, a particular version of the mythic narrative – through which ideas of narrative construction and function can be played out further. By providing an alternative ending to the familiar mythic narrative, and replacing the Euripidean ending with a reversed state of affairs where the suicide of Phaedra is transposed onto the Theseus figure, Friel disrupts any sense of knowingness on the part of the audience. By deflating the audiences'

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[226] *Living Quarters*, 177.
[227] *Living Quarters*, 220.
[228] Elmer Andrews, *The Art of Brian Friel* (Basingstoke: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 140.
[229] *Living Quarters*, 225.

expectations, Friel defamiliarises the theatrical experience; by having the events played out with the same consequences, however, he reinforces the inevitability of the Butler's tragic ending.

Friel establishes the uncanny qualities of home in the play by emphasising the isolation and restricted nature of the Butler home in both physical and metaphorical terms. Situated within the living quarters of an army barracks, the double-function of home in its physical location as a boundary space between Commandant Frank Butler's private and public functions blurs the distinction between home as a site of work and a site of domesticity, and provides the first indication of the domestic difficulties that will come to pass. The tension between the various possible versions of events that Sir's narrative evokes, meanwhile, draws our attention to the narrative of the mytho-historic Irish Catholic family that informs the Butler's self-conception and their difficult relationships with each other. Once again the particular Catholic quality of their domestic reality not performative as ritual, but is implicit in the particular ideals that shape inter-familial relationships by promoting a sense of collective responsibility among the family members as well as a sense of guilt and shame when they fail to fulfil their duties to each other.

In the theatrical re-enactment of the events that provide the pretext for the dramatic action, however, the Butler family is firstly characterised within the limits of the mytho-historic Irish Catholic family model. Frank Butler's triumphant homecoming, for example, is established through a discourse of courage and self-sacrifice familiar from the heroic patriarchal model of Irish history. Frank, dedicated father and committed military man, has finally made the mark that his life has steadily progressed towards - an accession to the status of local hero. In the speeches that celebrate his achievements, however, his role as soldier is placed secondary to his role as father and family man.

The characterisations of the Butler daughters, meanwhile, are also filtered through the rose-tinted lens of mythory. Miriam, the middle daughter, for example, fulfils the symbolic female function within the house. Her marital home appears to perpetuate the happy family model that the Butler's initially offer, with her

relationship with her children and husband being played out through nurture (food) and mutual dependency on both sides.

The shadows of unease that permeate the house, however, reveal a domestic experience that problematises the surface impression of the domestic ideal that the Butler's appear to embody, relocating the family's situation between the polar, yet symbiotic, concepts of *heimlich/unheimlich* that characterise Freud's uncanny. Frank, as father figure and figure of authority, for example, is revealed as a failure of and a failure to the patriarchal model, even if these failures are not outside of the bounds of his own awareness within the context of the play, as they have been with Dada and James Tyrone - although Frank does have the benefit of historical hindsight and a foresight of the family's future. As father and domestic authority of the Butler household, Frank is "not unaware that the domestic life must have been bruised, damaged, by the stern attitudes" of military life or of "certain shortcomings"[230] in his relationships with his children. Yet, while these shortcomings are not manifested in any particular problematic sense for Frank at the beginning of the play, they have created a pathology of problematic experience for his children, who believe that he sacrificed his family for the sake of his military career to the result of the death of their mother; a pathology that has sown the seeds for his betrayal.

The Butler children's difficulty with the private/public juxtaposition of their domestic inheritance is reflected in the emigration of one daughter, the neurosis of another and the identity crisis of Ben, as well as in the general difficulties that define the siblings' relationships with each other and their father. Far from the ease, honesty and comforts associated with home in its ideological construction, the family members' behaviour towards one another is carefully measured; they are constantly "watching, circling one another"[231] like enemies, with a degree of suspicion and caution far from the mutual intimacies expected within the private space of the home. Furthermore, Frank's attempt to introduce a replacement/substitute mother-figure to the family becomes deeply problematic as Anna - hardly older than Tina, Frank's youngest daughter - is not the answer to the family's problems but the catalyst for the

[230] *Living Quarters*, 194.
[231] *Living Quarters*, 196.

explosion of the familial structure. Not only will she betray Frank by being unfaithful, she will break the taboo of inter-familial relationships by committing adultery with Frank's only son Ben; a double-betrayal that points towards the most problematic relationship in the play.

It is in the father-son relationship that the family failures find their greatest repercussions, particularly as it results in the play's inevitable tragedy. The conflict between father and son in *Living Quarters* is located deep in family history, rather than recent difference. Ben is so caught up with grief for his mother and resentment of his father that he refuses to speak to Frank, and self-medicates his misery with alcohol. He lives apart from the family, but maintains a comforting proximity that suggests an inability to function outside of the familial structure, even as the family is revealed as the root of his emotional problems. The duality of Ben's feelings towards his father, meanwhile, reveal a paradox akin to the *heimlich/unheimlich* binary that structures the conceptualisation of the home throughout the play. Ben resents Frank's privilege of his public role over his private role as father, but this resentment is twinned with a desire to connect with his father on a deeper emotional level that has always been lacking in their relationship and which is necessary for Ben's identity development and his accession to adulthood. Thus while Ben's affair with Anna can be constructed as an attempt to usurp his father's position, it can also be interpreted as an act of emulation, with the figures of father and son merging as one.

This interpretation is given solidity by Ben's attempts to make a deeper emotional connection with his father within the context of this retrospective re-enactment of the play's central drama. Despite his knowledge that his actions within the course of the re-enactment cannot circumvent the inevitable tragedy, Ben still tries to reconcile himself to his father. Frank's dismissal of Ben's honesty, however, points towards the deep-seated dysfunction in their relationship, a dysfunction that has been the root cause of the play's tragedy.

The fractious relationship between father and son is echoed on female terms in the relationship between Helen, the eldest daughter, and her deceased mother, who, rather than the idealised absent mother of *A Whistle in the Dark*, is presented outside of the ideological boundaries of idealisation; her need for control over her children's

lives, however, reinforces her domestic domination in line with the particularly Catholic construction of the Irish Mother that our model in Chapter One established. Mrs. Butler's disapproval of Helen's marriage (for reasons of social snobbery) created the conflict that caused Helen to emigrate (with the man she loved). Helen thus abandoned the failures of the family home for the possibilities of the marital home, but the psychic implications of her individual assertion over the collective family will has resulted in the breakdown of her marriage, the further dissolution of her familial relationships, and a serious nervous breakdown. Her homecoming, more than Frank's, sets the tone for the play; it is not a triumphant, celebratory return, but a deliberate test to see if she could face the past and impress her individual needs/desires within the context of the family unit. Helen's individuality is ultimately compromised, however, as she has become, unbeknownst to herself but as registered by everybody else, the image of her mother; recreating her gestures and voice at uncanny moments throughout the play and creating an awareness of the cycles of familial dysfunction which we have seen echo through the generations in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* and *a Whistle in the Dark*.

Although *Living Quarters* sets itself up as a re-enactment of a past event - the re-creation of incidents leading up to Frank's suicide - it is actually concerned with the reinforcement of a solid idea: the stability or fixedness of the past. However, by undermining this stability through dramaturgical technique, Friel succeeds in exposing how it is the narratives through which the past is expressed that the false and comforting ideal of collective control over individual fate is perpetuated, echoing the analysis of ideological function that conceptualised mythory as one such narrative in Chapter One. The Butler's efforts to fix the past, however, are not motivated by the family's desire to move towards a brighter future, but by their desire to *remain* in the past where they can share some fixed meaning with each other and where, at least, there is some certainty of experience. The site of home thus embodies the ideological fixity that the family try to impose upon their history, even if it does not accord with the reality we witness being played out on stage in accordance with their original wishes.

Living Quarters, then, is the collective re-enactment of their collective experience of a collective tragedy. Yet as the version of events that will be "preserved in posterity"[232] for the family's greater good is contained within Sir's ledger, so the sense of resistance to this truth is preserved for posterity within the text of the play. Thus the family's love and dependency will be preserved alongside the destructive elements of their relationships with each other that Sir's version of events reveals. In fact the entire fiction of the play prefigures the arguments that can be made about its own narrative functions as they will be deconstructed in Chapter Five, by moving us towards the acknowledgement of the play's status as a narrative itself, subject to the manipulation of individual will and historical time as much as any other; "it doesn't matter if it's true or not. . . it's part of the Butler lore."[233]

That the play closes with Sir alone on stage, looking about the set and dimming the lights as he leaves, suggests that Friel's interests in *Living Quarters* lie beyond exposing the Irish Catholic family as a flawed ideological model in itself, and in the ideological forces that have shaped it. However, at the end of the play the Butlers disappear not merely into the fictional world that they have come from, but into the fiction that they have invented themselves. This disappearance implies that despite the belated forgiveness and compassion enacted in the battle for narrative control within the play, Sir holds the only version of their lives that will stand the test of time within the pages of his ledger; that is, the only version apart from that enacted on stage.

Conclusion

The Irish Catholic families of *Long Day's Journey Into Night, The House, A Whistle in the Dark, Aristocrats* and *Living Quarters* thus examined in line with the *heimlich/unheimlich* of Freud's uncanny provide a productive entry point into examining representations of the Irish Catholic family on the twentieth-century stage. The collision of the homely and the unhomely in the plays, as we have seen, provides

[232] *Living Quarters*, 212.
[233] *Living Quarters*, 224/225.

the plays with their dramatic tension and their wider ideological significance. The domestic dysfunction enacted on stage challenges the mytho-historic domestic ideals that provide the foundation for the family's self-conception, and suggests an alternative, destructive domestic reality that exposes both the essentialising forces of narrative construction that allow such homogenous discourses of experiences to thrive and the potential dysfunctional reality of the Irish Catholic family itself. By juxtaposing a particular set of ideals against a contradictory reality physically enacted on stage, the alternative versions of the family that the representational models of the plays put forth thus succeed in deconstructing the ideological structures of mythory. Meanwhile, the plays subversions of dramatic form through the manipulation of realism heightens this process of deconstruction, while it also adds to the experience of the *heimlich/unheimlich* tension as an uncanny atmosphere felt by characters and audience alike.

However, while this chapter has established the ideal/reality conflict as symptomatic of a failed patriarchal model within the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays, the evolution of dramaturgical models and historical time has allowed the various manifestations of the uncanny in their work to develop from its beginnings as a literary model (exemplified in *Long Day's Journey Into Night*) to a more confrontational model engaged with exposing ideas of ideological and narrative dysfunction as well as domestic dysfunction in its dramatic form. Thus the verbal sparring of the Tyrone family is developed in *A Whistle in the Dark* and *The House* so that the collision of two versions of home carries physical and metaphoric associations that implicate a cultural, as well as family, inheritance in the family's tragedy. Similarly in *Aristocrats* and *Living Quarters* the concern with narratives of expression represented in the Butler and O'Donnell's uneasy relationship with their family history provides a convenient meta-dramatic narrative that points towards a deconstruction of both the processes that have constructed the Irish Catholic family as an ideological model, as well as the dysfunction of the model itself.

This extrapolation from an individual domestic narrative to the wider implications of a social, and then an ideological, narrative provides an important ending point to the theories put forward in this chapter, as it provides a structure of

representational practice through which to introduce the relationship between familial dysfunction and individual psychic crises that is the focus of the chapter that follows. For insofar as the conflict between different versions of home can be reduced to a conflict between public discourses and private experience, the private space of the home becomes a battleground for a second psychic conflict, between the expectations of the collective family unit and the private space of the individual mind.

Chapter Three

Divided Homes, Divided Psyches: Geopathology and the Uncanny Irish Home

The uncanny Irish Catholic families in the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays discussed in the previous chapter were characterised by the juxtaposition of the dramatic family's domestic experiences with prevailing mytho-historic ideals. The juxtaposition of the physical environment - whose apparent domesticity suggests refuge and security - with the oppressive atmosphere of the domestic site created a suspended tension between the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich* in which domestic structures were gradually dissolved, often to tragic effect. However, the environmental and ideological disruption characteristic of the dysfunctional dramatic Irish Catholic families can be read in symptomatic relation to a greater spiritual problem at stake in the plays; For if the uncanny Irish Catholic home is deliberately placed in a relationship of physical marginality to the wider social world, the individual within the home experiences this marginality on a psychic level, whereby alienation is understood both on the wider level of social exclusion and from within the unit of the family itself. As the alternative versions of home collide with each other, as the previous chapter has illustrated, the individual characters enter a space *between* both versions, a liminal space in which their lives are lived out in various modes of existential crisis.

While the previous chapter argued that the conflict between ideology and reality invoked a tension that jettisoned the specifics of place (the site of the Irish Catholic home) for a wider idealised cultural space, this chapter will examine how individual identity is also sacrificed in the process; a sacrifice that takes the form for our purposes here as a violent battle of wills for emotional freedom within, and physical freedom from, the site of the uncanny dramatic Irish Catholic home. This chapter will thus move on from the discussion of inter-personal relationships within the dramatic Irish Catholic family defined in the previous chapter, to examine how the dysfunction of these domestic relationships is reflected in the development of individual identity itself within the plays. This identitarian focus will be reflected

through the central male characters in the plays already established within the uncanny domestic paradigm, while adding two more important plays, *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* and *Conversations on a Homecoming,* to the argument to strengthen the identification of the home-identity dysfunction that is the central interest of this chapter.

The exploration of the relationship between home and personal identity in the dramatic Irish Catholic family unit will be facilitated by a critical engagement with the concept of geopathology, which has already produced a more oblique entry point into the methodological introduction in Chapter One.[234] This chapter, however, will engage directly with Chaudhuri's thesis on the problematic relationship between place and personality in modern drama. The concept of geopathology will provide a theoretical framework through which a discussion of the problematic psychic development of individual characters in the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays can be structured, allowing us to trace the root of this problem back to the site of the individual's origin, the uncanny Irish Catholic home described and theorised in Chapter Two.

In her definition of geopathology as the psychic manifestation of place as problem, Chaudhuri draws attention to the home as both the condition for and the obstacle to the psychological coherence of individual identity development. While home is represented as an ideal of refuge and security for the individual, it is also established as a place of entrapment from which the individual, seeking to escape and assert his independence, is ultimately bound by feelings of guilt and responsibility. Chaudhuri describes the mutual dependency that these feelings foster as a "contradictory conditionality"[235] that binds the individual to home despite his desire to be free. John Wilson Foster, in a different context, invokes this experience as 'topophobia'; that is a "hatred of place that ensnares the self"[236] and fosters the coexistence of the

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[234] p.p.64-66.
[235] Chaudhuri, 1997, 8.
[236] John Wilson Foster, *Colonial Consequences: Essays in Irish Literature and Culture* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1991), 31.

contradictory feelings of dependency and loathing that are characteristic of the individual's relationship with the home in twentieth-century drama.

Chaudhuri ascribes two principles to the geopathic consciousness: "victimage of location", whereby place (or placeless-ness) positions the self/individual as victim; and "heroism of departure", the shedding of victim-hood through departure and the attainment of final independence.[237] These principles, she argues, structure the plot, as well as the plays' account of subjectivity and identity; the individual's experience of the first geopathic principle as an existential crisis leads him towards the latter, a recognition of the need for (if not the actual enactment) of departure from the home.

The uncanny homes described in Chapter Two located the first principle of Chaudhuri's thesis, victimage of location, in the Irish Catholic home, where domestic dysfunction positioned the individual as victim of his environmental conditions; the individual's subjectivity (and henceforth his instability) is determined in relation to place. The individual finds means of coping with the existential crisis induced by these conditions in a series of survival mechanisms that enable his social participation on a number of levels. These mechanisms vary in their approach and their effect, from the negative implications of drug or alcohol addiction to the more successful tactic of inventing oneself along with a different logic of home (one that conforms to accepted domestic ideals).

Chaudhuri's second principle of geopathic consciousness, meanwhile, is invoked in the individual's heightened awareness that departure from the home is the only possible solution to their existential crisis; they are so bound by the paradoxical dictates of their geopathic experience, however, that physical departure from the home is either an aspirational impossibility or, if achieved, a false and failed means of psychic resolution. While geopathology in its manifestation as psychic exile in the dramatic Irish Catholic home indeed leads to an impulse towards the heroic departure theorised by Chaudhuri, such a solution would ultimately direct the heroes towards an essentialised idea of unified self-hood similarly tied to particular constructions of place as a condition of personal identity. In fact, the heroic departure offered by the geopathic thesis actually reinforces the concept of a fixed individualistic identity, one

[237] Chaudhuri, 1997, 63.

that misguidedly constructs itself in accordance with a particular place (here, 'not home') and will be defeated again, as we will see in Chapter Four, by the psychic repercussions of physical exile.

Instead of following Chaudhuri's logic towards its conclusion, then, this chapter will centre on the paradoxes surrounding departure which the individual experiences; that is exploring how the impossibility of fulfilling the desire to depart is constantly offset by the consequences of staying, producing a damned-if-you-do/damned-if-you-don't logic characteristic of the *heimlich/unheimlich* domestic experience in the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays. As John Joe in *A Crucial Week in the Life of a Grocer's Assistant* insists "It's not just a case of staying or going"[238]; For as the geopathic consciousness examined from within the site of the Irish Catholic home suggests, the site-specific identification of place and personality forces a sense of metaphysical alienation upon the individual who does not feel *at home* either within the physical site of home or away from it.

This chapter will focus specifically on the development of individual identity within the Irish Catholic family unit in line with the primary logic of Chaudhuri's geopathology, whereupon the allegiance of place and personality in symbiotic relationship is reflected in the problematic psychic development of the individual within the family unit. The victimage of location of Chaudhuri's thesis is expressed in the individual's struggle to thrive within the dysfunctional site of the dramatic home, which, in line with its governing mytho-historic framework, subjugates individual will to the greater good of the family unit. The individual battles against this bind of mutual responsibility as it is enforced within a particular hierarchy of authority that determines the individual's psychic development. This particular patriarchal hierarchy condemns the male characters in the plays to a state of perpetual adolescence, where the rite of passage for their accession to adulthood is continuously denied.

It is at this point of tension in the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays (where the paradoxical tension between home and not home is at its most inevitable and

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[238] Tom Murphy, *A Crucial Week in the LIfe of a Grocer's Assistant*, in *Plays Four* (London: Methuen, 1999), 103.

inexorable) that the strategies of survival that Chaudhuri exemplifies in her geopathic diagnosis take over. These strategies are strategies of evasion, represented in negative form as physical and psychological addiction (alcoholism, obsession, compulsion), and in less immediately destructive form as performative strategies (acting, dissimulation, self-deception) that enable the characters "to *occupy* spaces without *inhabiting* them."[239] While these coping mechanisms provide the characters with an emotional distance from the destructive realities of home, and a psychic distance for the individual from the trauma of their own geopathic condition, these strategies only serve to alienate the characters further from their environment and the essential self that they search for in their quest for independence from the home. The geopathic condition thus becomes both a causal and a symptomatic condition of the dysfunctional dramatic home, forcing self and space into a paradoxical coexistence that echoes the *heimlich/unheimlich* tension of Freud's uncanny and threatens the survival of both.

The psychic instability expressed as part of the geopathic experience in the Irish Catholic home will be examined in the O'Neill, Friel, and Murphy plays in a tripartite structure. Firstly, the problematics of male identity will be explored through the condition of arrested adulthood as a state in which the negative strategies of existential evasion find their fullest expression in physical and psychological addictions that deny the full development of individual identity. Secondly, the underlying strategies of representation in the split-personality syndrome in the various plays will be explored by way of its unmistakable relationship to the negotiation of identity within the home. While Chaudhuri herself does not identify the split personality as a geopathic symptom, theorising this split personality device as 'geopathic schizophrenia' ensures that the argument retains its theoretical anchor in Chaudhuri's thesis even as its own interests push her logic towards a more advanced conclusion. Finally, the focus of the argument in this chapter will shift to examine the concept of performance in the plays as a temporary process of healing for the characters, providing an enabling façade of unified self-hood that facilitates a certain

[239] Ibid.

measure of social survival for the individual both outside of and within the family home.

However, what the tripartite structure of this chapter aims to reveal is that the strategies of survival employed by the characters push them further away from achieving their desired goal. While this reinforces the paradox of Chaudhuri's geopathic structure, it also reinforces the impossibility of heroic departure as a means of existential resolution. It is on the basis of this realisation, then, that this thesis can progress towards examining the relationship between psychic and physical exile that structures the plays' exploration of individual identity development.

Arrested Adulthood and Perpetual Adolescence: "You can be a boy here forever as long as the old fellow is alive"[240]

Geopathology in the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays is expressed as an experience of place as problem, dramatically centred in the site of the Irish Catholic home. Operating against an ideological background of mytho-historic domestic idealisation, the individual characters experience home through a series of dysfunctional relationships that accord with Freud's theory of the uncanny. These interfamilial relationships are defined by mutual dependencies in which individual will is subjected to familial obligation despite individual desire for independence. The constant position of subjugation creates difficulties for individual identity development in the plays, as reflected in the adolescent mentality of the central male characters in the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays which can be diagnosed in line with Chaudhuri's geopathic thesis.

In the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays the domestically-inflected geopathology is mediated almost exclusively through the lens of masculinity and in the interpersonal relationships of father and son. The inability of fathers to provide a model of independent masculinity for their sons, and their reluctance to yield to the burgeoning authority of their sons' adult selves, reveals a culture of partial identity formation in the plays that is reflected in the characterisation of male identity within a

[240] Arensberg and Kimball, 2001, 55.

state of arrested adulthood or perpetual adolescence. However, the inter-generational conflict also begins a pathology of geopathic experience, whereby identity crises are passed down from generation to generation, with its eventual manifestation as a split-personality syndrome characteristic of the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays.

Critics Richard Pine, Fintan O'Toole, Elmer Andrews and Declan Kiberd have commented on the culture of partial identity formation in the plays of Brian Friel and Tom Murphy particularly. Andrews, for example, proposes that individual subjectivity is represented "as process, not fixity"[241] in Brian Friel's plays, while Declan Kiberd has drawn attention to the tendency towards provisional identity models in twentieth-century Irish drama by referencing the work of Tom Murphy, reading identity in the Murphy plays as a "provisional complex at a point in time" rather than a "fixed, unitary entity."[242]

Further to this accepted reading of character formation in the Friel and Murphy plays are the extended theses of Richard Pine and Fintan O'Toole, which argue - in different capacities - that inadequate identity development in twentieth-century Irish drama is the root of the identity crises in the plays. Pine chooses to define this crisis through the post-colonial moment, reflecting the "gap or discontinuity in experience" of the characters by way of the postcolonial characterisation of "transitive beings"[243] made popular by Homi Bhabha. O'Toole, meanwhile, implicates the identity crises in the Murphy plays as an inevitable product of Ireland's problematic social development from a relatively underdeveloped traditional culture to an industrialised society. Both critics agree, however, that psychic resolution for the characters in the plays will be achieved at the moment when adolescence is cast off and adulthood achieved.

While neither Pine nor O'Toole draws particular attention to the domestic structures that foster psychic conditions in the plays, O'Toole's statement that "repressed childhood fears must be banished for accession to adulthood"[244], and Pine's assertion that the characters "need to re-experience the transistus from

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[241] Andrews, 1995, 78.
[242] Declan Kiberd, 'Theatre as Opera: The Gigli Concert' in Jordan ed., 2000, 146.
[243] Richard Pine, *The Diviner: The Art of Brian Friel* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 1999), 283.
[244] O'Toole, 1994, 85.

childhood to adulthood and to understand what was not understood at the time"[245], implicitly acknowledges a starting point for exploring the psychic crises in the plays within the domestic culture of the Irish Catholic home, even if they do not reveal any interest in exploring this connection themselves. However, the critics' focus on the negative implications of identity development in a wider social context, as a "disjunction between the public world of shared values and responsibilities, and the private world of family and duties"[246], inadvertently provides a model for discussing identity formation in the dramatic model of the dysfunctional Irish Catholic family. By transposing the public/private disjunction of this social model to the family model itself, the particular responsibility of the family for the inadequacies of identity development can be brought to bear; it is the disjunction between the shared values and responsibilities of the private world of family duty and the needs and desires of the private self that complicates the process of identity development within the Irish Catholic families of twentieth-century drama.

The internalisation of the disjunction between private and public worlds of experience in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* provides a dramatic model for exploring the phenomenon of arrested adulthood in the Friel and Murphy plays. Although the psychic experience of geopathology in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* is primarily embodied in the maternal figure of Mary Tyrone, Eugene O'Neill's exploration of male identity in the relationship between father and sons provides a significant starting point from which to examine the problematics of male identity development in twentieth-century representations of the Irish Catholic family. While their individual crises are, on one level, revealed as a condition of their dependency on Mary for a resolution to their psychic instability, the inability of father and sons to function as independent beings outside of their relationship with Mary suggests that a wider crisis of authority in the play is at the root of their geopathology and their uncanny experiences within the home.

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[245] Pine, 1999, 263.
[246] O'Toole, 1994, 181.

O'Neill anchors his conception of individual identity to the environment in which it is nurtured (or not nurtured); that is, of course, the site of the home. In the dramatic model offered by Chaudhuri, but complemented by the sociological and historical models of modern identity formation suggested by Cote and Taylor,[247] the condition of home as place conditions the internal self and the publicly performed personality. Thus the failure of individual adult identity development can be connected to the failure of the communal environment of home to provide the stable ground on which the self can develop, thrive and function independently; the individual's psychic alienation can be traced to the site of its physical conditioning.

Pfister refers to O'Neill's model of identity formation as a model of "psychological determinism"[248], a concept not unlike the pathological nature of Chaudhuri's geopathology, whereby an individual's personality is determined by an inherited psychological history; it is the past that has determined their present and will shape their future. Indeed, the cycle of geopathology in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* begins not with Mary and James Tyrone, but with their parents' exilic experiences as Irish emigrants; problematic identity formation and its particular relation to place is, for the Tyrones, an inherited psychological legacy. The shared individual/environmental connection resonates throughout the generations, as uncanny environmental conditions prevent the individual family members from separating their individual futures from the familial fate.

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[247] Cote's discussion of arrested adulthood directly links identity development to the identity of the group, which he defines in the modern period as the nuclear family. With the passing into capitalism, however, he observes that while the individual loses his affiliation to a social community, the dissolution of communal social structures brought about in the ensuing transformation of the family as the basic unit of society unit saw the individual turned inwards to the site of home for the fulfilment of his individual and social needs despite its diminished status. Taylor, meanwhile, takes this argument to its logical extreme in his suggestion that the individualisation of society led directly to the internalisation of identity development; its transfer from the public world of social/economic roles to the private sphere of the home. See Cote, 2000 and Taylor, 1989.

[248] Joel Pfister's identification of 'psychological determinism' in O'Neill's work is indebted to a culturally materialist methodology that identifies O'Neill's work with a context of psychoanalysis gaining currency during O'Neill's lifetime. Pfister uses the epic nine-act play *Strange Interlude* to demonstrate O'Neill's most self-conscious use of contemporary psychological models. He connects the models of identity development in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* to a similar tradition, suggesting that the changing economic structures of capitalism in the early twentieth century reformulated the fundamental "social agency" of the modern family as a "self-absorbed psychological unit" (Pfister, 1995, 28).

In *Long Day's Journey Into Night* Edmund and Jamie's failure to reach full psychic development provide two adolescent personalities through which we can explore models of identity development in the play. Although Edmund is twenty-four and Jamie ten years older, the Tyrone sons are characterised by an excessive dependence on their mother and an adolescent resistance to their father, and they have yet to enter the arena of independent adult experience. They struggle to assert themselves within a model of modern identity formation which defines the individual through his interpersonal relationships – the sons' difficult domestic relationships are echoed in their social isolation - and that measures the individual as a series of accomplishments - Jamie attempts to distinguish himself as an actor, Edmund as a seaman. Ultimately, however, neither has managed to forge an independent site of successful existence or a path of experience outside of the home.

The conflict between the brothers, meanwhile, provides another reinforcement of the relationship between failed domestic structures and problematic identity development. The antagonism between the pair draws attention to the mutual binds of dependency and loathing that define interpersonal relationships within the Irish Catholic family. The brothers' relationship is defined by a sense of failed fraternal responsibilities and is played out in a competition for verbal supremacy. Although their geopathic crises can be traced back to Mary's addiction, the brothers participate in a blame game with each other. Ultimately, however, they further yield their adult responsibility to greater forces as they look for a resolution to their psychic trauma; Jamie seeks refuge in the substitute mother-figure of a prostitute, Josie, who temporarily envelops his insecurities in her flesh, while Edmund seeks to hand over control of his life to nature; the natural forces in life, not rational choice, he hopes, will guide him towards psychic resolution.

Jamie and Edmund's refusal of responsibility is a similar strategy of survival to that which their morphine-addicted mother takes on, and they heighten this association by repeating the pattern of addiction that she has set, as it allows them to avoid their own responsibilities to the reality around them. By repeating their mother's failure, however, they are repeating the very cycle of dependence that characterises their geopathic crises, rather than escaping it.

Jamie and Edmund's dependence on their mother is matched by an adolescent resistance to the authority of their father which follows the Freudian paradigm of the Oedipus complex that O'Neill subscribed to in many of the plays that Pfister focuses on in his psychoanalytic readings. Placing this context against the culturally specific Irish Catholic family model already established in Chapter One, however, opens up a particular framework for exploring the father-son conflict in the play. Referring back to the material model of delayed inheritance described by Arensberg and Kimball - which ensured the prolonged domination of the patriarchal figure within the Irish Catholic family, for example - suggests a model of adult male maturity that is continually deferred until the father figure yields authority. As the father figure, thus, refuses to concede his dominant position, he becomes the chief engineer of the family's collective fate, and in the pathological culture of problematic identity development this can only have negative implications.

The relationship between James Tyrone and his sons complements such a reading, as the sons' intense resistance to their father suggests. Tyrone is the chief negotiator of his sons' identities in the play, despite what the brothers' mother-fixation may indicate. The struggle for authority between father and sons is metaphorically embedded in their conflicting literary tastes. Jamie and Edmund reject the universal humanism that Tyrone finds in Shakespeare in favour of the nihilistic pessimism of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, which they identify with philosophical developments of modern life and their own existential positions. Tyrone's classical pose, however, is not merely a defence against the alienating modern reality that he shares with his sons; by refusing to acknowledge the possible literary worth of their choice of reading he is rejecting not just the passage of literary history, but the passage to independent adulthood of his sons.

The relationship between sons and father is played out over economics; Tyrone establishes his authority by asserting control over the finances of the family, while arguments are fought over issues like electricity and the cost of medical treatment. By controlling the family's finances and their individual livelihoods Tyrone is the ultimate arbiter of the family's fate as a unit; but he also controls the

individual fates of his sons, who have yet to reach the desired state of independent adulthood.

With his elder son Jamie, Tyrone exerts his control by limiting Jamie's expenditure. While Jamie has no means of defending himself from this assault on his independence, he violently resists his father's authority on every other level. However, Jamie's defensive position is fraught with an implicit irony; Jamie hates his father because he needs him in order to retain any economic freedom or social independence. Furthermore, as a failing actor Jamie is dependent on his father's patronage, yet his failure is equally bound up with this patronage; Jamie fears that he will never emulate his father's success. Even if he were to gain economic independence, by following in his father's footsteps he will never be free of his influence; Jamie will always live under the shadow of his father's reputation as one of the greatest American actors of all time.

Tyrone's control over Edmund, meanwhile, is somewhat less extensive but ultimately more powerful; by controlling the decision over where Edmund goes for medical treatment Tyrone wields the ultimate power as an arbiter of life and death. Tyrone's refusal to accept the significance of this role, however, is a refusal of responsibility that suggests his own adolescent status and places him in a similar geopathic position to that of his sons which will be discussed later in the chapter through the function of the performance metaphor in the play. This theoretical identification between father and sons is particularly significant; it suggests that until Tyrone himself ascends beyond the limits of his own geopathic position, his sons' identities will continue to remain limited by their partiality. The pathology of geopathology is fulfilled.

A similar provisionality of identity is reflected in the adult male individuals in the Friel and Murphy plays, who exist in a state of arrested adulthood that is defined by their relationships with the father figures in the plays. Having passed through the physical rites of passage into adulthood, the male individuals in the Friel and Murphy plays have not yet fully developed adult personalities. Through a relationship with the

home that encourages psychological, material and economic dependence, Friel's and Murphy's men are psychically stunted, caught in a limbo between childhood and maturity that is manifested in various strategies of infantilisation in the plays. In *A Whistle in the Dark,* for example, the Carney brothers' adolescent natures are expressed in the childish language with which they express themselves, while in *Aristocrats* Casimir's childish imaginary world exists concomitantly with the fictional adult world that he draws around himself for the sake of public appearance.

Following on from *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, it is interesting to turn first to *A Whistle in the Dark* in which Murphy explores the implications of the failure of home in the partial nature of male identity as it is dramatised in the relationship between brothers. The intra-psychic tensions of the Carney brothers and their individual states of continuing adolescence are manifested in the aggressive and violent strategies of resistance, which provide them with compensation for the lack of collective support within the family realm, and provide the audience with a further indication of the wider spiritual implications of the uncanny domestic environment. While the conflict between father and sons is strongly represented in the relationship between Michael and Dada, and is reinforced by the brothers' collective rejection of their father at the dramatic climax, the oedipal conflict remains sublimated in the relationship between the brothers for much of the play. Although the exile of any potential mother figure from the stage makes Dada both the focus of his sons' attentions and the chief arbiter of their identities, it is the competition between the various expressions of inadequate masculine identity that the brothers embody that creates the context in which the tragedy plays out.

In *Long Day's Journey Into Night* the fraternal difference is expressed verbally, but in *A Whistle in the Dark* the clash between Michael, social aspirant, and his brothers, social deviants, is represented in full and violent escalation. Underneath the conflict, however, there is an insistence on a common identity - characterised by their shared loyalty to the family unit - which binds them together in a dangerous and mutually antagonistic cycle of hatred and love that denies them accession to the fully independent realm of adulthood.

The brothers Harry, Hugo and Iggy provide the most straightforward paradigm for exploring the partial identity formation associated with geopathology, as their emigration, while suggestive of a strategy of independence, serves as nothing more than a relocation of their adolescent selves to a new environment; their emigration is merely a move from one site of dependence (the family home) to another (Michael's home). Furthermore, outside of their social context, the certainty of family values on which they based their individual and collective identity is left open to question and, potentially, restructuring, but they can only deal with this disruption by reformulating existing antagonisms in different forms.

This transposition of specific antagonisms associated with home to their new site of being provides an emotional anchor for the brothers, a means of self-identification in an alien environment. They employ this coping mechanism in their familial relationships, transferring the dependency and loathing that defines the father-son complex of resentment in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* to the secondary figure of authority in their lives, their eldest brother Michael. While Dada has lost the external referents of his authority (his job, his social standing), Michael has gained them. However, despite its obsolete reality, Dada's symbolic authority is so pervasive that resistance to it is transposed entirely onto the closest figure of comparison. The brothers' idealisation of Dada is thus matched in oedipal terms by their resentment of Michael; Dada becomes idealised as a victim, and Michael demonised as an enemy. Thus as Michael becomes a substitute father figure for his brothers he also becomes the victim of their adolescent hatred, and the brothers' resentment of Michael serves as a displacement of the oedipal drive from their father to their elder brother, despite the ostensible context of the conflict that the faction fight with the Mulryans provides.

Harry, Hugo and Iggy are characterised within a template of arrested adulthood through the juxtaposition of their behaviour and their physicality. The contrast between their physical maturity and their psychic immaturity is marked. Hugo, for example, is known as 'The Iron Man' but his stutter and the inversion of gender in his speech highlights a child-like facility with language that undermines his hulking physicality and points towards psychic immaturity as the root of his problem. The speech patterns of the other brothers, characterised by a series of diminutives and

childhood nursery jingles, are also indicative of their problematic identity development and their failure to reach psychic adulthood. But where the Carney brothers lack the verbal capacity for self-expression, they express themselves physically, striking out against a family structure and a world system that they are powerless to change. The fight with the Mulryans may suggest a determination to uphold familial identity, but it simultaneously represents an attempt to destroy it.

When Harry says of Michael that "he doesn't know me outside"[249] he reveals a template of masculine identity development that is echoed throughout the plays. Having been denied self-expression by both father and brother the fundamental problematic of Harry's existence is revealed: Harry has been denied the capacity to speak for and define himself; "There's been so many good intelligent blokes for so long explaining things to thick lads." Having been defined as one of the "thick lads (that) don't feel, they can't be offended"[250], Harry here reveals that they can. Harry's adult identity has been paralysed by the lacuna that has opened up between his public capacity for self-expression and his private desire to exist independently outside of the domestic referents that define him. The dissolution of Dada's authority presents him with a similar problem to that faced by the Tyrone brothers in *Long Day's Journey Into Night*; it destroys the foundations on which he has based his sense of self, in both private terms and public expression. However, Dada's downfall also indicates the pathology of psychic trauma generated by Dada's own geopathic experiences within the oppressive social environment of Mayo, and the full repercussions of this inherited pathology will be discussed later in the chapter through the metaphoric mechanics of performance as they simultaneously enable Dada's survival and enhance his psychic trauma.

The various members of the O'Donnell family in *Aristocrats* provide an interesting parallel to the Carney brothers, as the various coping mechanisms that the O'Donnell children have devised allow them to function with a greater degree of adult

[249] *A Whistle in the Dark*, 89.
[250] Ibid.

conviction than the Carney brothers can. They have adopted a series of strategies of evasion that enable them to function in a public capacity with a convincing degree of adult normalcy; when they return to the family home, however, their various approaches begin to break down and they are brought back to the adolescent level of consciousness that defined their experiences in the uncanny Irish Catholic home of their childhood. Their convincing façade of fully-fledged adulthood may allow them to function in the social world, but it is not until their Father dies that the domestic cycle can be fully broken and that their personal redemption and individual, independent fulfilment will be made truly possible.

The geopathology of the characters in *Aristocrats* is expressed through a paralysing fear of their father that is completely unfounded in the present experience of the play; their father has been incapacitated by a stroke for several years, and cannot even recognise, let alone discipline, them. Despite their father's physical powerlessness, however, the O'Donnell children are trapped in a cycle of fear and subordination. Individually they have adopted the various strategies of evasion exemplified in Chaudhuri's geopathic model, but physical acts of departure and the mental oblivion of drunken obliteration do not equate with the psychic liberation that the characters ultimately desire.

Judith, for example, emigrated to England with her boyfriend, in an assertion of independence from the family's prejudices and its oppressive domestic structure. When her relationship failed, however, as her parents had predicted, she handed her daughter up for adoption and returned home to take care of the parents who resent her. Her life at Ballybeg Hall is defined completely by her role as carer, her own needs being subordinated to the needs of her invalid father.

Judith's younger sister Alice has also emigrated, but physical distance is not commensurate with psychic peace for her either, and she is drawn into a web of addiction and alcohol abuse. She manages to control her addictive tendencies while she is away but they are magnified on her return, and serve to heighten the crisis that she hoped to be relieved from. Her refusal (possible inability) to have children draws attention to her own position of arrested adulthood: she cannot have children because mentally she is still a child herself.

It is through the principal male character in *Aristocrats*, however, that we get a full sense of the geopathic implications for the individual within the uncanny Irish Catholic home, and Casimir provides a particularly interesting counterpoint to the male aggression that characterised the Carney brothers' strategy of self-assertion in the world. While the disparity between the physicality of the Carney brother's and their psychic development drew attention to their geopathic condition, the combination of psychological fragility and physical delicacy in Casimir's character highlights the inadequacy of his identity development. From the game-playing rituals that define his relationship with Claire, to the fabricated illusions of his adult life, Friel places Casimir in a limbo between childhood and adulthood that allows him to occupy the space of either world but commit to neither; Casimir exists, then, in the geopathic space that lies between both.

Caismir's early acknowledgement and acceptance of what he calls his own 'difference' allows him to maintain a façade of normalcy, even as he is fighting to find some reconciliation between the private world that he psychically inhabits and the public world that he must live in. Casimir, then, performs a fictional life within the boundaries of normality (partaking imaginatively in the social rituals of marriage and fatherhood), not just for the benefit of those he loves but also for himself; these consist of "certain compensatory recognitions" that allow him to live within the "very confined territories"[251] of reconciliation between the public and private landscapes of his mind. As Elmer Andrews rightly suggests Casimir's fictionalising memory functions as both "an avoidance of reality and a creation of identity"[252]; the identity that it creates, however, is merely temporary and totally dependent on public affirmation.

Casmir's fictions are, then, always subject to the laws of reality and actual experience. When he returns to Ballybeg Hall, for example, his strategies of defiance are broken down and the geopathic consciousness of his still-adolescent self is revealed. When he hears his father's voice booming through the room via the intercom, he is reduced to a childhood pose of fear and self-protection, even as his

[251] *Aristocrats,* 310.
[252] Andrews, 1995, 154.

adult-self knows that his father is, in fact, now powerless. While his strategy of coping may differ from the Carney's violent resistance of an unsatisfactory reality, Casimir is in the same position of not being able to shake off his father's authority; until his father dies, Casimir is denied the capacity to become a man.

As an only son in the Butler family in *Living Quarters*, Ben's position is similar to Casimir's. While Casimir manages to find a social space for himself in his public life that belies his psychic insecurity, Ben's independence has both spatial and psychic limits and he never manages to escape the domestic context or find wider self-expression in the public world. Ben's inability to leave Ballybeg barracks and his simultaneous inability to function within the family home finds expression in his geopathic consciousness, which denies him the transcendence of psychic adolescence towards fully independent maturity. While Ben does not live within the family home, the provisional or temporary nature of his substitute home suggests that he lives in a kind of limbo between childhood and adulthood that is fully corroborated by the nature of his relationship with his father.

Ben lives in a caravan at the edge of the barracks, and this liminal site places him in a marginal position within the socially marginalised family. Ben's adult life has been punctuated with attempted departures and disappearances. He spent a year at university in Dublin, for example, but had a nervous breakdown and returned home, and every few months he runs off to England or Scotland with grand ambitions but always ends up poor and despondent and on the boat home. In his caravan, however, he can maintain a safe distance from, but a close enough proximity to, the domestic environment that serves as much as a necessary condition for the maintenance of his sense of self as it functions as an obstacle to his psychological independence.

The characterisation of Ben in an oppositional relationship to his father echoes the conflicting paternal relationships of *Long Day's Journey Into Night* and *A Whistle in the Dark,* where the excess of patriarchal authority and the paradoxical inadequacy of the paternal function inhibits the development of the adult male identity of the son. Ben's arrested adulthood is referenced through his inability to survive outside of the

domestic referents, through the feminisation of his character as a "mother's boy"[253], and through the broken speech patterns of his stutter, which reveal an incapacity for self-expression and the partial nature of his identity formation.

Following the model established in *A Whistle in the Dark,* in the absence of a mother figure Frank becomes the focal point of Ben's frustration and resentment. However, the potential oedipal implications set as precedent in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* are taken further by Friel in his adoption of the Phaedra myth as a structuring narrative to his play. As Ben is unable to get the emotional support that he needs from his father and finds that alcohol does not provide the self-obliterating comfort that will alleviate his psychic trauma, he turns to his father's new wife for the nurture and stability that he needs to mend the growing gap between the adolescent self that he is and the adult man he wants to be. As his father cannot provide the model of independent masculinity that he needs, a relationship with Anna becomes a means of independently fulfilling his adult masculine role, as well as a means of getting back at his father.

Friel, however, subverts the traditional oedipal complex (and the original Greek source for this play, *Hippolytus*) by providing an alternative ending to the Euripidean tragedy at the very beginning of Act One. By having the father figure, rather than the mother figure, commit suicide, Friel draws a geopathic parallel between son and father that is symptomatic of the essential pathology of geopathic experience that has been identified in *Long Day's Journey Into Night, A Whistle in the Dark* and *Aristocrats*; without a stable identity himself, Frank has not been able to provide the stable container for identity that Ben ultimately needs. On one level, Frank's suicide could be interpreted as a gesture of redemption for his son, a submission of masculine authority to the younger generation; as the fatal night for the Butler family is replayed, however, father and son remain unreconciled.

Yet, despite his knowledge of his father's fate, Ben still looks to him for the resolution of his psychic trauma. For even though Frank is the focus of Ben's frustration and resentment, he is also the focus of Ben's attempted redemption and the means through which Ben seeks to resolve his geopathic crisis. Like Gar in

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[253] *Living Quarters*, 175.

Philadelphia, Here I Come!, Ben's final attempt to resolve the fractured identity that defines his experience with the world is articulated in a gesture that he makes towards his father after years of mutual rejection. This gesture, like Gar's, is also articulated through memory, as Ben stutters his way through sentences that recreate a fictional memory of closeness between them.

The image of vulnerability that Ben chooses to express his relationship to his father, reminds us of psychic immaturity, but also points towards the means to its resolution:

> Ben: "My head was on your knees - and you had one hand on the driving wheel - and your other hand kept s- s- s- s- - your other hand kept- . . .
>
> Frank: . . .*(Irritably to Ben.)* What is it? What is it?
>
> Ben: With your other hand, your free hand, you all the way home you kept stroking my face, my face, my cheeks, my forehead- . .
>
> Frank: *(To Ben)* Not now, later, please-
>
> Ben: But what I want to tell you Father, and what I want you to know is that I-
>
> Frank: *(Leaving)* Some other time. . . .[254]

It is not until Frank has taken his own life that Ben can enunciate that which he has wanted to communicate to his father; that "ever since I was a child I always loved him . . . he was always my hero." Even though this "wouldn't have been the truth, it wouldn't have been a lie either"[255], and, crucially, it would have been an expression of what they both needed - a compassionate connection that could have served to resolve the geopathic crises of both father and son.

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[254] *Living Quarters*, 228.
[255] *Living Quarters*, 245.

Geopathic Schizophrenia and the Split Personality: "The two of ye together might make up a decent man"[256]

While Freud's theory of the uncanny, as we have seen in Chapter Two, provides a model for discussing the relationship between the individual and the Irish Catholic family unit in twentieth-century drama, the uncanny can also be engaged with on a deeper psychic level to complement the discussion of identity development that is the focus of this chapter; the *heimlich/unheimlich* paradox that reflects an exterior physical reality established in the dramatic environment also infiltrates the inner workings of the individual characters' minds, as the above analysis of individual identity development within the geopathic framework has suggested. While the geopathic effect of individual identity development has so far provided an oblique complement to the *heimlich/unheimlich* binary of Freud's engagement with the modern home, his theory of the uncanny can also be engaged with on a direct level to discuss the split personalities characterised as an extreme crisis of the geopathic condition when the *heimlich/unheimlich* binary is applied directly within the inner workings of the mind itself. Combining the mutual interests of the Freudian and Chaudhurian model allows us to anchor the extreme geopathic condition of the split personality in the material environmental conditions of the home, and to connect this linkage through the single coined phrase 'geopathic schizophrenia.' Geopathic schizophrenia will thus refer to the split personalities dramatised as a consequence of the problematic relationship with place in the uncanny Irish Catholic homes of twentieth-century drama, where the pressures of the binary experience of home as both the condition for individual development and the barrier to individual independence is a binary that splits the self in two.

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[256] Tom Murphy, *Conversations on a Homecoming* in Tom Murphy, *Plays: 2* (London: Methuen Drama, 1993), 68.

Freud expresses the psychic experience of the uncanny as a "doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self"[257], and Richard Pine has applied this logic to the plays of Brian Friel, where the "divided mind oscillating between public and private, (is) conscious always of the doppelganger at its shoulder."[258] Individual identity development expressed as a divided mind split between public self-expression and private self-conceptualisation is a dramatic device in the O'Neill and Murphy plays as well, where the idea of the doubled or divided self structures both the thematics and the dramaturgy of the plays and further problematises the construction of identity as it is configured in relation to home.

The problematic presentation of Gar's psychic experience in *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* which Pine's statement directly invokes, for example, is a typical illustration of how the use of the split personality as a dramatic device can question both the audiences' expectations of the play within the traditional realist framework, as well as interrogate the conceptualisation of human subjectivity. The split personality device allows the playwright to differentiate between the individual who speaks and the individual who is represented by the act of speaking, between the individual who experiences and the individual who is represented by his actions - a differentiation that draws our attention back to the fracture of rhetoric and reality that defined the discussion of mythory in Chapter One.

While the tension between the public social sphere and the private domestic sphere, conceptualised in Chapter Two, exists as a tension between the public and private functions of the Irish Catholic family, the presence of the doubled self on stage *internalises* these tensions, revealing anxieties between the public and private manifestations of the veridical self - that is the authentic self that the individual recognises as his truest expression. The dissolution of a single unified conception of Irishness that Fintan O'Toole theorises in the 'Double Worlds' essay that has already provided us with a useful template for structuring the arguments of this thesis,[259] is turned inward for the dramatisation of the male psyche as a double (and incompatible) experience of the self.

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[257] Freud, 1966, 306.
[258] Pine, 1999, 164.
[259] p.p.14 -15.

The dual on-stage presence of public and private consciousness in *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*, for example, illustrates the splitting of the psyche brought on as a consequence of inadequate identity development within the Irish Catholic family and the continual suppression of individual instinct for the wider family good. However, the divided/doubled self is actualised on stage in more oblique ways in the other plays that illustrate the manifested experiences of geopathic schizophrenia in the dramatic Irish Catholic home. In *Dancing at Lughnasa,* for example, past and present versions of Michael appear in the theatrical texture, if not in the physical reality of the performance, drawing attention to the constructed nature of both memory (and mythory) and the individual self, while in the figure of Casimir in *Aristocrats,* the conflicting selves of his private fantasy and his public self-representation suggests a sense of co-existent double-ness necessary for survival in both the family unit and the public social world. In *Conversations on a Homecoming,* meanwhile, Tom Murphy uses two separate characters to invoke the dual nature of the individual rent asunder by geopathic experience. Furthermore, by deliberately invoking the pub in which the play is set as a substitute home, Murphy makes the link between place and personality, and the resultant schizophrenic effects, explicit; the divided self is the natural consequence of the divided uncanny home.

We can look to *Long Day's Journey Into Night* for a dramatic precedent for the representation of the binary conflicts of the psychic self. While Chaudhuri's reading of the relationship between brothers/alter-egos Jamie and Edmund in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* provides us with a paradigm for exploring the expression of geopathic schizophrenia in the dramatic Irish Catholic home, much of O'Neill's earlier work struggled to give theatrical expression to the split personality through a variety of experimental stage techniques. In *Beyond the Horizon* (1920), for example, O'Neill dramatised the idea of the split personality through two brothers, in a way very similar, but perhaps more explicit, than the establishment of alter-egos in *Long Day's Journey Into Night.*

In *Beyond the Horizon* two brothers vie for possession of the same woman, and the rituals of departure enacted in the play draw explicit attention to the function

of place in developing personality, as well as the symbiotic relationship between the two brothers as conflicting halves of a divided personality. Interestingly, Chaudhuri does not mention this play in her succinct discussion of geopathology in *Long Day's Journey Into Night,* but the use of two separate characters as alter-egos in the earlier O'Neill play certainly implies a similar duality in the conceptualisation of individual identity. Meanwhile in *Strange Interlude*, under the influence of developments in modern psychology, O'Neill used the dramatic device of the interior monologue to represent the conflict between private and public aspects of the self, while in *The Great God Brown* masks were used to suggest the inter-dependent and resistant functioning of the ego and the alter-ego and the conflict between public and private aspects of personality.

In accordance with Chaudhuri's understanding of the play, the oppositional relationship of dependence and hostility that characterises the brothers' relationship in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* can be determined as both an *inter-* and an *intra-*psychic conflict. While Jamie and Edmund are established on stage firstly as individuals and secondly as brothers, most importantly they are characterised as polar opposites, and their oppositional nature aligns them as much as it divides them. While the brothers turn to their mother for the security of selfhood that they seek, it is in the apparently incompatible aspects of the split self that the resolution to their crisis lies and their deliberate oppositional stance is an ironic rejection of that which they desire the most, a re-unification of the self.

Thierry Dubost provides a model for discussing the geopathic schizophrenia implicit in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* by suggesting a logic of suspended tension in the brothers' relationship whereby Jamie and Edmund represent for each other another possible (an Other) self. However, Dubost rejects the potential resolution of this conflict in reunification, arguing that the attraction-repulsion dynamic between the pair is a natural response to their ultimate incompatibility. "Rejection," he says, is an instinctual move of self-preservation; "in its fratricidal and liberating aspect, it is ultimately to be freed from the unacceptable image of one's own id."[260] Attempting to reconcile this ultimate rejection with the characters desire for unified wholeness,

[260] Dubost, 1997, 64.

however, suggests an interesting mode of potential reconciliation for the play's characters.

Edmund and Jamie's relationship exists in a dynamic of flux, wavering constantly between dependency and loathing, companionship and competition. Although they are separated by ten years in age, there is a world of difference between their attitudes, ambitions and means of coping with the world. Jamie hates Edmund in the same way that he hates his father: he resents him because he depends upon him, for companionship and mutual understanding. In his role as older brother, he assumes a certain level of responsibility for Edmund's well-being, but this is juxtaposed with a resentment that is manifested in his impulse to destroy Edmund even as he wants to protect him: "I'd like you to become the greatest success in the world. But you had better be on your guard because I'll do my damndest to make you fail."[261] Dubost suggests that Jamie looks to Edmund as an image of himself as he would like to be,[262] but this is an image that he cannot reconcile with the conflicting feelings of antipathy and loathing that he feels towards his brother.

While Dubost polarises the brothers' opposition as a conflict between poetry and materialism, we can see their opposition in more abstract metaphysical terms - as a conflict between nature and culture - by drawing attention to Edmund's existential angst. Where Jamie's alcoholism and promiscuity align him with the earthly pleasures of the world, Edmund seeks solace in nature and poetry, and their separate individual speeches of self-revelation reveal the contrast between the pair. Where Jamie seeks physical comfort for his spiritual pains, Edmund understands that his physical existence is the root of his spiritual pains. Thus while Jamie concludes with desperation and bitterness that Man is "a goddamned hollow shell" without "a good woman's love"[263], Edmund traces Man's fatal mishap to the coming into being of consciousness: "It was a great mistake, my being born a man, I would have been much more successful as a seagull or a fish. . . . I will always be a stranger who never

[261] *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, 103.
[262] Dubost, 1997, 64.
[263] *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, 97.

feels at home, who does not really want and is not really wanted, who can never belong."[264]

Edmund's illness allows O'Neill to reinforce the central conflict between the pair. Jamie's promiscuity may exhibit a virility that the physically frail but fluent Edmund cannot, but Jamie is engaged in a self-destructive battle against the indifference of the world, while Edmund's weaker constitution has allowed him time for self-reflection which has given him a measure of acceptance with the fundamental experience of man's alienation in the world; if alienation is man's natural state of consciousness, as Edmund believes it, then extinction can be his only possibility of belonging. Edmund's revelation that he "must always be a little in love with death"[265] is thus more than a nihilistic pose; it is a philosophy of survival. His earlier suicide attempt and his acceptance of his tuberculean fate is an embrace of the prospect of freedom that death offers.

This conclusion complements Dubost's suggestion that rejection of the Other provides the means to the liberation of the self. Edmund's predetermined fate, and his acceptance of that fate, suggests that it is not in the complementary marriage between the brothers, but in the death of one - the most ultimate rejection - that the possibility for spiritual wholeness exists. Further analysis of the schizophrenic tendencies in the Friel and Murphy plays reinforce this fact; that the unified self that the individual spends his life searching for does not exist.

In *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* the struggle for dominance between two conflicting aspects of the psyche is concentrated in the thematic and dramatic conception of a single character as two embodied figures on the stage, immediately undermining the realist conventions of the set. The protagonist, Gar, is represented in both his public and his private aspect, with Gar Public serving the interactive function of Gar's relationship with the world, and Gar Private embodying Gar's inner consciousness.

Each aspect of Gar's character functions individually, and without full consciousness of its other half. The conflict between the pair stems from their

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[264] *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, 94-95.
[265] Ibid.

incompatibility; as Friel concedes in the opening stage directions *"One cannot look at one's alter-ego."*[266] Audience members, however, are permitted to observe how Gar Public and Gar Private function as a single character by watching the single consequences of their individual actions. Within the play Gar Public may be *"the Gar that people see, talk to, talk about"*, and Gar Private *"the unseen man, the man within, the conscience, the alter-ego, the secret thoughts, the id"*[267], but within the theatre the audience have access to both.

Gar Public and Gar Private operate on separate continuums of experience, and Gar Private is unable to make his desires match Gar Public's actions. Thus while Gar Private can worship Kate Doogan and want to marry her, Gar Public can only stutter denial for fear of failure; while Gar Public can wonder why he desires reconciliation with his father, Private can acknowledge that this reconciliation will never happen. Neither aspects of Gar's personality, however, can accept that some kind of spiritual wholeness is equally impossible.

Both aspects of Gar's consciousness, meanwhile, are implicated within a state of arrested identity development, and his Public and Private aspects are united on one front; in their resentment of 'Screw Balls' for treating Gar like a child. Yet as Gar Private expresses his frustrations with his Father's refusal to give him adult responsibility, Gar Public places himself in the continual position of subjugation by refusing to behave like an adult.

Gar's psychic immaturity is carried through to his relationships outside of the family. Mr. Boyle, who has acted, in part, as a father figure to Gar, is rejected when the intimacies of this relationship must be acknowledged; thus despite their closeness, and Mr. Boyle's kind words on the eve of Gar's departure, Boyle's gesture of affection is met with the same silence that Gar uses as a weapon against his father. Meanwhile Madge, who has served as a substitute mother for Gar, is also rejected when she tries to bond with him as he prepares to leave Ballybeg, while the failure of his relationship with Kate is due to his inability to accept the adult responsibility of

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[266] Brian Friel, *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* in Friel, 1996, 11.
[267] Ibid.

commitment; both encounters reflect his inability to handle emotional intimacy, as well as further indicating his social insecurities.

Gar's emotional immaturity is coupled with an inability to express himself. Although Gar Private can manifest his frustration vocally to the audience, his inner monologue cannot find expression in the outside world; thus Gar Public remains sullen and terse and cannot ask for what he needs. While Gar Private yearns for his father to make a gesture of communication or understanding, Gar Public is unable to accept or reciprocate the gestures of understanding that Mr. Boyle, Kate and Madge make towards him. Silence thus becomes the defining feature of his close relationships. However, the revelation of any emotion, kindness or understanding would be far worse than the continuing impasse of emotional disengagement.

The set conversational pieces that his Father uses to fill in the growing distance suggest that it is too late for communication to heal the emotional wounds:

> Private: . .we've eaten together like this for the past twenty-odd years, and never once in all that time have you made so much as one unpredictable remark. . .But worse, far worse than that, Screwballs, because. . . If one of us were to say, 'You're looking tired' or 'That's a bad cough you have', the other would fall over backways with embarrassment."[268]

Gar's inability to express himself is similar to Ben's in *Living Quarters*; in key moments of self-expression and self-revelation language fails him, but this shortcoming becomes his chief weapon, as Gar Private's *inability* to engage with his father on the level of private intimacy is manifested by Gar Public as a *refusal* to. This refusal to speak is a non-gesture of adolescent obstinacy that reoccurs in more urgent and aggressive form when Kate visits to say goodbye. While he wants to embrace his "sweet Katie Doogan . . . my darling Kathy Doogan. . ."[269] he ends up losing control of himself in a revelatory rant that, while certainly true of his feelings about his imminent departure, does not express what he wants to; language fails him here in the same way that it fails him in his relationship with his father.

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[268] *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* 40.
[269] *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* 82.

For all of the emotional distance between Gar and his father, however, they are actually more alike than either would admit. The separate illusions of the past that they use to sustain themselves unite them by means of a shared geopathic experience, even if they can't see it themselves. In fact it is up to Madge - following the pattern that we have seen in Chapter Two as an outsider to the family unit - who makes the most prescient comment about their relationship when she says: "when the boss was his (Gar's) age, he was the very same. . .and when he's (Gar) the age the boss is now, he'll turn out just the same. And . . . you'll find that he's learned nothing in between times."[270] Gar's loneliness, alienation and uncanny experience of home is not unique. It is in fact symptomatic of an inherited culture of geopathology that stems from the very fabric of the culture itself as it is embodied in the relationship between fathers and sons in the Irish Catholic families of twentieth-century drama, where the patriarchal dictates of ideological narratives superseded the specific experience of individual realities. However, as the allegiance of place and personality that characterises both Gar's problematic experience of home and his problematic identity development thus implicates the domestic structures of the Irish Catholic family as manifestations of the wider repressive culture, so Gar falsely believes that leaving the environment that has stifled him is the natural resolution to his problems. The audience, meanwhile, with their access to both aspects of Gar's personality, is not so naïve.

Gar's projected departure is represented to the audience within the parameters of the paradox already observed in his geopathic relationship with home; it is actually a further obstacle to his psychic stability. The dramaturgical split between Gar's public and private personae also alerts us to the fact that while Gar's geopathology may have been conditioned by his domestic environment, it will also prove to be the greatest obstacle to his departure, as we will see in the next chapter.

If the physical space cannot determine his salvation, then it is in the psychic space that he may find the means to overcome his spiritual crisis. While *Long Day's Journey Into Night* proposed rejection of the Other as the means to psychic wholeness, *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* looks to the integration of Gar's private and public

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[270] *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* 99.

personae as the means towards resolving his fragmented, partial identity so that both his public functions can be performed and his private desires can be satisfied. However, the final lines of the play define the ambiguity of even this solution as Gar Private reaches out to Gar Public in a gesture of attempted understanding, Public admits his inability to answer the fundamental question that has defined his existential crisis:

> Private: Watch her careful, every movement, every gesture, every little peculiarity: keep the camera whirring: for this is a film you'll run over and over again- Madge Going to Bed On My Last Night At Home. . .Madge . . [Public and Private go into bedroom] God, Boy, why do you have to leave? Why? Why?
>
> Public: I don't know. I - I - I don't know.

It is, perhaps, only by staying that this self-knowledge will be revealed. However, the template of experience that will be revealed in Chapter Four suggests that neither staying nor going will provide the answer to the key question that defines his existence.

Where *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* represents geopathic schizophrenia on the material dramaturgical level, Tom Murphy's *Conversations on a Homecoming* mediates the idea of the split personality through two separate characters. Although the play takes place in a public bar (The White House), the concept and structures of the dysfunctional dramatic domestic model inform its representation in both physical and relational ways, so that The White House functions as another version of home for the characters in the play. The characters in *Conversations on a Homecoming* can be examined, therefore, in light of their relationships with home as both the place from which they have come, and the temporary site in which they have found refuge; in both functions, however, home has failed them.

The White House is a place of communion for the characters of the play, who are physically men but mentally adolescent, searching for the sense of belonging and wholeness of identity that they cannot find in their immediate domestic or social environment. The pub was originally conceived by its patron J.J. Kilkelly as a

temporary refuge for the disenfranchised and disillusioned youth of the town, "to give new life to broken dreams."[271] Ten years have passed, however, and time is wearing on its interior and on the ideals that it once stood for. J.J., once substitute father figure and moral guardian of the town's adolescents, has become a degenerate sot. The youths that he set out to save have become more disillusioned, and the symbolic freedom that The White House symbolised has been destroyed by an ugly partition which separates the lounge from the bar and, more tellingly, the older and younger generations.

In fact J.J.'s failure to bring his ideals to fruition indicates the pathology of the characters' psychic instability, as well as the inadequacies of the mytho-historic construction of home that has formed the characters' conceptualisation of home (and, by extension, their expectations of The White House). J. J's absence from the stage is an absence from his literal duties as husband and father, as well as an indication of his failure to keep his promises to the now-grown up youths that he promised to save; the spiritual vacuum symptomatic of the homes that they have fled now pervades their very place of refuge.

The failure of this substitute home to fill the characters' spiritual vacuum is reflected in the formulation of male identity by way of geopathology and by the geopathic schizophrenia of its central duo. All the characters are variously defined at different stages of the geopathic crisis: Junior's name indicates his adolescent position despite his recent accession to fatherhood; Liam's extravagant performance and obstinate materialism indicates an attempt to mask his insecurities; J.J's binges are symptomatic of his desire to escape the consciousness of his own position. In the figures of Tom and Michael, however, Murphy forces the geopathic consciousness to its most extreme crisis. By establishing an antagonistic relationship of dependency and loathing akin to that of Edmund and Jamie in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* and Robert and Andrew in *Beyond the Horizon,* Murphy suggests their function as alter-egos caught within the bind of geopathic schizophrenia that defined the fractured division of Gar's public and private personae in *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*

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[271] *Conversations on a Homecoming*, 52.

Tom is an embittered, unfulfilled schoolteacher, whose economic reality and acquired cynicism have quashed his dreams of leaving home. His adolescent ambitions of travelling the world as a poet have been superseded by his desire to forget that he once hoped for something better than his current situation. Michael, meanwhile, is a newly returned emigrant who is still desperately idealistic in spite of, or perhaps because of, his failure to make good in America. Despite the humiliation he has been subjected to, however, Michael insists on showing a brave, defiant and optimistic face; where Tom is desperate to find something to believe in, but can't, Michael wilfully believes in anything, even J. J., whose ideals have proved to be useless in the real world.

Tom is in his late thirties, but holds a posture "*almost foetal*"[272] that indicates the level of his emotional development. Tom's geopathic crisis is predicated by a problem with place on the domestic level (hence his early, and continuing, defection to The White House for security, and his inability to create his own home despite the prospect of marriage), and a subsequent problem with place on a more public level (the impossibility of success within the current social framework).

The private/public levels of Tom's geopathology are linked. As the first in his family to achieve a measure of social success (through his profession as a school teacher), Tom provides his family with economic stability and social respect. However, this involves the sacrifice of his own creative ambitions (and his financial autonomy) for the wider family good, while increasing his dependence on his family and refusing him the capacity to develop beyond the adolescent state of mind that has defined the geopathology of the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy characters so far.

Ironically, then, Tom's relative social and economic status has only tightened his obligations to his family; as they have become more economically dependent on his salary, the mutual emotional dependency of familial relationships has also been enhanced. Despite his material independence his psychic dependence on his parents has been intensified by their material dependence on him, and his cynicism is both an expression of his frustration, as well as a mechanism of defence against acknowledging, or changing, the realities of his situation.

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[272] *Conversations on a Homecoming*, 3.

Michael, on the other hand, is full of desperate enthusiasm. His geopathology functions differently than Tom's, although it is revealed in a similar way. While Tom's geopathology is, in the Chaudhurian sense, a problem with place that has becomes a problem with self, Michael's crisis is revealed first as a crisis of self before the geopathic implications of his problematic psychic experience are exposed.

Michael's emigration is closer to Chaudhuri's characterisation of problematic homecomings than it is to her idea of heroic departure which will be deconstructed in the following chapter; his emigration is an example of a *failed* departure and an anti-heroic return. Having moved towards his personal utopia in America, to escape the claustrophobic confines of the town's social structures and to pursue a career as an actor, Michael discovers that the problematic relationship with his environment has been translocated; his physical relocation revealing the intensity of his psychic dislocation. While he initially associates this pathology with home, he paradoxically becomes dependent on home for its resolution; it is both the obstacle to and the condition for his psychological coherence.

Thus Michael returns to the White House to recuperate the identity that was compromised by the failure of his ideals abroad, even though it was the very impossibility of achieving these ideals, which was the precondition for his departure in the first instance. Michael still holds on to these ideals, then, despite their proven failure; for all his association with progressive America, he fails to recognise that J. J. and the ideals of the future that he stood for are a thing of the past, if they ever existed, and that the recuperation of what he feels to be his lost identity is impossible. The personal and cultural displacement that he suffered abroad is no more than the historical and social displacement he feels at home.

It would be easy to directly transpose Chaudhuri's theory onto the two characters; Tom as the victim of his homeland, Michael as the hero that departed but must nonetheless suffer the indignity and ignominy of the failed homecoming. That conclusion, however, would neglect the binary relationship that Murphy establishes between the pair. Tom's cynicism and Michael's naivety create an antagonistic duality between the pair that binds them together even as it threatens to destroy their friendship. Their conflict (like the conflict between many Murphy characters - those

who stay at home versus those who emigrate) is a conflict between two warring parts of the one psyche, a psyche split by the realities of modern Ireland and by the conflicting obligations of self and home. As Junior says: "The two of ye together might make up one decent man."[273] However, there is no possibility within the play for the reunification of the conflicting aspects of the psyche that the pair represent.

The important difference between Tom and Michael is the abandonment of ideals by one and the continued maintenance of ideals by the other. While Michael retreats into a defensive shell of optimism, sustaining at least the semblance of success and optimism until Tom forces him to admit his failure and humiliation, Tom retreats into a defensive shell of aggression that permits him to assess the failures of others but to avoid confronting the reality of his own limitations.

Michael refuses to yield to the depressing truth of his own situation, preferring instead to embrace the language and idealism of his great hero J.J. Our knowledge of J.J.'s ignominious fate, however, is a reminder of Michael's naivety, and a projection of Michael and Tom's shared future. The irony, of course, is not lost on the cynical Tom, even if he is powerless to change it. He directs his self-aware pessimism outwardly, destroying the illusions of the other characters, but this merely masks his deepening insecurity. By destroying the ideals by which the other characters find accommodation with the world, he destroys the possibility of their, and his own, redemption:

> Tom:. . since you have nothing to offer but a few distorted memories.... I'm marking your card. You've come home to stay, die, whatever- and you're welcome- but save us the bullshit. We've had that from your predecessor. We won't put up with it again. Don't try to emulate him, no re-energising, cultural cradles or stirring that old pot. Now I know you have it in you to take careful account of what I've said, and the security- Michael- of wiser steps.
>
> Michael: Are you threatening me?
>
> Tom: Holy Moses, Michael! - Me twin! - We don't have to threaten anyone... All we have to do- all we have to do- is wait![274]

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[273] *Conversations on a Homecoming*, 62.
[274] *Conversations on a Homecoming*, 56.

Survival and Performance: "I know I can keep going as long as I'm not diverted from that routine"[275]

Chaudhuri's model of geopathology allows theatricality to function "as a constant caveat against the oppressive insistence of place." [276] Chaudhuri argues that theatricality, in its manifestation by the characters on stage as performance, "succeeds where addiction fails"[277] by providing psychic relief from the identity crises induced by the problematic relationship between place and personality. Addiction, alcohol and departure may serve as temporary possibilities of comfort for the geopathic consciousness, but ultimately they dissolve the possibilities of a more effective psychic liberation. Performance, meanwhile, allows the geopathic consciousness access to alternative realities that promise existential freedom.

Where addiction involves self-erasure, performance involves the supplementation of self. Through the deliberate adoption of different strategies of self-presentation, performance permits the *exterior* expression of a unified self, a means of occupying spaces without inhabiting them. This means of being-in-the-world without necessarily being-as-*oneself* allows the individual to inhabit the prescribed roles of their social and domestic function, alleviating their psychic anxiety in a social context, if not resolving completely the individual's problematic personal position in the public space of the social world and the shared private space of the home.

Richard Pine has also argued that performance plays a role in healing the divided mind, with particular reference to the plays of Brian Friel. Through performance, he argues, the "split personality can construct, reconstruct, or re-member an imagined life . . . put(ting) into place an identity"[278] that provides the private persona with temporary self-accommodation and permits their social function in a public capacity. Pine identifies ritual and storytelling as the most common performative modes for the healing of psychic trauma within the plays that he

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[275] *Living Quarters,* 299.
[276] Chaudhuri, 1997, 58.
[277] Ibid.
[278] Pine, 1999, 258.

discusses, but the various roles that the characters adopt in the plays we will be discussing here enact a less self-aware role-playing function, which, while facilitating their convincing public performances, simultaneously destroys the psychic stability that both Chaudhuri and Pine suggest performance can provide. For as an external mode of personal legitimation, performance is dependent on the external legitimation of its audience; the personal security that the characters seek thus still eludes them.

In *Aristocrats*, for example, Casimir performs the role of adult male in a fictional life that allows him to maintain a semblance of normality which secures his position within the world and his relationships with other people. Similarly in *The House,* Christy's lies allow him to perform the role of respectability that the pathology of his dysfunctional background has denied him. In *Conversations on a Homecoming*, meanwhile, the characters all rely in different ways on "borrowed images of identity"[279]; Michael, for example, becomes an actor in the hopes that one of the roles he plays will fill the spiritual void that defines his existential crisis. However, when the dissembling positions of these several characters are undermined by the refutation of their performative pose (the vocal re-enactment of authority by Casimir's father; the discovery of Christy's crime; the home truths that Tom imposes on Michael) the limitations of the performative capacity in individual identity construction is revealed.

In fact, while performance is represented as a means of coping with the existential crisis provoked by the conflict between ideological and real versions of the Irish Catholic family, many of the crises in the plays are further heightened by the *rejection* of publicly performed identities. In *Conversations on a Homecoming,* Murphy draws attention to the breakdown of performed identities as a consequence of audience resistance in the figure of Michael, but he also draws attention to the inherent limitations of the performative model in the character of Liam. Liam adopts the exterior markings of success by affiliating himself in accent, dress, attitude and cultural reference with the self-made men of the American Dream. For all the conviction with which he performs these roles on a public level, however, Liam's

[279] Fintan O'Toole, Programme note to the 1985 production of *Conversations on a Homecoming* at The Abbey Theatre.

strategies of self-preservation do not function with equal success in a private capacity; those who know him most intimately, who have heard his private self-revelations, deride him as an "eejit", a "bollocks, with his auctioneering and tax-collecting and travel-agenting and property dealing and general unprincipled poncing, and Sunday night dancing...and he's still-Jesus! - watching the few acres of bog at home, still-Jesus! - caught up in the few acres of bog around the house at home."[280] His conflicting and hypocritical attitudes towards Irish history, his slipping Yankee accent, his inability to act and his bumbling inarticulacy, all set him up as a figure of ridicule - as nothing more than a soul-less modern gombeen man, despite the smoothness of his public persona.

The public presentation of a coherent surface reality of self thus offers the characters in the plays a means of occupying physical spaces without psychically inhabiting them. However, without acknowledging the essential plurality of the self as a necessary condition of performance, the performance of unified selfhood eventually fails the characters; or, rather, the characters fail in their performances, as the essential self that forms the basis of their conceptualisation of individual identity is an erroneous concept that conditions their continually frustrated desires within the home, and is merely symptomatic of their deeper psychic crises.

Where the discussion of arrested adulthood and geopathic schizophrenia has focused on the identity development of sons in the Irish Catholic family structures of twentieth-century drama, it is the father figures in the plays that provide the most interesting paradigm for examining the successes and limitations of performance as a defence against the geopathic condition. While performance allows the fictional fathers to publicly present a coherent surface reality of self, performance is ultimately revealed as an inadequate bridge between the psychic and public worlds; being-in-the-world without being-as-oneself places the characters on a boundary line between existence and extinction, revealing performance simultaneously as a mode of self-preservation and self-destruction.

Where Chaudhuri's analysis of the character of James Tyrone in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* sets a paradigm for examining the relationship between

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[280] *Conversations on a Homecoming*, 70.

performance and the geopathic condition, the negative implications of this relationship are also brought out in the equivalent characters of the Friel and Murphy plays who are ultimately destroyed by their theatrical impulse for self-preservation. Dada in *A Whistle in the Dark*, for example, finds the world that has supported his patriarchal performance dissolve around him as his own existential crisis begins to reveal itself, while Frank in *Living Quarters* finds no recourse to salvation when the authority of his performance as soldier and patriarch is publicly challenged by the revelation of his wife and son's betrayal and he takes the only definitive step towards defending himself by committing suicide. Just as in *Dancing at Lughnasa,* when the music stops and the release that the Mundy women have found in their corporeality is overtaken by the disturbing reality of their fate, the performance that the geopathic figures in the Friel and Murphy plays use to alleviate the trauma of their psychic existence is merely provisional; the coherent stable self that they seek always eludes them.

In *Long Day's Journey Into Night,* Chaudhuri explores the concept of theatricality as a survival mechanism through the figure of James Tyrone. Pfister's argument that counterfeit (or performance) represents the individual's attempt to preserve his unified self against the culture's attempt to shape him[281] complements Chaudhuri's reading, while Julie Adam identifies the "falsification of the self" in O'Neill's plays as a heroic defence against limited cultural constructions of masculinity.[282] However, these readings suggest that Chaudhuri, Pfister and Adam presuppose the possible existence of a unified self in the O'Neill plays; that performance is a means of *preserving* identity, rather than a constructive means of survival in the absence of a secure and unified self.

James Tyrone, for example, uses performance as a strategy through which he can exist *within* the world even if, in a private capacity, he does not feel like he belongs. As an actor James Tyrone's professional public life is completely immersed

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[281] See Pfister, 1995, 31-32.

[282] Adam, 1991, 131. 'Survival as Heroism', in fact, is the chapter title of the concluding chapter of Adam's exploration into the possibilities of heroism in twentieth century American Drama. Modern man can only "attempt to escape the falseness of existence by creating new sets of falsities" (128) – the alter-ego or the performed public version of the self.

in performance. Actor, however, is only one of the many roles that his public life is an enactment of, and his existence is defined by the roles he plays in both the shared (and thus public in its own self-contained way) private space of the home and in the wider social context (as beneficent landlord and worldly gentleman). As a result Tyrone is caught in an endless cycle of re-enactment, embodying the same character over and over again on the touring circuit, while working through a series of roles in the home (father, husband, male role model) which never manage to fully convince his family. The line between the public persona of Tyrone's acting self and the private persona of his veridical self, however, is not just continually blurred; it has been worn so thin that the boundary between James Tyrone, actor, James Tyrone, husband and father, and James Tyrone in his essential self-conception has become almost indistinguishable to both his family and himself.

O'Neill puts the actor at the forefront of his characterisation of Tyrone; *"the actor shows in all his unconscious habits of speech, movement and gesture"* which have the *"quality of belonging to a studied technique."*[283] Tyrone's career began from an impulse to overcome the impoverished legacy of his immigrant background, an impulse to reinvent himself in the prosperous new world of the United States. Having lost his brogue and polished his voice to a *"remarkably fine, resonant and flexible"* modulation that would hardly recall his humble roots, Tyrone has mastered the art of self-representation, but his wife and sons do not have access to this strategy of assimilation, and thus reject him. It is a rejection that underlines the pathology of the geopathic consciousness and that further enhances Tyrone's own experience of alienation.

Mary's rejection of Tyrone is ironically facilitated by her wilful subscription to an almost entirely fictional version of her husband. She married him because "he was handsomer than my wildest dreams, in his makeup and nobleman's costume"[284] and Tyrone's own accounts of his acting success complements the conviction against which we must measure his performances. As we see throughout the play, however, Tyrone's mask can only be upheld with the complicity and reassurance of others.

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[283] *Long Day's Journey Into Night,* 11.
[284] *Long Day's Journey Into Night,* 91.

Mary may have fallen in love with Tyrone's careful preserved public persona, but her accusations throughout the play betray the superficiality of his mask and the insecurity of his position, while the withdrawal of her complicity as she retreats further and further into her fantasy world places a pressure on Tyrone's performance that threatens to shatter his public facade. In the final act of the play, his mask begins to reveal the partiality and pathology of his own geopathic position, and the insecurity of his own identity construction.

It is ironic that Mary's gravest accusation is that Tyrone doesn't "know how to act in a home"[285]; his role as domestic authority is really only upheld through the success of his *performance* of this authority. His professional skill becomes an important factor in his capacity to survive at home, and acting thus necessarily infiltrates all parts of his interaction with the world; the performance of optimism for his drug-addicted wife, and the performance of denial for his own sake are necessary for the continued enactment of day-to-day rituals. In the final act, however, Tyrone's tone continually fluctuates between self-revelation - as the mask of his authority is challenged - and self-defence - as he attempts to reassert control over the situation and control over himself. His saving grace comes from the refuge that his public performance continues to offer him; even if his performance as father and husband has been rendered untenable, the audience that applaud his performance on stage every night still provide the means of his self-preservation.

We can turn briefly to Con Melody in *A Touch of the Poet* for a further, more destructive example, of the problematics and limitations attendant with the continual dissembling of self in the psychological model of O'Neill's plays. In the figure of Con Melody the tension between the public man and the private self is heightened by the public and private rejections of Con's self-image as his performance is undermined by both the wider community of the bar room and the private community of his home. Challenged in both a private and a public capacity, Con's attempts at self-preservation become the very catalyst of his self-destruction.

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[285] *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, 37.

As an Irish emigrant, like James Tyrone, America provided Con with "the chance . . . to make himself all his lies pretended to be."[286] By the close of the play, however, Con's ruined face reveals the limitations and psychic implications of his performative capacity. When all complicity in his performance is withdrawn, and he is forced into a position of complete self-reliance, the public face of the polished gentleman, "which has become more real than his real self to him,"[287] collapses. He "*has no audience and cannot keep it up. His shoulders sag and he stares at the table top, hopelessness and defeat bringing a trace of real tragedy to his ruined handsome face.*"[288] Con's fate is the fate that Tyrone has avoided, but which the father figures in the Friel and Murphy plays do not; the pathology of the geopathic condition is brought to its inevitable conclusion - the dissolution of both the public and the private self.

In *A Whistle in the Dark*, Dada's performance of authority as putative head of the Carney family follows the performative model of O'Neill's father figures. However, Dada's fate is closer to the tragic fate of Con Melody's than to the stoic survival of James Tyrone. Dada, as we have already seen in Chapter Two, is representative of the old social order. He is implicated within the traditional structures of the mytho-historic domestic model that define public expressions of the Irish Catholic family despite the inadequacy of such discursive function in the contemporary reality of the play. This disjunction is particularly brought to bear when set against the backdrop of the play's location in Coventry; for Dada's geopathic crisis is brought to bear outside of the context of the family home, which has maintained and nurtured the performative illusion that has kept his patriarchal authority and his performative identity intact.

Dada's attempted translocation of his domestically located authority to a context outside of its parameters in fact reveals a crisis of identity not far from the alienating geopathic experience of his sons. Furthermore, the gradual revelation that

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[286] Eugene O'Neill, *A Touch of the Poet* in *The Collected Plays of Eugene O'Neill* (London: Cape, 1988), 979.
[287] *A Touch of the Poet,* 984.
[288] *A Touch of the Poet,* 989.

the social framework that once supported him at home has also broken down - or, rather, has been redefined in line with the burgeoning embourgeoisment of modern Ireland - reinforces the dissolution of the traditional ideologies that have facilitated the performance of his public identity and maintained his patriarchal authority thus far.

Dada, like his sons, attempts to resist the dissolution of the mytho-historic boundaries of home. While Harry, Iggy and Hugo use aggression to deal with their alienation, and Michael attempts to escape it through respectability, like the fathers in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* and *A Touch of the Poet,* Dada copes with his situation through performance. Dada's whole personality is embedded in performance: performance of the big man, the father, the Gaeilgoir, the socialite. Performance allows him, like Tyrone, to maintain a semblance of authority, to avoid confronting his domestic problems and his own psychic crisis, but his bravado masks a deepening insecurity that is defined by the new domestic parameters which have challenged his public self-expression and thus his self-conception of his individual identity.

It is when Dada is challenged outside of the domestic boundaries within which his performance strategies have been accepted, then, that they really begin to fail him. His authority, and, as we will see, his identity, is ultimately dependent on the validation of his position within the home. The challenge to Dada's authority is also a challenge to his identity and as he struggles to maintain his power outside of the domestic context of the Carney's Mayo home, he is forced to acknowledge the spiritual emptiness of the physical site of home, as well as the spiritual void in his own identity.

Dada's attempts to defend home by clinging on to its materiality are defeated by the interruption of his own disrupted consciousness, which reminds him continually, in this alien environment, of the ultimate inner emptiness of his own geopathic conscience. Dada's admission of self-defeat and psychic rupture, however, take place at a private moment of despair, and it is not until his sons move against him in the closing moments of the play that his bravura performance publicly collapses and his real vulnerability is revealed to his sons. While his final speech struggles to refuse culpability, it simultaneously exposes his guilt:

> "Boys . . Ye're not blaming me. . . No control over it. . . Did my best. Ye don't know how hard it is. Life. Made men of ye. . . No man can do more than best. I tried. Must have some kind of pride. Wha? I tried, I did my best. . "[289]

Dada's fate, then, is intertwined with those whom he performs for: thus when the audience that validates the claims he makes about himself disappears in the newly defined boundaries in Coventry, his fundamental self-conception is irreparably challenged. The play closes with a tragic image of impotence and self-loss that resembles the uncanny family portrait with which O'Neill closed *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. It is, however, closer to the closing image of *A Touch of the Poet*, where Con sits alone, head in hands, on the stage. Dada is standing on a chair on the far left of the stage, while his sons stand together in the opposite corner of the room, united against him. The *heimlich/unheimlich* tension that has sustained the dramatic conflict throughout the play, and which Dada has struggled to hold together through his performance, has finally split the family, as well as the psyche of its originary character, in two.

Conclusion

Using Chaudhuri's theory of geopathology to discuss the inadequate identity development and split psyches manifested in the Friel and Murphy plays has offered a useful dramatic model through which to elaborate the problematic relationship between home and identity that the discussion of the uncanny Irish Catholic home in Chapter Two suggested. The relationship between physical space and psychic identity thus reverberates beyond the interior and exterior workings of inter-familial relationships, to affect the interior workings of the mind.

One such manifestation of this environmental conditioning of the individual is in the arrested identity development of the characters in the plays, which is brought to bear by the juxtaposition of their physical adulthood with their mental adolescence

[289] *A Whistle in the Dark*, 97.

and the use of particular strategies for coping with this disjunction (most particularly performance). The implications of arrested adulthood are widespread for the individual's self-conception, their relationships within the home and their function within the wider social world.

The incompatibility of the individual's private desires with the public functions of the home/social unit is further manifested in the diagnosis of split personalities in the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays. The conceptualisation of geopathic schizophrenia allows the divided self that structures the plot and the dramaturgy of the plays to be discussed as a logical consequence of the disparity between the private and public personae that the individual must develop in order to survive in the world. The particular nature of the conflict also directs us back towards the fundamental conflict at issue in the wider interests of this thesis; the conflict between mytho-historic narratives and real experience as viewed through the lens of the dramatic Irish Catholic family.

The geopathic model, however, suggests that if the exilic consciousness that defines geopathology cannot be healed by performance, departure may offer the only logical liberation from the problematic site of oppression - in this case the Irish Catholic home. Chaudhuri frames this potential resolution as a means to heroism, but we will see in the next chapter that departure is not the precondition for overcoming the problem of place and personality, neither in the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays that will be discussed, nor in Chaudhuri's model itself. Departure, as we will see in the following chapter, serves as nothing more than a translocation of the problematic personality, as the exilic consciousness identified at home is intensified by the politics of physical exile.

Chapter 4

Emigration and the Politics of Exile

Margaret Llewellyn-Jones has suggested that the concept of exile in twentieth-century Irish drama "links (the) psychological and geographical spaces"[290] that have so far been placed in dialectical relationship in the discussion of dramatic representations of the Irish Catholic family. While the concept of exile, as the previous chapter has suggested, is manifested in the psychic experiences of the characters in twentieth-century Irish drama, exile is also manifested in the physical experiences of geographical dispersion established as a natural reaction to the dysfunctional Irish Catholic family. Before qualifying the direction that this chapter will take in its exploration of the link between emigration as physical movement and exile as psychological state of mind, it is productive to return briefly to Chaudhuri's geopathic model which elucidates the link between the psychological and geographical spaces in the concept of heroic departure.

We have so far been able to use geopathology to discuss the psychic repercussions of place as problem in the dramatic representations of Irish Catholic family. Chaudhuri's model holds the interdependent structures of place and personality as an exilic consciousness that names alienation as the defining existential experience for the individual characters within the home. The logical trajectory of the model suggests that departure from the problematic site of existence provides the natural resolution to the place-related psychic trauma; the *psychic* exile of the individual within the home thus becomes the precondition for their *physical* exile *from* the home, reaffirming the problematic paradox of the domestic model theorised so far, where home is both the condition for and the obstacle to psychological coherence.

Chaudhuri names this template of resolution heroic departure; departure from the home offers the individual a "re-evaluation of the experience of displacement"[291], the potential for and the possibility of, liberation. Chaudhuri exemplifies the station-drama structure of expressionism in her primary

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[290] Margaret Llewellyn-Jones, *Contemporary Irish Drama and Cultural Identity* (Bristol: Intellect, 2002), 13.
[291] Chaudhuri, 199, 61.

exploration of the liberating potentialities of departure. The expressionistic hero allows Chaudhuri to trace the movement through varying sites of experience in which the hero invests his hopes for the resolution to his identity crisis. The expressionistic hero, however, is ultimately betrayed by the new modes of being offered by his travels, as he discovers that each new place he arrives at shows "an unshakeable complicity with the structure of the prison-home of geopathology."[292] The quest for personal liberation is thus ultimately doomed as departure "re-inscribes . . . (the) victimage of location."[293]

Heroic departure is, then, a misnomer; the most promising strategy for survival is defeated by its very enactment, while the problematic politics of the established relationship between place and identity are reinforced in the characters' continuing geopathic fate. Instead of securing the individual's personal development, then, emigration imposes a "discontinuous state of being"[294] that reinforces the inadequacies of the site-specific configuration of identity. As emigration theoretically reveals "the 'I' as a cultural narrative, a fabricated reality"[295] that must be constantly negotiated rather than discovered, so the characters failure to embrace the necessary plurality of identity perpetuates the geopathic experience of the individual in relation to the specific crisis of home. Individual identity is not merely a product of *where one is* but of *where one finds oneself.*

Following the paradox of geopathic experience itself, Chaudhuri identifies a *return* to home as the natural solution to the failed heroism of departure. While an expressionistic dramaturgy allowed her to explore the potential of liberation through departure, Chaudhuri returns to the dramatic structure of realism - which, as we have seen, best expresses the geopathic consciousness - for an analysis of its disappointments. The techniques of high naturalism that she identifies, in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* in particular, however, allows her to explore the tragic paradox that defines the geopathic condition[296]; departure may be a gesture that is

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[292] Ibid.
[293] Ibid.
[294] Edward Said cited in Iain Chambers, *Migrancy Culture and Identity* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), 2.
[295] Ibid.
[296] Raymond Williams' model of high naturalism confirms this reading of inevitability: "It is characteristic that the actions of high naturalism are often struggles against this environment, of attempted extrication

oriented towards the future, but it is a journey that inevitably leads the characters back to the past and the site from which they have come.

However, while Chaudhuri identifies homecoming as a potential plot convention for individual salvation in the pseudo-realistic framework, the re-discovered home that is encountered by the characters does not offer dramatic closure, but a perpetuation of their identity crisis. Like its initiation as the resolution to the problems emanating from departure, the homecoming that Chaudhuri identifies as a structural mechanism in the plays becomes re-formulated through its limitations as it is put into practice. While the literalness of dispossession that has characterised the individual's migration from the home interferes with their construction of a new identity by enhancing the duality of character already implicit in the fracture of public and private aspects of the self at home, the *return* to the home by the geopathic victim provides no resolution to the characters' identity crises.

The dramatic strategy of homecoming is thus used neither to "recuperate identity" nor just to stage "the difficulty of such recuperation"[297], as Chaudhuri has argued; it is a third psychic trauma for the characters, whose uncanny experiences at home have forced them into an endless cycle of departure and homecoming that merely perpetuates the condition of their trauma by returning them to the domestic site that has already proved inadequate to their psychic needs. The act of homecoming thus throws into relief the limited nature of such essentialised site-specific constructions of identity; the stable identity that the characters desire never existed for the characters in the first instance, and the interplay of personal, historical and cultural circumstances that characterise the dysfunction of the dramatic Irish Catholic families ensures that the psychic accommodation that the individual desires will not be forthcoming within or outside of the home.

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from it, and more often than not these fail. The pre-naturalist conventions of providential escape, or of resolution through recognition, fall away in the face of this sombre assessment of the weight of the world: not a world which is a background, nor an illustrative setting; but one which has entwined itself in the deepest layers of the personality." Williams, 1977a, 217.

[297] Chaudhuri, 1997, 92.

In the plays that will be discussed in this chapter, an engagement with the heroic departure and the limits of homecoming laid out in Chaudhuri's argument is facilitated by the social and cultural passage of emigration; emigration provides a structural mechanism for revealing the continued inadequacies of place as a container for individual identity development by allowing the existential issues emanating from the oppressive site of home to be sustained in the individual's new site of being. Furthermore, the "dialectic of homecoming and exile"[298] that Fintan O'Toole identifies as a thematic trend in twentieth-century Irish drama corroborates the structural relationship between departure and homecoming that Chaudhuri identified in the pathology of the geopathic condition, and can be extended in embryonic form to encompass the dramatic structure of the O'Neill plays.

In the plays that have been discussed so far, the dialectical structure is identical; the possibility of emigration provides the characters with an imaginary site in which to invest their hopes for psychological liberation, while the physical enactment of departure does not fulfil its liberational capacities for the characters. The juxtaposition of a projected ideal future invested in a particular site ('away') against the uncanny reality of the enactment of departure provides a comparative echo of the conflict between ideological ideal and actual experience that has so far defined our examination of the uncanny dramatic Irish Catholic home.

The domestic narrative, however, is elevated to a national level by emigration, which understands home both in its familial context and as the symbolic homeland of wider national concern discovered by the characters on their journeys. The move from a micro-cosmic expression of mythory in the home to a macro-cosmic expression of mythory as national ideology forces us to look again at the interplay between ideology and identity which has already been revealed as key to the psychic crises that structure the plays. It also reminds us of the wider significance of the plays themselves outside of their immediate dramatic context, as social and ideological documents which challenge the mytho-historic narratives of national expression that erase individual experience from the fabric of historical discourse. Significantly, however, the dialectic between domestic and national issues complements the structure of this chapter as it explores the

[298] O'Toole, 1994a, 3.

dynamic between departure and homecoming in the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays, and the attendant ideological and identity crises that are maintained at their conclusions.

This chapter will diverge from the structure established in the previous chapters, whereby the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays were discussed individually as they related to the developments in the theoretical argument. Instead, this chapter will follow a trajectory similar to that set out in the journeys that the plays themselves initiate, examining firstly the psychology of departure, secondly the actual experience of emigration, and thirdly the limits of homecoming, where the characters' migrations finally bring them full circle, returning them to the site of home from which they originally set out to escape. For emigration, as we will see, inevitably fails to provide the characters with the necessary means for their liberation; forcing this chapter, then, like the individual characters within the plays, right back to the point of its origin, the site of its crisis, the Irish Catholic home.

Before turning to the plays themselves, however, it is necessary to explore the cultural context in which emigration found its expression in this particular dramatic framework as a natural rite of passage in Irish life. Tracing the historical configuration of emigration through a discourse of enforced/involuntary exile, the emigrant mentality identifiable throughout the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays can be given the full breadth of its wider cultural significance, suggesting another alternative narrative of Irish experience that undermines mytho-historic constructions of national history.

Emigration as Exile

In the plays that we will be examining in this chapter, the cultural context of Ireland's history of emigration provides a lens through which the structures of the Irish Catholic family and the psychological ramifications of these structures can be re-examined and deconstructed in a wider social environment. The structures of inheritance, the subjugation of individual will to the greater family unit and the encouragement of economic and emotional dependency proposes emigration as a logical resolution that will enable individual characters to escape from the site of

their oppression. The particular quality of their experience away from home, however, enhances rather than alleviates the characteristic alienation of the individual characters. Emigration does not serve as the precondition for overcoming the problematic relationship between place and personality; it facilitates, rather, a translocation of the problematic personality to a new site of existence, which becomes problematised itself by the psychic baggage that the individual arrives with, as the emotional ties and dysfunctional dependencies that have defined their domestic experiences accompany them on their journeys.

The characters' geopathic experiences *at home* thus become the biggest impediment to their psychological and physical liberation even after they have left the domestic site of their oppression. A resolution to their psychic crises, as the earlier explorations of identity development have suggested, is not merely a condition of place (a condition that can be resolved by relocation) even if it is place (the characters' original location) that is the condition of the characters' psychic trauma. Providing a contextualised reading that engages with Ireland's social history of emigration complements this revelation of an exilic consciousness that functions independently of the structures that created it. John Joe's insistence in *A Crucial Week in the Life of a Grocer's Assistant* that "It's not just a case of staying or going"[299] rings true; the exilic consciousness requires more than a physical act of departure or homecoming for psychic liberation to be fulfilled.

In *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America,* Kerby A. Miller suggests that the intense experience of psychic dislocation that historically attends the Irish experience of emigration stems from the motif of exile self-consciously adopted by the Irish in the expression of their experiences of emigration both at home and abroad. While Miller's study applies specifically to an Irish-American experience, it can be extended for literary analysis to provide some useful tools for understanding the means through which Irish emigrants experienced the international cultural phenomenon of emigration in their own culturally specific way.

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[299] *A Crucial Week in the Life of a Grocer's Assistant*, 103.

Miller dismisses the tendency towards national historical exceptionalism, and argues that Irish Catholic emigrants were merely one social group in the nineteenth century to respond "to the same structural changes in rural society which encouraged Irish Protestants and other Europeans to leave their homes in search of cheaper land and higher wages."[300] While the economic conditions leading up to and after the Famine made the case for their departure more urgent, perhaps, than many other social groups, the Irish experience of emigration was not unique. Miller argues, however, that the way in which the Irish formulated their experience of emigration makes their *expression* of their emigrant history unique within a wider European context.

Miller's argument holds that Irish Catholic emigrants to the United States in the 1800s redefined their experiences of emigration through a discourse of Irish nationalism that ignored the contemporary reality of Irish economic and social conditions in favour of an historical through-line that connected their emigrant experience to the legacy of colonial oppression. Following the inherent mytho-historic tendencies of nationalist discourse, voluntary social migrants in the pre-Famine period established a discursive tradition that formulated the Irish experience of emigration through a motif of involuntary exile. Its inscription in the rhetorical structures of the Irish Catholic communities abroad, most notably in the literature and songs through which the communities expressed themselves, ensured that the motif of exile extended beyond the pre-Famine period, providing a cultural touchstone for emigrants throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

According to Miller, the motif of exile allowed the Irish to maintain their connection to a wider cultural tradition by heightening their self-identification with the homeland and complementing the communal structures of collective Irish American nationalism. The shared association with a history of colonial oppression provided the emigrants with a defence mechanism against their new alien environment, but the social and economic foundations of emigration were largely ignored in these cultural narratives which insisted their experience was an historical inevitability connected to the colonial past.

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[300] Miller, 1985, 103.

Miller's interest in the development of emigration as "a continuum among various stages"[301] in Irish life is complemented by Jim McLaughlin's tidy assessment of the economic and social structures that necessitated and conditioned emigration in twentieth-century Ireland.[302] McLaughlin concisely evaluates the various developments that enabled emigration to become a rite of passage of Irish life and Ireland's youth to become her primary export throughout the twentieth century.

The population haemorrhage of the post-independence period provides McLaughlin with a specific historical context for examining emigration as a social inevitability forced by Ireland's poorly developed economic infrastructure. The crippling policies of economic self-sufficiency in the early years of the Free State, for example, had left Ireland with an inadequate infrastructure and a failing agricultural economy that directly contributed to the soaring emigration figures during the 1940s and 1950s. Although the phenomenon that John O'Brien famously called "the vanishing Irish"[303] was alleviated slightly by the First and Second Programmes for Economic Expansion in the 1960s, McLaughlin's sociological analysis provides figures that reveal a continually depleting population throughout the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s, which can be directly traced to Ireland's poorly developed economic and social landscape.

The post-independence understanding of emigration found solace in the shaping metaphor of exile inherited from the nineteenth century migration discourse which it reformulated to contemporary ends, adopting the fatalistic narrative of historical inevitability to their own social and economic plight. While McLaughlin argues that such ideological slippage in the conceptualisation of emigration was disingenuous, he also suggests that it did reflect the way in which the effects of the economic crisis became embedded in the country's institutional framework - particularly, for our purposes here, in the microcosm of the Irish Catholic family. For while on a broader level, the reality of emigration was embedded in Ireland's failure to develop its economy on a European or

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[301] Miller, 1985, 9.

[302]. Jim McLaughlin ed., *Location and Dislocation in Contemporary Irish Society: Emigration and Irish Identities* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1997).

[303] See John O'Brien, *The Vanishing Irish: The Enigma of the Modern World* (London: W. H. Allen, 1954).

international scale, on the microcosmic level it became embedded in the fabric of social institutions like the family whose "dispersal" became the basis for population control and "the proper functioning of society."[304]

In line with the ideological interests of this thesis, the fatalistic discourses of exile and inevitability facilitated the maintenance of individual, tribal and collective identities by connecting emigrants to a contemporary community and a shared, historical past. Crucially, however, the shared past that the discourse of exile invoked drew on a history already reconfigured in line with the mytho-historic tendencies of nationalist discourse, which elided actual experience in favour of unified ideological narratives. Furthermore, as emigration developed as an inevitable rite of passage in Irish life it nurtured the idea that physical relocation as a means of economic refuge in the wider social context could be supplemented to extend to psychic liberation from stifling domestic environments. The paradoxical tendencies of mythory adopted in the cultural expression of emigration, however, ensured that emigration did not act as continuum among various stages of the emigrants' lives; it merely enhanced experiences of social and psychic oppression in a new environment.

This continued psychic trauma is expressed dramatically through the continued experience of geopathology in the plays that we have so far looked at, where the ruptures in identity development that characterised the geopathic experience at home accompany the emigrant characters as they depart for England or America. Miller's social evaluation of emigration in twentieth-century Ireland corroborates the emigrant characters' experience of psychic disjunction, where emigration begins a "traumatic initiation into (an) adulthood" [305] already problematised by the domestic structures of the Irish Catholic family.

McLaughlin's argument that the structures of identity development in twentieth-century Ireland did not equip emigrants with the necessary skills for survival or integration outside of their domestic contexts also corroborates the intensification of the emigrant characters' psychic crises in the plays. Furthermore the structures of identification and identity development that Miller identifies in

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[304] Jim McLaughlin, 'The New Vanishing Irish: The Social Characteristics of New Wave Irish Emigration', in McLaughlin ed., 1997, 152.
[305] Miller,1985, 567.

the Irish social and domestic context as nurturing the emigrants "adapt(ation) to their experience of (American) life in ways which were often (*self*)alienating and sometimes dysfunctional" [306] are fully illustrated in the plays; For as inherited cultural narratives provide the emigrant characters with an alternative conceptualisation of their real experiences of emigration, so their real experiences abroad are made increasingly problematic and - in line with the literary and dramatic purposes already established in this thesis - uncanny.

If geopathology provided a framework for expressing the spiritual alienation of the individual within the particular environs of the theatrical site of the Irish Catholic home, placing it within the contextualised social landscape that McLaughlin and Miller offer articulates the politics of exile that structures the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays as a triple alienation; psychic exile may be conditioned by individual alienation in the uncanny domestic landscape, as we have already seen, but it is also inured by the continuing collective alienation of the family within the wider social environment as it is disrupted by emigration processes. Meanwhile, the strategies by which the emigrant characters adapt themselves to their new environments, through discourses that express a particular ideology rather than the true reality of their experiences, ensures the perpetuation of the individual and collective experience of psychic exile.

The wider national implications of the individual emigrants' plight are implicit in the narrative through which emigrant experience gains cultural expression in the plays. The idealisation of home on an individual level - whose dysfunctional realities have so far fuelled the individual's journey - is subsumed by the idea of a national homeland in which the same processes of identification and idealisation are repeated despite the reality of the oppressive social and economic conditions that predicated their departures. The mytho-historic ideologies that have informed the characters' ideals of home as a place of refuge are reformulated through mytho-historic constructions of the homeland as a *natural extension* of the home and a "metaphor for kinship"[307], as the ideal site in which their desires for a stable identity (at least in its historical sense) can be met.

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[306] Miller, 1985, 4.

[307] Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartman, *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World* (Thousand Oaks, California; London: Pine Forge, 1998), 19.

Miller and McLaughlin's theses on the impact of emigration on Irish identity, meanwhile, allow us to extend the ideological lacuna that the psychic crises suggest to a wider social context by echoing the symptom-of-condition-for paradox that has echoed through our understanding of Freud's uncanny and Chaudhuri's geopathic thesis. If the emigrant's departure is impelled because they have been "denied a place in the nationalist idyll"[308] (the domestic ideal being a localised expression of the nation's ideologies), in turn their departure is a physical expression of the emigrant's "denial of an Irish nation constructed under bourgeois nationalist hegemony."[309] Fintan O'Toole identifies this ideological slippage as a symptom of the wider nationalist project which "privilege(d) . . place over people"[310], in its neglect of individual social realities in favour of hegemonic discourses of national unity. The O'Neill plays create an historical link to early national conceptions of emigration, while the deconstructive purposes of the Friel and Murphy plays suggest an attempt to redress this balance.

The cultural nationalism that influenced mytho-historic domestic ideology thus comes full circle in a newly awakened sense of nationalism that finds its expression in the emigrant consciousness, despite the emigrant's close relationship with the failure of this ideal. The emigrant experience prompts a discursive reversal, whereby home - the problematic domestic site - and homeland - the problematic national landscape - become discursively conflated as an ideologically unified site in which the emigrant can re-invest his fantasies of self-identification and liberation, forgetting, paradoxically, that it was the very processes of mytho-historic construction that problematised the originary site of his existence and necessitated his exile in the first instance.

This discursive reversal succeeds in highlighting the contradictions of the mytho-historic ideological structures which have shaped the dramatic expression of the Irish Catholic family. By transferring the mytho-historic ideologies of the home onto the larger canvas of the homeland, the psychological repercussions of these discursive strategies are reinforced beyond the particular sites in which they were conceived, suggesting a legacy of psychic dysfunction that exists beyond the

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[308] Jim McLaughlin, 'Emigration and the Construction of National Hegemony in Ireland: The historical background to New Wave Irish Emigration' in McLaughlin ed., 1997, 25.
[309] Ibid.
[310] Fintan O, Toole, *The Ex-Isle of Erin* (Dublin: New Island Books, 1997), 162.

home and, as we will see, can certainly be confirmed in the dramatic action of the plays.

The Psychology of Departure: "It's not just a case of staying or going."[311]

While much of Eugene O'Neill's major works deal with the psychological legacies of emigration, rather than the psychology of its physical enactment, *Beyond the Horizon* provides a significant introduction to the ambiguous psychology of the individual preparing to depart from home and homeland to a wider world where self-fulfilment is possible. While the Mayo brothers in *Beyond the Horizon* have so far suggested a precedent for looking at the split-personality/alter-ego symptom of geopathic schizophrenia, the brothers' relationship also provides a way into examining the psychology of departure as it manifests itself in the later Friel and Murphy plays.

Beyond the Horizon formulates the idea of departure from the home directly through the lens of exile. Although this exile is defined as a voluntary move by one brother to save his relationship with the other, the fatalistic inevitability evoked as the play explores the consequences of the brothers' decisions suggests the inexorable involuntary nature of their fate. As we have already seen in Chapter Two, the conflict between the Mayo brothers stems from the differences in their essential natures. Where Robert is an ailing poet-figure determined to find peace in his peripatetic preferences, Andrew is a robust figure who finds his essential self expressed in his work on the family farm. The conflict between the pair is played out in their competing desires for one woman, Mary, whose affections for Robert instigate a series of events that demand the denial of the essential natures of both brothers. Andrew's departure from the home initiates a cycle of homecoming and exile that prefigures the Irish emigrant's experience in twentieth-century drama. This psychology of departure is expressed as a conflicting desire to leave and to stay, to leave and to return. It is defined by Robert's insistence that "It's hard to stay – and equally hard to go sometimes"[312],

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[311] *A Crucial Week in the Life of a Grocer's Assistant*, 103.
[312] Eugene O'Neill, *Beyond the Horizon* in O'Neill, 1988, 180.

and this paradox echoes throughout the relationship between emigration and exile expressed in the Friel and Murphy plays.

The action in *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* takes place on the eve of Gar O'Donnell's departure for the United States. His incumbent departure is set up through a two-fold process of frustration: one directly related to his problematic relationship with his father and with home, the other related to the oppressive social environment of Ballybeg. With the limited independence that his father allows him and the limited freedom of movement available to him within the small-town social structures of Ballybeg, Gar is convinced that he has no control in the future he sees mapped out for him. While the accusations that he levels at his father, and the various other oppressors that he identifies, suggest that Gar's independence is continually compromised by the forces of authority that surround him, the stagnant situation that he imagines as his own future in Ballybeg is a future in which he does have some stake. While the adolescent psychological condition of geopathology may prevent Gar from recognising his adult responsibilities to his own situation, his resignation and reformulation of his voluntary departure as an enforced exile makes his situation proto-typical of the geopathic individual's response to their emigration from the home.

Gar's resistance to remaining in Ballybeg stems from the subservient position enforced upon him in his relationship with his father; emotionally and economically he is treated like a child. Gar, however, ultimately encourages the relationship in this way, and by refusing to accept adult responsibilities in his relationships (with his father, with his friends and with Kate) he becomes partly responsible for his own crisis. Yet there are truths to some of the accusations that he makes: the family structure exemplified in his relationship with his father *does* inherently deny Gar the freedom to move beyond the adolescent psychological conditions that are stifling his psychic growth, while the wider social structure that governs the material conditions of his various relationships are similarly oppressive. Meanwhile, the characterisation of Gar's friends deliberately underscores the limited potential futures available to the town's youth, while the character of Mr. Boyle (if not, S.B., himself, as we have already seen) serves as a

depressing prefiguration of inevitability for the future if Gar does not leave Ballybeg.

For Gar, Ballybeg is "a bloody quagmire, a backwater, a dead-end! Everybody in it goes crazy sooner or later!"[313] While Gar produces a litany of examples of those who have already been swallowed up by the psychic disintegration fostered by the domestic and social structures, he refuses to acknowledge his own position within that system, insisting that departure will save him even though the psychic processes of disintegration are already in motion in the conscience of Gar Private. When Gar Public attacks Kate for her defence of her own decision to settle in Ballybeg, his angry tirade against the material conditions and possibilities of the town result in an insistent declaration of his freedom; yet while he insists that his emigration will liberate him, Gar *is* stuck there, *emotionally*, and his psychological dependence on an ideal configuration of home is more dangerous than Kate's material circumstances.

Gar attempts to rationalise the situation by reducing his problem to its simplest manifestation: its geopathic roots as a problem with place; "If you're not happy and content in a place then- then- then you're not happy and content in a place."[314] Yet while place – the oppositional site of home located in an oppositional social context - is indeed his central problem, departure from that place is not the solution. *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* in fact finishes without narrative closure, and Gar's departure is not enacted in its physical sense. This reinforces the dramaturgical betrayal of the play's realist impulses as a cause-effect diagnosis of emigration (which the physical dramatisation of the doubled psychic experience of Gar Private and Gar Public on the stage has already broken through) and emphasises the play's interrogation of subjectivity, rather than material/social circumstances, in its closing moments. However, the paradigms suggested in the other plays and, indeed, the implications in *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* suggest limited possibilities of liberation for Gar outside of the domestic and social context that he is attempting to escape. For while the play opens with Gar's optimistic celebration of his departure in the popular musical number *'Philadelphia, Here I Come!'*, the song is actually a ballad of return, rather than a

[313] *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* 79.
[314] Ibid.

ballad of departure. The "right back where I started from"[315] of the second line prefigures the ambiguity of Gar's position in the play's final moments:

> Private: God, boy, why do you have to leave? Why? Why?
> Public: I don't know. I- I- I don't know.[316]

In *A Crucial Week in the Life of a Grocer's Assistant* the protagonist John-Joe makes his own investigation into the inadequacies of the national domestic model, the inadequacies of its actual counterpart in his own experience, and the inadequacies of departure as a resolution to his problems. While the idiosyncratic mode of expressionism used to dramatise John-Joe's concerns have so far excluded the play from detailed discussion within the larger framework of this thesis, John-Joe's ambiguous relationship with the concept of departure from home is significantly similar to the psychology of departure that characterises Gar's experiences in *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* John-Joe, however, is more self-aware than Gar, and as he projects himself along the trajectory of emigration through the examples of others, he sees with greater clarity the inevitable return that emigration promises as its natural conclusion.

While Chaudhuri used expressionism as a model through which to explore the enacted trajectory of heroic departure, in *A Crucial Week in the Life of a Grocer's Assistant* the journey that John-Joe Moran makes is psychic rather than physical. The expressionistic techniques of dream and hallucination in *A Crucial Week in the Life of a Grocer's Assistant* allow Murphy to realise John-Joe's psychic journey on stage, to thematise the various psychologies that perpetuate the geopathic condition, and to deconstruct the mytho-historic processes that shape it. By juxtaposing these illusive representational forms with the objective reality of the final scene, however, Murphy allows us to connect the dysfunctional psychological processes at work in the physical act of emigration with the other plays that will be discussed in this chapter.

John-Joe is, like Gar, powerless in the construction of his own fate: his finances are managed by his mother, while his emotional life is overseen by the local priest. His impotence extends to his inability to leave the town, despite the potential future represented by his girlfriend, Mona. John-Joe has watched the

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[315] *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* 29.
[316] *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* 99.

depletion of the town and has experienced second-hand the continuing geopathic existence of the town's emigrants, and he finds himself unable to commit to such a possible future, although he re-figures this inability as a deliberate choice.

John-Joe has many examples of the disruptive reality of emigration to call upon, including the example of his elder brother Frank whose emigration has resulted in violent crime and a prison sentence. The emigrant experience of his childhood friend Pakey Garvey also reinforces the futility of departure as a means to psychic resolution; despite his success abroad Pakey has still not managed to improve his social standing in the town, nor has he managed to escape the social and psychic alienation that his emigration was designed to alleviate. Despite his figuration of the pair on opposite ends of the geopathic trajectory, Murphy makes the similarity between the psychic preoccupations of John-Joe and Pakey explicit; while Pakey has made an attempt at heroic departure, and John Joe remains bound by the victimage of his location, both are plagued by the exilic consciousness of geopathology that their domestic experiences have fostered.

The social impetus for emigration in the play is explicit. As in *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* the town is portrayed as full of death and decay - it is "like a grave-yard with walking pus-eating corpses and fat maggots jumping from one corpse to the next looking for newses."[317] Everybody is interested in everybody else's business and the private world of the home is constantly invaded by the wider social world, while the wider social world is suffused with details of domestic privacies. The resident grocer Mr. Brown, for example, makes it his business to regulate the lives of his employees, making them join temperance and sodality movements and insisting that they turn up to mass on Sunday before their wages get paid. The local priest, on the other hand, is brought into local households as the divine, defining authority of Catholicism when parental authority fails to limit independent will and ambition. The alliance of public and private authority, however, is rooted firmly within the domestic sphere, whose oppressive power is merely supplemented by the influence of the repressive social system.

It is through an inherited logic of guilt and fear that Mrs. Moran and the other figures of authority in the play (Mrs. Smith, the priest) exercise their control

[317] *A Crucial Week in the LIfe of a Grocer's Assistant*, 141.

over the younger generations. Their greatest fear is change; "disturbing the equilibrium"[318] is neither invited nor welcome in the small town. Emigration is feared as one such destabilising force; England and America offer a different kind of experience to emigrants, one that threatens the security of domestic authority and weakens the stability of the domestic/wider social unit. Mrs. Smith, for example, sees any alternative to life outside of the boundaries of a reality filtered through mytho-historic discourse as dangerous: "life is no good in it! Away from their homes. The pitfalleens!"[319]

Departure is therefore figured in *A Crucial Week in the Life of a Grocer's Assistant* as both the beginnings of the individual's problems and the means to their resolution. This view is corroborated in *Conversations on a Homecoming*, where the hierarchy of authorities represented by absent clerical and maternal figures understand emigration as a rejection of community and an abandonment of security for the unknown unpredictability of the outside world. In fact the potential insecurities of the emigrant position is established with inevitability in *Conversations on a Homecoming*, and while embodied in a single figure, Michael, the destructive force of emigration is underscored by allusions to various other emigrant fates.

In *A Crucial Week in the Life of a Grocer's Assistant*, however, John Joe himself enacts the conflicting possibilities that emigration offers in the dream-life sequences that are played out on stage. His imaginative attempts to leave home for England/America/Dublin, or anywhere that might offer him more freedom or independence, are juxtaposed with his actual inability to leave; yet his awareness that departure will not offer him the liberation he desires does not allow him to circumvent the problematic psychological reality of having to stay. His experiences of dependency may refuse him the ability to fully play out the logic of geopathology - to transcend the victimage of his location by participating in the heroic potentialities that departure offers – even though the examples set by his brother and Pakey substantiate his claim that emigration does not provide the answer to their problems, John Joe's inability to leave despite the promising signs suggests less fatalistic possibilities. It is possible that John-Joe's rejection of

[318] *A Crucial Week in the LIfe of a Grocer's Assistant*, 103.
[319] Ibid.

departure as a resolution stems from a true understanding of the politics of emigration and the destructive cycle that it engenders. However, it is equally possible that John Joe is unable to break the destructive cycle of dependency already engendered by the structures of the Irish Catholic family.

The Politics of Emigration: ". .I do dream about it. Coming home and all."[320]

In his study of Irish emigrant experience in America, Kerby A. Miller identifies three overlapping forms of Irish emigrant experience. Firstly, he identifies the motivations of involuntary socioeconomic emigrants who would have preferred to remain at home but for economic reasons were forced to make their living abroad; secondly, he identifies the motivations of voluntary socio-economic emigrants, who used their fierce entrepreneurial ambition to improve their economic, material and social conditions by moving abroad; finally, Miller identifies a third motivation for emigration in the figure of the voluntary emigrant who has moved abroad for economic reasons but wants to remain traditional. Despite the different motives that Miller ascribes to the groups, they are united in their cultural expression of emigration through a discourse of trauma and alienation; "Estranged from the dominant culture of their adopted country", Miller argues, the emigrants revert to a "collective, almost institutionalised, homesickness"[321] that defines their emigration as exile.

The institutionalised homesickness that Miller refers to is expressed in the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays by the transference of the social expectations and the psychic structures that have so far defined their geopathic alienation from home to their new site of being. The cultural constructions that the characters draw around themselves in the plays may be connected more to the mytho-historic discourses they have been fighting than to their real experiences, but they are enabled by their physical distance; away from their homes they can re-invent their pasts in light of the ideals that have so far eluded them. However, the characters attempts to realise these ideals in their new site of existence will prove as problematic as their dysfunctional relationship with home.

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[320] *The House*, 42.
[321] Miller, 1985, 493.

The problematic relationship thus established between narratives of emigration and the reality of experience is mediated by the characters in the plays through two distinct, but often overlapping, reactions to their environment. These differing strategies of survival abroad are connected to Miller's examination of motivation, and can be loosely defined as separatist and assimilationist. Where assimilationists (voluntary socio-economic emigrants) immerse themselves totally in their host culture, separatists (the voluntary socio-economic emigrant that wants to remain traditional) privilege the maintenance of traditional cultural forms. However, while both experiences of emigration are explored in the plays, their differing intents and purposes are often merged in a single thought-process that destabilises any clear-cut differences in their use of exile as a cultural motif. By formulating the emigrant experience with such ambiguity, the plays ensure that the paradoxical nature of the geopathic relationship with the uncanny Irish Catholic home is never far from the surface of the drama.

Long Day's Journey Into Night provides a suitable point of departure for discussing the politics of emigration that define individual experiences within (and away from) the Irish Catholic family. While the characters' outward motivations are clearly social, their desire for full scale integration is problematised by competing discourses of home that both undermine and glorify traditional cultural constructions of their heritage. The condition of exile in the play is primarily established through the generational process of emigration embedded in the histories of Mary and James Tyrone. The psychological inheritances of the emigrant consciousness are established in the play as pathologies equivalent to, and synonymous with, the problematics of place that define Edmund and Jamie's experiences at home. While the material experiences of Mary and Tyrone's emigration differ, their psychological experiences of exile are similar, and are similar also to the exilic consciousness with which their sons identify. Furthermore, a lack of understanding between husband and wife, and parents and sons, doubles the shared historical sense of alienation that can be traced back to the original culture from which they have become displaced, as already set out in previous chapters.

The differing circumstances of Tyrone and Mary's emigrant backgrounds in the United States are based on class difference. Tyrone emigrated to America as a child, when worsening economic conditions in famine-Ireland threatened the family's material possibilities of survival. His father's inability to cope with the attendant experience of displacement that emigration inevitably entailed reached crisis point with his abandonment of the family; it prompted Tyrone's premature accession to the position of head of the family, enforcing an initiation into adulthood that was made doubly traumatic by Tyrone's own sense of cultural displacement within the alien social environment.

Tyrone, however, took advantage of the opportunistic social and material landscape of America and of the anonymity that displacement offered him. Despite his impoverished background, he managed to educate himself sufficiently, ironing out any obvious traces of Irishness that may have inhibited his integration into American culture and his social advancement. His career in the theatre, in fact, defines the way in which he has assimilated himself to American society; as one of the leading actors in the American theatre, Tyrone has succeeded materially because of his convincing performances on stage. On a wider social level, however, performance provides the key to resituating himself on the social scale within his adopted homeland; it also provides the key to temporarily resolving the psychological issues attendant with his cultural dislocation.

Mary, meanwhile, was "brought up in a respectable home and educated in the best convent in the Middle West."[322] She is one of the lace curtain Irish, coming from a respectable middle-class Irish Catholic family, who established themselves immediately within the social landscape of America by virtue of their reputable profession. Performance plays a significant element in Mary's background too; her father's secret sense of self-alienation within the foreign cultural landscape exposes his social confidence as a public pose, while Mary's own ambitions as a concert pianist complement the performances she later develops to hide her drug addiction. The problematic integration of Mary's family into American life may not have been played out on a public level, but it is reflected in her own inherited anxiety about home, and in the ideals that she has

[322] *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, 58.

subsequently set as a standard for the family within her own failing domestic landscape.

While Mary's psychological condition implicates her crisis within a greater narrative of significance to the dramatic development of the play, Tyrone's ambivalence about his heritage creates a similarly ambiguous discourse around the disillusioning realities of emigration which suggests that cultural assimilation is more problematic than mere social integration. While Mary pines after some elusive concept of home, Tyrone seeks stability in similar material terms, but imagines it less through a lens of idealised standards (the qualities that Mary assumes in home) than through a quantifiable materiality, which will, ironically, never actually be met. Tyrone's accumulation of property obviates his sense of displacement by providing him with several places that can function interchangeably as home, but the security that they offer him is no less temporary than the illusive ideals that Mary sets for herself; as Mary, in fact, often reminds him, a house is not necessarily a home

The possibilities that property ownership offer, then, function metaphorically beyond the material, just as Tyrone's capabilities as an actor signify more than a means of earning a living. O'Neill's characterisation of Tyrone through his performative capacities, as Chapter Three suggested, may enable the presentation of psychological coherence in the public world, but within the environment of the Tyrone household Tyrone's Irishness is continually asserted as an essential part of his personality and identity, despite his attempts to shake it off in the hopes of greater social respect.

Tyrone's "*inclinations are still close to his humble beginnings and his Irish farmer forebears.*"[323] There is "*a lot of the stolid, earthy peasant in him*"[324], yet he adapts his Irishness to suit him, identifying with colonial history and English literature and making claims that might connect him to a greater sense of Irishness than that actually available to him in historical and cultural reality. Even as he tries to escape his heritage on a public level, however, Tyrone bears a measure of defiant pride in his background. When Edmund and Jamie challenge his respectability by drawing attention to his roots, for example, he defends the

[323] *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, 2.
[324] *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, 3.

site of his origin against their criticisms: " . .Keep your dirty tongue off Ireland, with your sneers about peasants and bogs and hovels."[325] While his natural affinity for Ireland is not expressed through the excessively idealised national discourse that we will discover later in the Friel and Murphy plays, Tyrone maintains an unfailing affection for his Irish Catholic background that overlooks the history of his own impoverished childhood.

The politics of the emigrant condition are not quite as well delineated in Mary's case; her psychic trauma is intrinsically linked to the material conditions of her present home, rather than to larger concerns of emigration or exile. The fundamental misunderstanding between Mary and Tyrone, however, illuminates the similarity between their problematic psychic conditions. This misunderstanding arises from their inability to reconcile their shared backgrounds of cultural displacement and their failure to develop a unified strategy of resistance to the oppressive social hierarchy to which they aim to assimilate.

The conflict between the pair also resonates in their relationships with their children, and in the relationships between their children, which is established through a dysfunctional framework that displaces Jamie and Edmund within the domestic structure, and draws attention to their displacement within the wider cultural framework as second-generation immigrants. Thus emigration and exile are established as pathologies associated both with their parents' history of cultural displacement and with their own relationship to the problematic site of their own home, which is a seasonal temporary site of being rather than a place to which they feel like they really belong.

Set in pre-Famine America, meanwhile, *A Touch of the Poet* provides a background to the relationship between emigration and exile that our contextualised reading of the plays has identified. In *A Touch of the Poet* the tension between the traditional culture of origin and new cultural experiences is embodied in the single figure of Con Melody, whose geopathic consciousness is represented in connection to his emigrant experience. The problematic relationship between place and personality is played out in both the idealised cultural space of his origin and the uncanny site of his present home, and both

[325] *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, 16.

bear significant impact on the development and performance of individual identity in the play.

Like James Tyrone, Con's main motivation for emigration is socio-economic and his main interaction with the new host community is assimilationist. While he maintains a certain level of traditional pride in his Irish heritage, his desire for integration compromises the authenticity of his affiliation with the homeland as well as his performance of the role of father and husband in the home; For while Con veers between positions of glorifying and denying his heritage, his behaviour compromises both our acceptance of his personal history and our understanding of his present failures as a cultural inevitability.

Con's relationship with his heritage, like James Tyrone's is established with a measure of ambiguity; even in the moments where he does display pride in his background, the details he provides create both an erroneous image of a gentility that draws closer affiliation to an ideal colonial heritage than to native Irish history. His belief in his own superiority is performed ritualistically through costume, language and the physical boundaries that he sets within his public house/home. Con's refusal to drink in the public space of the sheebeen, his insistence on keeping a mare despite the family's increasing debt, and his rhetoric all mark him out from his Irish customers.

By reinventing his personal past Con hopes to accelerate the process of his full assimilation into American society; a middle-class colonial past is closer to the ideals of American society than his tenuous historical relationship to the land-owning class in Ireland, and "when he came here the chance was before him to make himself all he pretended to be."[326] His past experiences of social alienation in Ireland, however, combined with the psychic dislocation of his emigration, have created a sense of trauma that Con can only cope with by embracing the drunken Irish stereotype even though he publicly denies affiliation with the Irish community. His refusal to acknowledge his cultural ties, however, doubles the experience of alienation that his personal history and his rejection by his host community has already fostered.

Throughout the play the focus of Irish identity is expressed phonetically, through the idiosyncrasies of Irish-English that Con calls 'the brogue'. Con

[326] *A Touch of the Poet*, 982.

himself speaks in the affected accent of a British soldier, using snatches of Byron and battle-lore as strategies for authentication. This public persona, performed as a strategy of integration, however, actually acts as a catalyst for his destruction. By denying his origins, he denies the most essential part of his identity, and his breakdown at the end of the play is a clear indication that the desire for full-scale cultural assimilation cannot be facilitated by self-erasure. Significantly, Con's crisis is expressed linguistically through a full-scale lapse back into the derided brogue; it is an expression of his historical identity (which may or may not be his 'authentic' self) that enables him to find acceptance among the Irish rabble in the public bar.

The tensions between the desire for assimilation and the desire to maintain one's heritage is brought out in a more violent manifestation in *A Whistle in the Dark*, where the family's recent history of emigration is expressed with raw clarity. As in *A Touch of the Poet,* the tension is embodied in the individual struggle of a single character, Michael Carney, but it is also expressed through the conflict between the Carney brothers, whose shared experiences of dislocation have been translocated from Mayo to Coventry in their emigration.

Michael's problematic positioning as an emigrant applies both to his physical dislocation from Ireland and his dislocation from his own domestic context as his conflicting loyalties to his new home and the homeland are brought to a head. Like James Tyrone, Michael manages to forge a niche for himself within his host society, but the respectability attendant with middle-class living is denied to him by his inability to integrate fully into the English cultural and social landscape.

Like Tyrone, Michael is ambivalent about the psychological legacy that he has inherited from his homeland. He is under no illusion as to the reasons why he left; the stagnant economic and social conditions made any opportunity of self-advancement impossible. However, Michael's loyalties to Ireland run deep, both because of an instinctive nationalist loyalty and because of the paradoxical politics of location that inform his crisis within the play, whereby the very conditions that prompted his escape from Ireland follow him all the way into the living room of his three-bedroom house in Coventry.

Michael's attempts to dissuade Des from leaving home for England express his ambiguity about the legacies of emigration. Michael has already witnessed how emigration has destroyed his brothers, destabilising their already unstable identities and forcing them into a life of crime, less to make ends meet than to restore their damaged sense of self-esteem. Having found that their self-defining referents have disappeared in their new environmental context, Michael's brothers are aggressively determined to uphold their familial and cultural identity in their new environment. The loss of stable domestic and national referents that accompanies their migration draws attention to the provisionality of these referents and the partiality of identity construction based on such unstable abstract concepts. Miller's suggestion that disillusionment with the emigrant experience draws emigrants "to old but seemingly still valid cultural categories" can be invoked here, and these cultural categories enable the Carney brothers to "skirt responsibility for their decisions . . . and to fall back upon an explanation of themselves as involuntary exiles."[327] They do not, like Michael, crave integration into English society, and their intense tribal and national identifications provide them with a context of belonging in the new, alienating social environment.

The tension between wanting to fit in and wanting to maintain a connection to the homeland is exercised among the brothers. Harry, Hugo and Iggy, and later Des, persecute Michael for trying to fit in. They accuse him of betraying his country by marrying an English woman, of betraying his class by joining the social hierarchy in England, and of betraying them, his family, by attempting to make his own home away from the dependencies and pathologies of their collective domestic history. This tension brings into relief the conflict between the two ideas of home that structured the Carney's uncanny experience within the Irish Catholic family - that of home as place of origin (as represented not just in terms of the specific house in Mayo, but also in terms of Ireland as the homeland) and that of home as an individual or self-created process, as theorised fully in Chapter Two.

Meanwhile, the conflict also reveals the social problems engendered in the transfer of these loyalties abroad as they are played out primarily through the brothers' criminal lifestyles, which are formulated as an active pursuit of revenge.

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[327] Miller, 1985, 135.

Instead of empowering them, however, the brothers' criminality doubles their marginality; they are marginal anyway as self-ghettoised immigrants, but their criminality further alienates them from the social system and ensures the perpetuation of the reputations that they are fighting against, contributing further, as we have seen in Chapter Three, to the identity crisis that defines their several characters.

Michael is aware, meanwhile, that his brothers' aggressive approach is unlikely to provide them with either the sense of belonging or coherent self-hood that they ultimately desire. While he has experienced first hand the destructive dysfunctions of home, he communicates his anxieties about emigration to Des through a mytho-historic discourse that underlines the ambiguity of his feelings towards the homeland and his new-found home. His arguments, however, reflect neither the reality of his own experience nor wider social conditions in Ireland. While Michael emigrated in order to escape the stifling, divided and oppressive domestic and social environment of Mayo, away from the immediate environment of his home and his homeland he is in a position to negotiate his memories through the discourses of mythory, even though it is these discourses that have actually created the conditions that he left Ireland to escape. With the critical distance of emigration comes a narrowing focus of history, and Michael can thus project the ideals that failed him *at* home back onto the homeland, even though they do not support the domestic relationships and social reality being played out on stage.

In trying to convince his youngest brother Des to return to Ireland, for example, Michael uses all the clichés of home that are thoroughly overturned as the play is propelled towards its dramatic conclusion. "It'd be better for you at home . . . sound, secure."[328] But the play confirms, in both live action and metaphorical content, that the national, social and domestic climate that Michael can manipulate from his privileged position abroad offers no security, no safety and very little freedom. His own refusal to return home, even for a short holiday, further contradicts the logic with which he tries to persuade Des that staying at home would be the best option and confirms the problematic politics of emigration that are consistently invoked in the play. The fictionalising strategies

[328] *A Whistle in the Dark*, 37.

that his defence of home demands thus place him in a position of coping that is equally as precarious as his brothers' physical approach, and potentially more psychologically damaging, as illustrated in his developing dramatic crisis.

The figure of Dada is also used to relocate Ireland within the suitably patriotic discourse informed by the mytho-historic ideologies of nationalism. The anthem that he sings in Act Three glorifies the very homeland that has failed him, and his use of the standard motif of exile and longing draws a metaphoric connection between home and homeland, and an ironic juxtaposition between the lived realities of the Carney family and the expectations of the mytho-historic ideals that they continue to support:

> Far away from the land of the shamrock and heather,
> In search of a living as exiles we roam,
> And whenever we chance to assemble together,
> We think of the land where we once had a home.
> But those homes are destroyed and our land confiscated,
> The hand of the tyrant brought plunder and woe.
> The fires are now dead and the hearths desolated,
> In our once happy homes in the County Mayo.[329]

Yet Dada's paean to his country is also used to undermine these discourses by reminding us of the unhappy social and domestic reality being played out on stage. Meanwhile, the implicit historical invocation in the song reconfirms the inherited, pathological nature of the family's unhappy and uncanny experiences both at, and away from, their home, while his psychic breakdown at the end of the play suggests the final breaking point of assimilationist and separatist desires.

While *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* does not in fact enact the physical departure of its protagonist, the various psychological processes that Gar undergoes in preparation for his emigration explore the politics of emigration through a similar discourse of exile to that set out in *A Whistle in the Dark. Philadelphia, Here I Come!* achieves this deeper psychological exploration by placing the narrative of Gar's incumbent departure alongside the emigrant narrative of Lizzie and Con, which has a determining factor on Gar's emigration and also prefigures his emigrant fate.

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[329] *A Whistle in the Dark*, 79.

Ironically, it is an arrival that provides the inspiration for Gar's projected departure. The arrival of Lizzie and Con provides Gar with the impetus to get out of Ballybeg and get on with his life. Their invocation of American freedom and capitalism runs in sharp contrast to the oppression and poverty of life in Ballybeg, but it also runs in sharp contrast to the actuality of the lives that Con and Lizzie live in America. Their reliance on the patronage of Ben, their inability to have a family of their own, their loneliness and their spiritual poverty thus creates a second awareness of America as a spiritual wasteland, contradicting the idealised discourse of opportunity that pervades the imagining of America in the play. Their romanticisation of Ireland through a sentimental narrative of mytho-historic inclination serves as a strategy of compensation against the oppressive material condition of their experiences in America.

America and Ireland are simultaneously invoked in *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* as sites into which all fantasies of self-realisation can be invested; as Fintan O'Toole suggests, they are represented "not just as two places, but as two opposing but equally unhappy states of mind."[330] For O'Toole, Ireland represents "a place haunted by memory", and America "a place haunted by forgetfulness"[331]; however, America is also a place haunted by the spectre of the past, by the spectre of a *past* place, the place which the emigrant has come from and is *unable* to forget, even if – or perhaps *because* - their remembrance is suffused with the unreality of the ideal. Both platial figurations, however, are also haunted by the spectres of these unfulfilled ideals; Lizzie and Ben's simultaneous invocation of Ireland as the Homeland and America as the place of refuge draws attention to their status as fictive constructions – neither of which will be fulfilled outside of their imaginary existence.

Gar participates in the emigrants' tendency towards idealisation with ambiguity. While he is prepared to accept Con and Lizzie's version of the American Dream, he is not willing to accept their version of the *Irish* Dream, as his life is a total contradiction of everything their mytho-historic construction glorifies; the ancient, traditional, idyllic Ireland that they invoke on their return is far removed from the reality of the small town and domestic structures that really

[330] O'Toole, 1997.
[331] Ibid.

regulate Irish life. Gar sees Lizzie's version of Ireland - "the country of your birth, the land of the curlew and snipe, the Aran sweater and the Irish sweepstakes"[332]- as a familiar diasporic cliché. (Tom in *Conversations on a Homecoming* similarly insists upon the destructive potentialities of these kind of romantic impulses. Nostalgia is "the real enemy . . Unyielding, uncompromising, in its drive for total sentimentality. A sentimentality I say that would have us all an unholy herd of Sierra Sues, sad-eyed inquisitors, sentimental Nazis, fascists, sectarianists, black-and-blue shirted nationalists."[333]) Yet even as Gar scorns Lizzie's nostalgic imagining of Ireland, he will also participate in an act of memory-making mythory himself, as he struggles to reconcile his own uncanny experiences with the stable imaginings of home that his forthcoming departure will demand.

The tension between Public and Gar Private on the matter of Gar's future return allows us to connect the discourse of departure and return established in the Lizzie and Con narrative with Gar's own sentimentalising propensities. Thus while Gar Public may maintain nonchalance about his affiliation to home ("All this bloody yap about father and son and all this sentimental rubbish about 'homeland and 'birthplace'- yap!" [334]), asserting a thirst for "Impermanence-anonymity. . . . a vast restless place that doesn't give a damn about the past"[335], Gar Private *does* give a damn about the past, and through the psychic processes that we witness in the play we see Gar Private refigure the contentious site of home through an emigrant narrative of nostalgia and fond memory which the play establishes through the example of Con and Lizzie as a necessary precondition for his survival abroad.

Gar Private, as representative subconscious of Gar Public, draws attention to the deliberate memory-making processes that work as strategies of distraction from geopathic reality; the process whereby lived experience is "distilled of all its' coarseness" and what's left is turned into "precious gold."[336] In *Aristocrats* and *Living Quarters* the Butler and O'Donnell children use similar methods of memory making as they prepare to leave home, fixing the house in unified

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[332] *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* 32.
[333] *Conversations on a Homecoming*, 67.
[334] *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* 79.
[335] Ibid.
[336] *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* 77.

memories that exist contrary to their actual experiences. While these systems of sentimentalisation provide a necessary defence against the continuing geopathic future that awaits them, they are also a symptom of that continuing geopathic future, as Gar's predicament clearly indicates.

As Gar Public resists Private's attempts to filter their shared history into a collection of pleasant impressions, images and memories, Gar Private is aware that these very same images will save him. While he can question the validity of such a disingenuous approach to the past, he acknowledges that truth does not matter in this instance. It is the *idea* of a shared, communal experience, the *idea* of the homeland, whether real or not, that will provide him with a comforting sense of belonging somewhere/anywhere when he leaves for the vast spaces of America. It is the *idea*, not its possibility, that matters. And in the very same way, it is the idea of departure, rather than the practicalities of its realisation, that has saved Gar from self-destruction thus far.

In *The House* the various emigrant characters reveal a similarly ambiguous response to the psychological condition of their emigration, and a similarly idealised, if conflicted, impression of their homeland. The various characters' motivations for emigration can be understood by way of the socio-economic motivations that Miller identifies, yet while their aspirations are variously assimilationist and separatist, they each formulate the narrative of their experience as exile. Thus, although their physical displacement emanates from the problematic social and domestic climate of home, the politics of exile adds a deeper level of significance to their psychological dislocation that draws our attention back to the uncanny familial structures of the Irish Catholic home.

The economic and social background to the characters' emigration is established in the play as state of national crisis. The depletion of the town's youth is associated with a further depletion of the town's already weakening facility to provide ample opportunity for its young men and women. Instead of remaining at home to nurture their own society, the youth of the town are "scattered, somewhere"; there is "no one to tend their own land"[337] and no one, therefore, to

[337] *The House*, 5.

resolve the various issues that have contributed to the conditions that have driven them away.

The economic climate in England, meanwhile, has become thoroughly dependent on its immigrant Irish labourers to sustain it. Not only does the system provide them with economic opportunity ("You gets a living over there"[338]), the system is so dependent on its migrant workers that it completely shuts down for two weeks when the emigrants return home to spend their wages in the local pubs and expend their frustrated energy in bar-room brawls. While providing for them economically, however, England has not accommodated them within its social structure, and has not provided for the psychological reconstitution that the characters ultimately desire.

The characters' inability to integrate fully into the social landscape of England is implicit in the way in which the emigrant characters conceive their connection to the homeland. Peter, for example, desires full-scale integration and has married into the social system by marrying an English woman, but his hybrid accent still marks him out within British society, while his religious affiliation becomes a matter for concealment that heightens his social and cultural paranoia. Yet even as he desires assimilation, Peter maintains a deep-seated attachment to Ireland and feels the power of place as he is haunted by the spectre of home. Peter reconstructs the alienated reality of his experiences at home through the mytho-historic ideals of patriotism and nationalism because of his desperation for a site of security in which he can invest his dreams; while England served the function of that fantasy space when he was trapped in the socially alienating environment of home, home now serves as the container for his ideals.

Christy, meanwhile, is thoroughly separatist, and he sees emigration as a means to achieving what he wants in Ireland. His motivation for emigrating, like Peter's, is purely economic, but Christy does not look to England to provide him with the material and psychological conditions of security that will enable a more coherent sense of self-identity; England merely provides him with the financial facility to set about securing a future for himself *in Ireland.* Christy's vision of the future, however, is firmly rooted in a vision of the past, in a dying idea of the de Burca family that bears no significant relation to their present reality. By selling

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[338] *The House*, 11.

their house, meanwhile, they are joining the reality that Christy and the other male emigrants have suffered; a reality that is "not to belong to a place anymore . . We're being sent into exile."[339]

As in *A Whistle in the Dark*, the emigrant characters in *The House* best express their deep-rooted connection to Ireland through a motif of exile manifested in its frustration as violence and in its full romantic potential as song. The ballad that provides an intermittent soundtrack to many of the bar scenes expresses the inherent reverence with which the characters hold their homeland, even as it defies the logic of their actual experience there. The ballad articulates the cultural connection that is an essential, immutable part of their identity, and still holds them to the country of their origin even as their physical connection to the place is severed by their emigration: "I . .is for the Irish in your tiny heart, my dear/R means right and when you're right you have no need to fear/E is for Eileen, your mother's name I mean/And L is for the lakes where I met my own colleen. . . Then A is for the angels that are watching over you/N means never frown. . . Keep smiling through. . And D is for your Daddy's lesson. . .And I hope 'twill be a blessin'. . That's how I spell Ireland."[340] The invocation of the maternal figure and the landscape establish them as containers for the Irishness that the emigrants claim as an essential part of their identities; reclaiming the homeland through these images of piety and innocence is an essential part of reclaiming that sense of themselves they feel lost to them abroad.

Susanne, meanwhile, provides an interesting counterpoint to the male emigrants in the play. "I'm a poor emigrant too!"[341] she insists, even as she scorns the type of lives they live, and the desperation that comes to the surface when they return home. Although the material necessities of her circumstances may differ – her motivations for emigration are personal rather than economic - the psychological underpinnings of her situation are identical to those of the men that she refuses to identify with. When her sister Louise draws attention to the different (voluntary) reasons that defined Susanne's departure, however, we are ironically directed towards the similarity between Susanne and the male emigrants

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[339] *The House*, 77.
[340] *The House*, 20.
[341] *The House*, 36.

that she despises. "You didn't *have* to go away"[342], Louise may argue, but the inevitability of emigration in the developmental processes that are played out in the individual fates of the towns' youth suggests that Murphy is at pains to imply that there is never really any other choice.

Susanne feels the same anxiety about belonging that Christy, Peter and Goldfish do, the same anxiety that characterised the anxieties of the characters in *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, *A Whistle in the Dark* and *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* Susanne also turns to an identical process of idealising home in order to combat her growing insecurities, even if her idealisation lacks the sentimentality that many of the men in *The House* display. Her violent reaction to the family's decision to sell the house reinforces our understanding that it functions as a signpost to her deepest sense of identity.

The manifestation of these conflicting feelings in female form remind us of the cyclical pattern of departure and return that defines the journey of the male geopathic victims throughout the plays, where the outward manifestation of their unhappiness at home in its literal sense is refigured by a primal desire for home in all its symbolic significance. It also reminds us, more broadly, of the fundamental paradox that defines the politics of exile; that the act of physical departure provides no condition for the psychic liberation of the emigrant soul.

The Limits of Homecoming: "The longest way round is the shortest way home"[343]

The logic of the cyclical narratives of exile and return that define individual relationship to the dramatic Irish Catholic families thus suggests that the act of homecoming is as inevitable in the characters' quests for a coherent self as emigration is. While Margaret Llewellyn-Jones has suggested that homecoming in twentieth-century drama "acts as a catalyst, challenging the identities of the characters who stayed at home"[344], her reading fails to remind us of the identity crises that acted as a catalyst for the returning hero's departure in the first instance. Homecoming does not challenge the identities of those who stayed at home, nor

[342] Ibid.
[343] *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* 94.
[344] Llewellyn-Jones, 2002, 119.

does it reaffirm the identities of those returning, it merely reinforces the duality of the exilic consciousness as a symptom of both an alienating domestic environment and the processes of emigration; the limits of homecoming that Chaudhuri refers to, then, expose the limits of the site-specific identity constructions fostered by the structures of the Irish Catholic family.

The House serves as a particularly interesting starting point for discussing the potential limits of homecoming as a resolution to the emigrant characters' crises. Murphy's play unfolds over the course of a two-week period in high summer when the emigrant community makes its annual pilgrimage back home, and the dramatic conflict centres on the failure of their homecoming to provide the spiritual panacea that the emigrants are looking for. By placing the migrants' return at the centre of the dramatic action, and at the centre of the dramatic conflict, Murphy juxtaposes the extreme ends of the geopathic journey, reflecting the mutually causal link between home and exile in the equally disruptive identity crises of both the characters who left and those who stayed at home.

The experiences of the returning emigrants expose the limits of homecoming among the families and community that they have left. Their homecomings are received with muted celebration and mixed feelings that heighten the sense of alienation that their annual visit home has been designed to alleviate. They are regarded less as heroes than as traitors; their emigration is a betrayal of domestic, social and national ideals. The contradictions of this position, however, are immediately exposed; for while the emigrants are accused of leaving for America and England "only to hone their criminal skills"[345], the disposable income that they bring home, and the money that they send home, actually keeps the town's economy liquid. Furthermore, their annual return drives the town's social economy as well, their two-week visit enlivening the deadened atmosphere of the stifling small-town social scene.

The character of Jimmy provides a particularly good example of the locals' prevailing attitudes to their emigrant contemporaries. While Jimmy is "*supercilious (the way he laughs at/mimics their accents)*", looking down on them for leaving, he is also *"envious (because of his own situation and the rolls of*

[345] *The House*, 69.

money that they flash)."[346] As the play progresses his ambiguous attitude - his mixture of envy and regret - hardens into hatred, perhaps because he becomes aware of the ambiguous nature of his animosity, and his own inevitable future in the stultifying social landscape. Jimmy ignores the economic necessity of the emigrants' departure, formulating it as an act of national betrayal that reinforces the power of place in defining individual identity both in relation to the community and one's individual self. This dialectic implication, however, exposes the limitations of site-specific conceptions of identity; in as much as place *defines* belonging, it also delineates the *boundaries* of belonging and the limits of inclusion.

Jimmy demonstrates this logic when he questions Peter: "do you love your country...Declare your allegiance or do you have an anchor at all?"[347] For Jimmy the emigrant's identity depends on his declaration of which side (which site) he belongs to. If you cannot physically assert an allegiance to a place (and emigrating denies the very concept of this allegiance), the psychic stability of belonging is ultimately denied. Jimmy implores the emigrants to make their choice - "where's your anchor, where d'you belong?" - and reinforces the consequences when they can't; "Lads, ye belong nowhere, ye belong to nobody."[348]

At Sunday morning mass, the local priest gives a sermon that reinforces this idea; that to leave Ireland is to leave behind the markers of communal identity; to leave is to be independent, to be independent is to assert an individuality that the mytho-historic structures of identity development that we have already identified have already denied. Furthermore, as the priest calls on God to "Keep them in mind of the spiritual inheritance they brought with them"[349] he draws attention to the spiritual inheritance intrinsic to the individual's cultural affiliation, a spiritual inheritance that he also finds diluted by physical dislocation. By undermining the structures of cultural affiliation, emigration thus weakens the individual's capacity to belong; the irony of course being that it was these very same structures that inhibited their development at home in the first instance and that necessitated their departure.

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[346] *The House*, 10.
[347] *The House*, 13.
[348] *The House*, 19-20.
[349] *The House*, 36.

Peter's situation identifies the broader cultural terms of the community's ambiguous feelings about their emigrant sons. His marriage to an English woman may have given him an entry point into British culture, but it serves as the key obstacle to his re-integration when he returns home. Peter is convinced that the conservative social community disapproves of his marriage for religious reasons; his defensive characterisation of his wife as a *converted* English woman, and his repeated insistence that his children have been baptised, indeed signifies the control of the Catholic catechism over domestic issues and personal life. However, it is less religious affiliation than cultural difference that causes the greatest level of concern for Peter's mother and the other disapproving members of society; what Peter is really being punished for is for marrying outside of his culture. Peter's predicament is similar to Michael's in *A Whistle in the Dark,* but the community's rejection of exogamy is not just based on a disapproval of the lifestyles that the emigrants have chosen; it indicates that a wider cultural concern is at stake.

Meanwhile, the ambiguity of the emigrants' feelings towards home in both its literal and metaphoric meaning is highlighted by their return, as they are forced to abandon the idealised version of the homeland that they have constructed for themselves abroad and consider the reality of the situation that they left behind. In fact, their experience of homecoming is so fraught with conflicting loyalties, disappointed realities and complex ambiguities that self-medication with alcohol provides the only release. The various scenes of inebriation remind us of the fate of Tyrone's father in *Long Day's Journey Into Night,* who abandoned his family to return home, embracing a similarly self-medicated fate and a premature death.

The peripheral emigrant characters in *The House*, Peter and Goldfish, best exemplify the complexities of the belonging/not belonging binary in direct relation to the politics of physical exile. Their "bastard accent(s)"[350] betray both their heritage abroad and their compromised status at home, denying them the means of assimilation in their host society as well as the means of re-integration within their culture of origin. Their emigration, therefore, places them in a liminal space, belonging neither to the culture that they have come from nor the society that they have hoped to join.

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[350] *The House*, 10.

Peter in particular finds returning home problematic. While he understands the concern with place that plagues him abroad, he does not understand why it continues to affect him so deeply at home: "it happens [at] times, the other side, but does you expect it at home- ay?"[351] Peter is consistently haunted by a longing for home when he is abroad, but the event of his homecoming merely reinforces the fact that he is haunted by the same anxieties *at* home as well.

The conflict between Peter's desire to belong and his feelings of exclusion draws our attention back to the circular inevitability that defines the geopathic experience within the dramatic Irish Catholic home. If the uncanny Irish Catholic home, as we have defined it, serves as both the condition for and the obstacle to the characters' psychological coherence, so homecoming operates within the same paradoxical framework; while providing the characters with a physical site in which they can project ideals of a stable identity, it reminds us of the limits of its ability to actually do so:

> Christy: We come back every year.
> Goldfish: That is a fact. And for what, I sure as shit don't know.[352]

In *Conversations on a Homecoming* the homecoming of the title generates a similarly ambiguous response among the local community to that identified in *The House;* parallel homecoming rituals are performed by the characters, but the juxtaposition of the community's enthusiastic expectation - he will bring all the news of the outside world - with a degree of cynicism reveals a similar concern with the limits of homecoming. The very act of Michael's homecoming is laid open to question in the opening moments of his entrance. Michael hasn't been home in nearly ten years, but rather than return as expected during high-season, his arrival in the middle of the working year engenders the immediate suspicion of the townspeople. Their suspicion is further aroused when their quest for news is met with a series of recycled stories that Michael entertained them with on his last visit home. Michael's inability to provide them with anything more contemporary creates a 10-year elision of experience that points towards a hidden crisis.

It is in Tom, Michael's closest friend, that the most destructive aspects of ambiguity towards the returning emigrants are played out. Tom reveals the same

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[351] *The House*, 41.
[352] *The House*, 38.

mixture of envy and regret towards his friends that Jimmy demonstrates in *The House*. His contempt for Michael's failure, however, is fuelled more by his own inability to find the courage to break away from the suffocating cycle of dysfunction and disappointment that characterises interpersonal relationships in the town. Tom subscribes to the inherited conservatism and suspicion of change characteristic of prevailing political and social attitudes to emigration among the wider communities in many of the other plays. America is a "Ridiculous country. The luck is on me I never left here."[353] However, his determination to expose Michael through a ritual of humiliation that he attempts to pass off as constructive criticism is as much a symptom of Tom's own need to prove his superiority as it is a means of proving to himself that he missed nothing by staying at home.

Tom is suspicious of Michael's motivation for coming home, and this conflict arises particularly when Michael reveals his continuing idealism about the possibility of a better future in Ireland; he still believes in The White House as the site in which this idealism can reach its ultimate fruition, even though the other characters have all seen this possibility defeated first hand. Tom rejects Michael's romanticism, which he judges as both ridiculous and patronising, but he knows that it is more than nostalgia that has prompted Michael's return. "Home to re-inspire us, take a look at our problems, shake us out of our lethargy, stop us vegetating, show us we went wrong. . ." he jeers; the real reason that Michael has returned, he believes, is "to stay, to die. . ."[354], having realised that America offers no panacea to the symptoms of his crisis.

Michael holds a similar opposition within himself that is manifested in the very act of his homecoming. While performing the act as a triumphant return, his experience in America has actually been as alienating as his experiences at home, only now he has also lost connection with his closest friends and family. The small-town structures of insularity that prompted his departure, however, have not changed. Everybody knows that he has failed abroad, and that he has returned to home for economic, as well as emotional, salvation; the money that he generously spends on rounds of drinks in a demonstration of fiscal liquidity is, in fact, his mother's.

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[353] *Conversations on a Homecoming*, 42.
[354] *Conversations on a Homecoming*, 51.

While the local community look to their returning emigrants for confirmation that salvation is possible in the larger framework of the world, Michael actually projects the same expectation of transformation onto his homecoming; the personal trauma of his emigrant experiences have shown him "how dicked-up one can get. . . how meaningless things can become for one"[355] away from the cultural security of home. For Michael, home rather than America is projected as "the right place. ."[356] to resolve his issues, renew his optimism and express his essential identity, but his faith is undermined by the social stasis that has swallowed the ambitions of his friends and threatens to smother him; the idealism that The White House represented has been destroyed by economic realities and the debilitating effects of alcohol, while J.J., the embodied figure of spiritual salvation, has dissipated into nothing more than a drunk.

Tom draws parallels between Michael's future and J.J.'s fate. Michael's own realisation that his ideals extend further than personal salvation is enforced by the limits of homecoming revealed on his return. While his insistence that the community's salvation lies in the possibilities of departure - "Why don't you leave? . . You can still get out. . . There's still time"[357] – is replete with an irony engendered by his own traumatic experience abroad, by pointing us towards J.J's prediction that if Tom "didn't break out of it, none of us would"[358], Michael reveals the fulfilment of J.J's prophesy, as well as the compromised altruism of his own campaign. By liberating Tom and the other characters from the oppressed site of their existence, Michael hopes not just to emulate J.J. as potential saviour of the town, but to ensure his own salvation. The townspeople have no time for a second coming, however, and the possibilities of Michael's liberation are inadequate anyway. The limits of homecoming as a means to salvation are revealed as home is exposed as the originary site of Michael's identity crisis; his return has merely reinforced the exilic consciousness that has defined his being both at home and abroad.

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[355] *Conversations on a Homecoming*, 12.
[356] *Conversations on a Homecoming*, 9.
[357] *Conversations on a Homecoming*, 65.
[358] *Conversations on a Homecoming*, 66.

While the juxtaposition between the returning emigrants and their home communities in the Murphy plays highlighted the ambiguity about the returned emigrant's liminal condition at home and abroad, the case for homecoming is made clear in *Aristocrats* and *Living Quarters*: "it is the memories of those lost possibilities"[359] that have exercised the characters endlessly since their departure that brings them back to the site of home from which they began. If the lost possibilities thus provide the impetus for the cyclical homecomings that the plays enact, the limits of homecoming are the same; home has been figured as the conditioner of the individual's identity crisis in the first instance, and the return home thus cannot possibly provide the means to their salvation.

In *Aristocrats* and *Living Quarters,* Friel uses the act of homecoming as a key element in the dramatic and thematic structure of the plays. The act of homecoming drives both the drama and the dramatic crisis itself, as the act of return proves neither triumphant nor recuperative but deeply traumatic for both the returning characters and the characters that stayed at home. In *Dancing at Lughnasa*, for example, Father Jack's return is regarded with anxiety by the community, who are horrified by the profound changes in the priest's behaviour. Father Jack himself, meanwhile, has been so changed by his mission abroad that re-integration into his home community is impossible. Similarly in *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* Lizzy's homecoming is different from the homecoming she imagined, and she finds herself confronting a country that is very different from the ideal that she has constructed in her emigrant consciousness. Her emotional breakdown suggests a crisis of consciousness, less profound than Father Jack's, perhaps, but certainly as traumatic. Homecoming, as Friel presents it, is as psychically disruptive as the physical act of departure itself is.

In fact, in *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* the static position of Gar on the eve of his departure does not prevent us from following the trajectory of emigration through to its fulfilment as homecoming, both through the example that Lizzie and Con provide us with, and through the projection of Gar's fate in the familiar discourse of triumphant return. Thus even as the play directs us towards the psychology of departure without following it through to its natural end, Gar

[359] *Living Quarters*, 206.

Private draws our awareness to the wider implications of Gar's departure and the limits of homecoming in his inevitable return.

Gar Public draws our attention to the recurring cycle of exile and homecoming in his projection of a triumphant return, a homecoming that he imagines through the discourse of materiality familiar from the narrative of American opportunity that Lizzie and Con invoke. In the familiar narrative of idealisation, Gar imagines returning home to Ballybeg as an all-conquering hero, proving the begrudgers in Ballybeg wrong - that life in Ballybeg is not the only life available to those trapped there. Although Gar imagines coming home "when I make my first million, driving a Cadillac and smoking cigars and talking movie-films"[360], he rejects possible re-integration with the site of his origin; he will return only to burn the place to the ground.

Although we cannot take his threat at face value, Gar Public's dismissal of a possible future in Ballybeg is telling, and ultimately ironic, as we discover his own complicity in perpetuating the discursive paradox of home; his defiance merely adds one more level to the fictionalising fabric already examined as a function of mytho-historic processes in Lizzie's relationship to her personal history and in Gar's relationship with his father. Gar Public's desires for revenge are gradually replaced with the romantic ideals that Gar Private draws around him in anticipation of his physical displacement and its inevitable psychological effects. Despite his public resistance to the geopathic cycle and the cultural conditions that have engendered it, Gar's life will follow the trajectory established in the other plays we have examined; his homecoming will also be his undoing.

Meanwhile, the reality of homecoming is played out on stage in *Aristocrats* through the several homecomings of the O'Donnell children. Although the collective homecoming is initiated by an act of celebration – the wedding of the youngest sister, Claire – it is actually played out in tragic circumstances to the dying sounds of a funeral dirge. The limits of homecoming are not just exposed in the extreme circumstances of Father's death, however, as the anxiety surrounding the act of homecoming exposes a destructive relationship within the site of home itself that points towards a more deep-rooted and destructive trauma.

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[360] Ibid.

Judith's homecoming, for example, is a mark of her failure to break free from the mutual dependencies that defined her relationship with home. Following her psychic disintegration abroad she returned home to recuperate but finds her domestic dependencies highlighted by the physical dependency of her dying father. Alice, meanwhile, tries to break the boundaries of the limits of homecoming by medicating herself with alcohol. Casimir has also inured himself from the destructive potentialities of homecoming, by constructing a shield of fantasy. Although his personal history is structured by a series of homecomings (returning each year from boarding school, for example), the fictionalising mechanisms of self-protection that he has adopted as a life strategy have not freed him from the trauma of homecoming's enactment.

Alice's husband Eamon articulates the reasoning behind the family's position with a dispassionate cynicism when he identifies the limits of homecoming as home itself: "Less than 24 hours away from temperate London and already we're reverting to drunken Paddies. Must be environment mustn't it?" [361] As Eamon's comment signifies, the only means through which the O'Donnell children can shift the boundaries of homecoming and their psychic effects, then, is physically - by not coming home at all, yet their experiences away from home have already demonstrated the circularity of this logic.

As the funeral dirge for Father drowns out the wedding bells marking Claire's new life, Father's death in fact facilitates a more fortunate beginning for the entire family, by releasing the O'Donnell children from their most powerful connection to their home, the physical site of home itself embodied in its patriarchal figure. While the decision to sell the house is made, ironically, by Judith, the daughter who has the most significant physical dependence on it, each of the O'Donnell children understands that Father's death has enabled their physical release from the cycle of exile and homecoming that has helped to perpetuate the pathology of their collective trauma.

In *Living Quarters,* meanwhile, the dramatic action is also structured around an act of homecoming, the return of Commandant Frank Butler from a temporary posting in the Middle East where he has demonstrated his heroism with

[361] *Aristocrats,* 279.

"outstanding courage and selflessness." [362] Frank's prestige establishes his homecoming within a discourse of triumphant return, yet despite the hero's welcome he receives from the community, there is a more ambiguous welcome awaiting him at home, as the occasion for celebration becomes an occasion for mourning and the limits of homecoming are established, as in *Aristocrats*, as the boundaries of life and death. The deliberate foregrounding of the tragic inevitability through the figure of Sir sets these limits out clearly as they structure the characters' individual fates and the play's dramatic action as well.

The entire Butler family has gathered together for Frank's homecoming. Eldest daughter Helen, for example, has returned from England for the occasion. She has been living in London for six years, and gained a degree of material and emotional independence from the family. She sees her homecoming, however, as an emotional risk, admitting to Sir that she is using the opportunity as a "deliberate test"[363], a means of proving to herself that she has moved on from the destructive dependencies that have so far marked her relationship with home. In the end, however, the limits of her homecoming draw our attention to the limits of her independence. They also destroy the boundaries of her sanity, and when Sir informs us of the family's fate at the end of the play, we learn that Helen has failed the test that she set herself; she has suffered an acute nervous breakdown that destroys her relationship with her family and her own independent life.

Helen's brother Ben is also entirely submerged within the limits, and the limited discourse, of exile and homecoming. Ben's various attempts at emigration are punctuated by premature homecomings subsumed within the discourse of failure already imagined in the play. Ben's fate is evoked by Sir as an endless repetition of the cycle of departure and homecoming that has already characterised his attempts at independent existence.

It is in the father figure Frank, however, that the limits of homecoming are played out to the highest degree of tragedy. Frank's homecoming is conceptualised outside of the emigration discourse in which his children's fates are subsumed; Frank's stay abroad was not predicated on a desire to escape from home, and he has a new young wife and a promotion awaiting him on his return.

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[362] *Living Quarters*, 178.
[363] *Living Quarters*, 183.

The act of his homecoming, however, pushes his fate into the same dramatic framework that structures his children's futures; as he comes to find out that his place as husband has been usurped by his son, his homecoming merely reinforces the limits of his relationships at home.

Meanwhile, the new start that Frank imagines on his return is, ironically, a new start predicated on another departure, this time to Dublin; by the end of his homecoming celebrations, however, he has sent himself into permanent exile by committing suicide, an act that determines a personal tragedy in individual terms, and a collective tragedy for the family. Frank's suicide marks the final and total destruction of the ideas and ideals that have both destroyed the characters' lives and invested them with meaning; the politics of exile are played out to their most tragic effect.

While Father's death releases the O'Donnell children from the burden of the pathological patriarchal hierarchy in *Aristocrats*, the liberation implied in the O'Donnells future (though crucially, as we have seen, not enacted) is denied the Butlers as Frank's death has imparted a far more problematic psychic legacy to his children as they are compelled to relive not just the trauma of his suicide, but the trauma of their dysfunctional domestic past, over and over in accordance with Sir's narrative.

Conclusion

In her diagnosis of the exilic consciousness, which we have identified both at home and away in the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays, Chaudhuri suggests that the problematic relationship with place "remain(s) in force until it is recognised for what it is and directly confronted."[364] While the death of the father figures in *Aristocrats* and *Living Quarters* suggested the possibility of the family's release from the cycle of exile and homecoming, the dramaturgical framework of the two plays - and the other plays that have been discussed in this chapter - denies the confrontation that Chaudhuri sees as the means to the resolution of the individual's trauma. In *Philadelphia, Here I Come!,* for example, the irreconcilable Public and Private aspects of Gar's personality are reinforced

[364] Chaudhuri, 1997, 81.

dramatically by their inability to unite despite the private mutual acknowledgement in the final moment of the play. The conflict between Tom and Michael in *Conversations on a Homecoming*, meanwhile, will be replayed again and again, night after night, in the drink-fuelled environment of The White House, while in *Living Quarters* the characters are condemned to live their collective version of the past over and over again until they reach some self-acknowledgment. Meanwhile, the characters in *Aristocrats* may decide to forsake their physical connection to their home by selling it, but they fail to acknowledge that their emotional ties are stronger than any material connection and they remain on stage in a moment of contemplation that *"may go on indefinitely."*[365] Christy in *The House* makes a similar mistake, but the consequences are forced upon him in the closing moments of the play, as Christy *"standing in the setting sun . . . chokes back a sob"* and *"deals with it."*[366]

The recognition and confrontation that Chaudhuri suggests as the ultimate release is realised, however, in the two plays that do not actually enact departure or return in their dramatic trajectories, yet even for the men in these plays this confrontation has ambiguous consequences. Con Melody's enforced confrontation with his 'authentic' self, for example, marks a complete breakdown in his public function. If he has spent his life in alienation like the eponymous antihero in Byron's *Childe Harolde* as his frequent citations reinforce ("in the crowd they could not deem me one of such; I stood among them but not of them"[367]), he finally fulfils the moment of belonging he has been searching for in the closing moments of the play. The expressionistic dramaturgy of *A Crucial Week in the Life of a Grocer's Assistant*, meanwhile, facilitates John-Joe's verbal explosion at the end of the play as an attempt to purge both the domestic and social environment of the insular, myopic obsessions that have perpetuated the geopathic crises throughout the generations; however, even as his outburst purges his geopathic frustration it does not dispel his geopathic future. John Joe may have found the courage to challenge the rigid and oppressive domestic and social structures that govern the determining action of the play, but he remains bound up in the domestic paradox of dependency and loathing, with neither the economic,

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[365] *Aristocrats*, 326.
[366] *The House*, 113.
[367] *Touch of the Poet*, 985.

physical or psychic recourses to move away, nor the possibilities of making a success of his life at home.

The O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays thus enact a problematic trajectory that remodels the significant theme of emigration in light of the characters' relationship with home. The politics of home and emigration become mutually configured as a politics of exile, whose cultural expression exemplifies mytho-historic processes of narrative construction. If, as we have seen in previous chapters, the plays have exposed home as the catalyst for individual trauma, so they use emigration to demonstrate that this trauma is perpetuated independently of the specific site of home, indicating a wider problematic inherent in the culture itself, as this thesis has continued to suggest.

The act of emigration, however, is also conceived as traumatic in its own right. While the ambiguity reflected in the psychology of departure reflects the deep-rooted, metaphorical significance of home in the specifically Catholic cultural conception set out in Chapters One, Two and Three, the enactment of departure reinforces this ambiguity by enforcing a cultural displacement that intensifies their identity crises. Meanwhile, the characters' attempts to circumvent this trauma by looking back towards home in a desperate search for an essential identity draws them into complicity with mytho-historic processes of idealisation; the homecoming that they imagine to be their salvation is limited in its very construction by its mytho-historic foundations.

However, as the plays' refusal of closure indicates the impossibility of escaping such mytho-historic structures in spite of the ability to express them, the postmodern representational practices in the late twentieth-century plays of Martin McDonagh, which we turn to in the following chapter, provide a double-edged challenge to the function of mytho-historic narratives in a contemporary ideological climate. Drawing on a different set of cultural references and dramaturgical practices, McDonagh manages to challenge both the mytho-historic ideologies that necessitate the static vision of irresolution in the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays, and the dramatic ideologies that such a static vision of domestic dysfunction sets forth as canonical precedent for dramatic representations of the Irish Catholic family.

Chapter 5

Postmodern Politics and the Uncanny Home

Blending a traditional representational subject with late twentieth-century representational strategies, the plays of Martin McDonagh succeed in de-familiarising the archetypal patterns of domestic dysfunction so far identified in the Friel and Murphy plays. By de-familiarising this dramatic tradition in form and content, McDonagh maintains a double-edged ideological deconstruction that serves a double-function in this chapter; it allows us to continue the relationship drawn between mythory and dramatic representations of the Irish Catholic family that has so far structured this thesis, but it also allows McDonagh to challenge it, pointing towards the wider cultural project of this thesis as it attempts to unpack the way in which particular ideologies have functioned as narratives of cultural expression in twentieth-century Ireland.

The structure of this chapter will essentially compress the main thematic strands that have so far shaped the analysis of the dramatic Irish Catholic family into a single unit. It will not attempt to translate or revise the conclusions of the previous chapters to suit a simplified textual reading of the McDonagh plays; it will involve, instead, a full reworking of the arguments in line with the contemporary dramaturgical, political and canonical issues that the McDonagh plays invoke in line with their postmodern representational practices. While the characterisation of the Irish Catholic family in ideological and representational form through the literary model of the uncanny, the impact of geopathology on the construction of identity, and the emigration-exile binary will be duly examined in their relationship to McDonagh's dramatic worlds, these issues will be discussed in light of the politics of postmodern representation which have shaped both the construction of the plays and the critical lens through which the plays' deconstructive practices and cultural expression can be examined.

A first step towards achieving this contextualised reading of McDonagh's work situates the plays in their relationship to the Irish dramatic canon, which has been an issue of considerable critical contention.[368] While some critics suggest

[368] For a detailed analysis of this critical debate see Sara Keating, 'Critical Contexts in Contemporary Irish Theatre Criticism: Or Is Martin McDonagh an Irish Playwright?' in *Martin*

that McDonagh's plays are parasitic, plagiarised versions of canonical Irish plays, others appreciate his use of literary and dramatic tradition as intertextuality, confirming a postmodern status that is further enhanced in the plays' performance and physical conceptualisation on stage. This intertexuality can be combined here with a theoretical formula adapted from the earlier chapters of this thesis, where the dramatic context that the O'Neill plays provided to the Friel and Murphy dramas is remodelled so that the Friel and Murphy plays provide the enabling dramatic model from which the McDonagh plays can be discussed. However, the McDonagh plays also function independently of their originary texts, and they merit an analysis in their dramatic and textual realisation that is not always forthcoming due to the controversies of authority, authenticity and ownership that have surrounded both the author and his plays. It is only by redefining the terms on which McDonagh's work can be discussed, then, that the plays themselves can be examined and that the relationship that they bear to the wider argument of my thesis can be made clear.

Thus rather than arguing for an either/or reading of McDonagh's plays – that is assigning definitive conclusions complicit with social drama on the one hand or playful postmodernist entertainment on the other – combining an examination of the way in which critical narratives have been constructed around the plays with an analysis of McDonagh's subversion of the reified function of the Irish Catholic family as a *dramatic* ideology, will allow the contradiction between how McDonagh's plays are received and their own representational function to point towards the wider conclusion of this thesis. For if the dysfunctional model of the Irish Catholic family of the twentieth-century stage has become as deeply problematic as the mytho-historic model that it originally resisted, so the controversy that has accompanied the reception of McDonagh's plays suggests that the critical boundaries of late twentieth-century Irish drama are complicit in confirming a dramatic ideology (by way of canonicity) that is as limited in its hermeneutical possibility as the essentialising ideological narratives that it claims to deconstruct. The Friel and Murphy plays may have been resisting the residual ideology of mythory at a time when the material manifestation of ideology had given way to modernising infrastructures, but the subversive quality of

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McDonagh: A World of Savage Stories. Eds. Eamon Jordan and Lillian Chambers. (Dublin, Carysfort Press, 2006.) p.p.281-294.

McDonagh's plays can be understood to suggest that the dramatic canon, and the critical tools used to construct and interpret that canon, are now complicit in perpetuating cultural narratives implicit with their own ideological essentialism.

Social and ideological change along with the growth of global capitalism, found a changing context of expression from which McDonagh could begin his dramatic explorations of the Irish Catholic family. The removal of special mention of the Catholic Church from the constitution in 1972, for example, shifted the Church's institutional power towards the Protestant conscience model of social reform that was reflected in the diminution of the Church's social power and force in Irish society.[369] Meanwhile, the admission of Ireland to the EEC in 1973 made significant changes to Ireland's economic landscape by improving infrastructure, encouraging further foreign investment by EEC states and, crucially, implementing agricultural policies that essentially "encouraged the development of larger farms and hastened the demise of the traditional smaller family farm"[370] on which the Irish Catholic family model was largely based.

In cultural terms, the movement of historical revisionism during the same period officially denounced the prevailing National Mythology that the Friel and Murphy plays had been writing against in historical terms. However, the New Revisionism refused to reinvest the space created in its historical deconstruction with any alternative value-system. This wholesale replacement of the old mythology with the revisionist perspective created the fallacy of a value-free history and the myth of a mythless society, both of which were undermined by the residual ideology sustained in the Irish Constitution and in discursive conditions that still maintained nationalist aspirations as the fabric of the social value-system.[371] Friel and Murphy's ideological deconstructions could thus remain relevant well into the 1990s - *The House* premiered at the Abbey Theatre in 1998, while Friel's latest play *The Home Place*, which premiered at the Gate Theatre in 2005, explored the concept of home as a "treacherous legacy"[372] in its ambiguous investigation of Ireland's relationship to her colonial past – allowing McDonagh to exploit both the form and content of the plays even as he challenged them.

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[369] Kenny, 2000, 278.
[370] Kennedy, 2001, 243.
[371] p.p. 72.
[372] Brian Friel, *The Home Place* (Meath: Gallery Books, 2005), 63.

However, far from extrapolating outwards from the drama, as the historicised ideological concerns of this thesis have so far necessitated, the analysis of *The Leenane Trilogy* in this chapter will continually turn the plays back upon themselves as textual and theatrical creations of a post-modern age in which intertextuality replaces referent reality as the formative influence of narrative construction. While this may appear to deviate from the methodological continuum that has so far allowed the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays to exist in a contextualised dialogue with particular social contexts and each other, the transdiscursive principle of analysis that has so far been useful to this thesis, and the contemporary context of the plays themselves, dictate this self-reflexive measure of analysis as a function of their postmodern form.

Such a malleable methodology enables the concluding paradox by which the McDonagh plays simultaneously contribute to and undermine the deconstructive paradigms of their theatrical predecessors. The canonical conditions of dramatic construction and the conditions of criticism themselves do not just validate this double-function, they make it fundamental to our understanding of the importance of the McDonagh plays to the conclusion of this thesis. For as McDonagh's plays become convenient texts from which a variety of political positions can be pushed by critical commentators, so they can be understood to deconstruct the very ideological basis of the construction of cultural narratives - be that in their dramatic, social, political or even critical manifestation. Before turning to the plays, themselves, then, it is essential to tease out fully the canonical and critical history with which they engage and the implications of this engagement for an analysis of the plays themselves.

The Postmodern Paradox: Controversy over Criticism

Although the similarities in form and construction in the plays of Friel, Murphy and McDonagh suggest a continuum of representation (the shared domestic concerns, the realist signifiers of the set construction), drawing parallels between their shared representational concerns is slightly disingenuous. Where the Friel and Murphy plays are structured by the tensions between an idealised world and a dysfunctional reality, McDonagh's plays establish a dysfunctional reality as the

natural state of order in the enclosed world of Leenane, just as the uncanny home has become the natural dramatic reality of twentieth-century drama.

In the McDonagh plays, for example, the fraternal violence that proved so shocking for the original audience of Murphy's *A Whistle in the Dark* is heightened to the status of high farcical comedy. The intra-familial tension in a play like *Living Quarters*, meanwhile, is made to escalate beyond suicide to the actual murder of father by son, while the act of suicide itself is naturalised as a plot convention in American T.V. shows and a spiritual escape route for a depressed and faithless priest. Thus even as a discussion of the three playwrights under the rubric of a single research project might point towards some concluding paradigm of essential connection, the analysis of the McDonagh plays demand an entirely different critical approach.

We have so far defined the dramatic realism of the Friel and Murphy plays through Catherine Belsey's model of interrogative function, which manipulates ostensible realist form to various degrees to the ends of destabilising theatrical unities and deconstructing the ideologies that underpin them. Fintan O'Toole identifies a similar commitment to, and disruption of, the realist dramatic model in Martin McDonagh's plays, classifying his manipulation of realist dramaturgical form as a "dirty naturalism" that stretches realistic boundaries to uncanny effect and deconstructs a particular set of ideological assumptions in a similar way to the Friel and Murphy plays.[373]

However, McDonagh's allegiance to a particular tradition of Irish realism has as much to do with the ideological associations of realist form itself as it does with the ideological associations that the Friel and Murphy plays espouse, even in their deconstructive mode; it is not just domestic realism, but the dysfunctional domestic realism of the 'Irish Catholic Family Drama' that provides the familiar form from which McDonagh can disrupt dramatic, ideological and audience expectations to uncanny effect. The interrogative function that McDonagh invests in his manipulation of realist form thus interrogates both realist form itself and the function that realism (even in its interrogative form) has served in the representation of the Irish Catholic family on the twentieth-century stage.

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[373] Fintan O'Toole, 'The Leenane Trilogy' (*The Irish Times*, 24th June, 1997a) reprinted in Furay and Redmond eds., 2003, 181.

This specific subversion of canonical Irish drama is made clear in the McDonagh plays by the visual invocation of the Irish theatrical canon that has accompanied the plays' realisation on stage. The physical configuration of the sets absorb a visual canonical stereotype by carefully reproducing a country-cottage setting that has become shorthand for 'authentic Irish drama', a setting that "embodies . . .reiterates" and exploits "the well-known Irish attachment to place."[374] The stage settings delineated by McDonagh draw particular attention to the inflected Catholicism of the domestic site of the Irish theatrical home as it has existed in the standard country-cottage realism that the Friel and Murphy plays both subverted and absorbed into their own dramaturgical aesthetic.

The Beauty Queen of Leenane, for example, takes place in the "living-room/kitchen of a rural cottage in the west of Ireland. . .There is a window with an inner ledge above the sink in the right wall looking out onto a field"[375], while a crucifix and a framed picture of John and Robert Kennedy provide the visual signifiers of the domestic rural world that is about to take shape on stage. McDonagh uses various modern appliances, however - a TV, a radio, an electric kettle, and a modern oven - to provide a visual suggestion of the clash of values that lies at the heart of both the play's thematic content and its theatrical construction.

Similarly in *A Skull in Connemara* the stage action begins in the "spartan main room of a cottage in rural Galway"[376], but McDonagh juxtaposes the ubiquitous crucifix that is attached to the back wall with an array of lethal-looking farm tools as a visual clue to the violent turn that the play will take soon after it begins. In *The Lonesome West*, meanwhile, the site of action is also defined by realist domesticity, with the contrast between audience expectation and the ensuing stage reality represented in layered visual terms of ironic contrast; "a long row of dusty, plastic Catholic figurines. . . line a shelf on the back wall, above which hangs a double-barrelled shotgun and above that a large crucifix."[377]

Far from replicating reality, however, the level of domestic detail with which the physical sets are created on stage creates a fetishist focus that invests the ostensibly realist setting with a hyper-real context in which the dramatic

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[374] Bertha, 2004, 64.
[375] Martin McDonagh, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* in *Plays:1* (London: Meuthen, 1997), 1.
[376] Martin McDonagh, *A Skull in Connemara* in McDonagh, 1997, 63.
[377] Martin McDonagh, *The Lonesome West* in McDonagh, 1997, 129.

landscape takes on greater significance than the historical or social situation of the stage action might allow. By investing pre-modern dramaturgical elements with the hyper-real quality of theatrical effect, this creates a stage reality in which form and content are held in constant tension to uncanny effect and "the play's apparent realism" is given the "ghostly, dizzying feel of a superimposed photo."[378]

The benign domestic objects that provide clues to the contemporary setting in the plays' physical conception, for example, are redeployed for horrific purposes, while gestures of affection are defined by acts of brutality; the rural Leenane is a world in which objects have lost their utility, and the violent and the holy can exist side by side. It is a world in which inherited values have been divested of their ideological significance and discursive ideologies have been emptied of the values that have given them meaning.

This dramatic allegiance of the pre-modern and the hyper-real creates an identifiably postmodern context of aesthetic construction that has yet to gain full critical appreciation. The dramaturgical performance of visual citation and the layering of intertextual effect takes the 'dirty naturalism' of the McDonagh plays creates a different interrogative realist model than that which Friel's and Murphy's plays espoused, by using the familiar realist features that the Friel and Murphy plays also exploited through different aesthetic means, which achieve different aesthetic ends. While it allows McDonagh to subvert the dramaturgical and canonical status of the dramatic Irish Catholic family tradition at the same time as he exploits its familiar, accepted dramatic and thematic form, it also operates successfully on the superficial level of light cartoon comedy. McDonagh's plays, then, demand a different critical language than the plays which they cite in their construction, and, for our purposes here, this is the language of postmodern aesthetic practice.

Suffice to acknowledge, without excessive elaboration, the difficulty with which a postmodern model of aesthetic identification has been formulated for critical practice. In an essay on 'Postmodernism and Theatre' in *The Routledge Encyclopaedia of Postmodernism*, Matthew Causey differentiates between a series of overlapping historical periods defined as modernist, high modernist and late

[378] O'Toole, 'The Beauty Queen of Leenane' (*The Irish Times*, 6th February, 1996) reprinted in Furay and Redmond eds., 2003, 160.

modernist.[379] In line with the Marxist inflections of the Jamesonian model that Causey describes, McDonagh's plays are firmly fixed within a cultural logic of late capitalism (late modernism) that has gained wider contemporary critical identification as the consumerist logic of globalisation in its aesthetic conception as postmodernism. The mode of pastiche identified in the McDonagh plays act out the "hyper-commodification and dispersed borders and mixed spaces"[380] of contemporary globalised capitalism that Jameson's model identifies, while playful investigations of concepts of authenticity and culture-as-product suggest a deliberate connection between McDonagh's dramaturgy and the development of global capitalism in the late twentieth-century world.

These issues are pushed forward thematically through the construction of Ireland as a cultural product in *The Cripple of Inishmaan,* and the citation of television programmes, women's magazines, and international humanitarian crises as products of entertainment in *The Leenane Trilogy*. However, the performance of the plays on a global scale, successfully marketed and consumed from the West Coast of Ireland to the West End in London, and from New York to New Zealand, heightens our awareness of the plays' own textual function as cultural products themselves. This simultaneous deconstruction of and contribution to the commodification of Irish culture reminds us of the place-related paradox that frames the ideological investigation at the heart of this thesis, but also of the differing aesthetic context through which the content of the plays must be examined.[381]

However, the modes of aesthetic performance reflected in the Jamesonian model and identified in McDonagh's postmodern representational strategies rely on stylistic techniques and ideological principles that often overlap with the aesthetic reflections of the early modern and high modern historical periods that Jameson's model delineates, and with the realist manipulations of the Friel and Murphy plays. The disruption of spatial/temporal continuity, performer/spectator

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[379]Matthew Causey, 'Theatre Arts' in eds. Charles E. Windquist and Victor Taylor, *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1999), 285-7.

[380] Causey, 1999, 286.

[381] For a concise analysis of the relationship between the plays of Martin McDonagh and the processes of consumer capitalism see Patrick Lonergan ' "The Laughter Will Come of Itself. The Tears Are Inevitable": Martin McDonagh and the Impact of Globalization on Irish Theatre Criticism' in *Modern Drama* Volume 47, no.4. (Winter 2004) and 'Recent Irish Theatre: The Impact of Globalisation' in *New Voices in Irish Criticism*, ed. Finola Dillane and Ronan Kelly (Dublin: Four Courts, 2003).

configuration, subject-positions and traditional dramatic representational strategies, the questioning of universalism, essentialism, truth values and consensus can be identified in the Friel and Murphy plays as a response to the tension between traditional value-systems and the infrastructures of high modernism. However, they can also be connected to the late-modern (postmodern) aesthetic response in McDonagh's plays.

The aesthetic practices of pastiche, bricolage, intertextuality and technological interventions, meanwhile, can also be linked across the representational reflections of Jameson's historical periods. The fluid representational and ideological boundaries identified in the Friel, Murphy and McDonagh plays alone suggest that Jameson's differentiation of aesthetic practice as it is linked to historical periodisation is neither wholly definitive, nor entirely useful for developing an authoritative critical model from which to begin exploring the relationship between the Friel and Murphy plays on the one hand and the work of Martin McDonagh on the other.

Causey's essay, however, identifies a key turning point between high-modernist and late-(post)modernist representation that allows us to tease out the contradictory parallels in Jameson's historical periods, suggesting a critical model of difference from which we can begin to discuss the different representational agenda at work in the McDonagh plays. This turning point is the shift from a "textually based art concerned with the crises of subjectivity and representation (Modern Drama) to a performance-based art concerned with the random play of signifiers and the deconstruction of the process of theatre production itself (Postmodern Theatre)."[382] Although the McDonagh plays prove of primary interest to us here from the textual perspective of Modern Drama - particularly in light of their intertextual relationship to the Irish dramatic canon - Causey's identification of the 'deconstruction of the process of theatre production itself' in Postmodern Theatre proves essential to drawing the boundary between the representational practices and ideological intents of the Friel and Murphy plays and the politics of McDonagh's own representational forms. Modern Drama's 'crises of subjectivity and representation', meanwhile, take on new depth in

[382] Causey, 1999, 286.

Postmodern Theatre as the 'random play of signifiers' identified by Causey's model destabilise even, and especially, the performative act itself.

By combining the implications of Causey's distinction between Modern Drama and Postmodern Theatre with the overlapping aesthetic features identified in Jameson's late-modernist model, McDonagh's plays can be discussed in line with a postmodern framework that allows for the difference and sameness that structures McDonagh's relationship with the Irish dramatic canon. It is the very ambiguity of the necessary identification/differentiation that this involves that has generated the problematic relationship between McDonagh and his critics.

It is the relationship between the McDonagh plays and the postmodern politics of their representational strategies that has been at the root of the controversy that has surrounded their critical reception. Placing opposing critical readings side by side proves helpful in illuminating the wider critical ambiguity that the plays have generated, and locates the critical anxiety in the site of contemporary cultural and social conditions rather than in the plays themselves. While some critics suggest that the plays reveal the uncomfortable realities of dysfunction and exclusion in contemporary Ireland, the critical opposition voiced by others suggests an ideologically informed reluctance to accept a (stage) reality beyond particular narratives of cultural construction.

The postmodern strategies of dramaturgical construction that McDonagh employs in his plays, for example, have been interpreted variously by dissenting critics as parasitic empty parody: they are "copies that have forgotten their originals"[383], images that have no referent reality of their own. [384] For these critics, the forced Syngean linguistic constructions, the use of plot devices from canonical episodes in Irish drama and contemporary episodes in Australian soap-opera, exposes a referent reality that is purely textual or theatrical rather than reflective of an independent reality of its own concern. McDonagh's greatest talent, such arguments suggest, is as a pasticheur; yet while his plays may be "perfect

[383] Morash, 2002, 269.
[384] Jose Lanters, 'Playwrights of the Western World: Synge, Murphy, McDonagh', in *A Century of Irish Drama: Widening the Stage,* ed. Eileen Morgan, Shakir Mustafa and Stephen Watt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 15.

forgeries"[385], this is diagnosed not as their greatest achievement but their greatest flaw. "There is too much quotation, it is too directly from other fiction"[386] for any authoritative authorial voice to make itself heard.

In a review of *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, for example, an anonymous theatre critic refers to the play as "*Bailegangaire* in an alternative universe", and McDonagh as a "deranged offspring" of Murphy.[387] While acknowledging the link between the representational worlds, the review suggests that the explicit textual and theatrical citation that functions as the predominant dramaturgical device in the play places McDonagh simultaneously in parasitic and parodic relationship to his theatrical predecessors; McDonagh's plays do not just *feed* off Irish dramatic tradition, they provide a mocking imitation through exaggerated mimicry.[388]

The unnamed reviewer in this case illustrates a frequent anxiety that has surrounded the critical and academic reception of the McDonagh plays; that McDonagh is exploiting Irish culture while laughing at it at the same time, instead of contributing a potentially subversive addition to a long theatrical tradition of ideological deconstruction. McDonagh is seen in this context as an "interloper" whose plays are "rooted not in (Irish) reality but in the canon of Irish theatre."[389] It is precisely at this nexus point - at the crux of the relationship between the potential realist function of the play and its theatrical playfulness - that McDonagh's plays incite the critical opposition that has privileged arguments about authority and authenticity over the actual construction, and potential ideological deconstruction, of the plays themselves.

However, by focusing exclusively on the relationship between the plays and various other canonical texts, such critical readings neglect the free-floating hermeneutical independence of McDonagh's representations ('the random play of signifiers' in Causey's definition of the postmodern aesthetic) outside of the (albeit considerable) influence of his theatrical predecessors; that is outside of the context of their canonical inheritance. Fintan O'Toole recognises the partial vision

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[385] Dominic Dromgoole, quoted in Mary Luckhurst, 'Martin McDonagh's Lieutenant of Inishmore: Selling (-Out) to the English', *Contemporary Theatre Review* Vol. 14, no. 4. (Winter 2004), 39.
[386] Ibid.
[387] Uncredited review of The Beauty Queen of Leenane in *Phoenix Magazine* (31st August 2001), 23.
[388] See Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 161.
[389] Waters, 2000, 30.

of this oppositional critical position when he suggests that the irreverent tone of the McDonagh plays is less important than the serious deconstructive purposes that can be attributed to them. O'Toole believes that while the plays exploit the canon for entertainment purposes, they also enhance the established dramatic tradition; if we accept that the representation of the Irish Catholic family in the Murphy and Friel plays involves a deconstruction of accepted ideological constructions, so *The Leenane Trilogy* represents "a culmination of a long history of demythologisation"[390] in twentieth-century Irish drama. O'Toole's reading suggests that McDonagh's plays provoke yet another dramatic revelation of the gap between the values projected onto the surface of Irish life in narratives of cultural expression and Irish reality.

Jose Lanters acknowledges the potentially productive possibilities of this deconstructive inheritance in her essay 'Playwrights of the Western World: Synge, Murphy, McDonagh', when she places McDonagh directly in the tradition of the contentious literary site of the West of Ireland.[391] McDonagh, she argues, follows up the tail end of a representational tradition begun by Synge, and taken up by Murphy, in which a more visceral, more real reality is put in place of the glorified 'authentic' rural representations that defined both the theatrical and literary genres of twentieth-century Ireland.

Furthermore, Lanters' reading suggests, McDonagh's invocation of contemporary details - from the absorption of contemporary political, media and consumer events into the fabric of both plot and play – can be seen to root them firmly within a recognisable realm of identification and familiarity from which a social critique can be extrapolated without too much difficulty, despite the flippant and farcical tone. O'Toole's argument would corroborate this reading, as it suggests that McDonagh's satiric purposes reveal the contemporary divisiveness of society and the "alienating influences of the present"[392], while they also facilitate the reclamation of dramatic stereotypes as an exorcism of "the still lurking demons of colonial distortions."[393] Meanwhile, Patrick Lonergan has suggested that *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* tackles issues "of local importance,

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[390] O'Toole, 1997a, 181.
[391] Lanters, 2000.
[392] O'Toole, 1997a, 179.
[393] Ibid.

such as the withdrawal of multinational firms from the area, emigration, and the changing status of women in Ireland."[394]

The oppositional critical position, however, would strongly disagree with the potential integrity that such readings bestow upon McDonagh's theatrical vision. Victor Merriman, for example, contends O'Toole's attribution of post-colonial concerns to the dramatic stereotypes in McDonagh's plays. In fact Merriman argues that not only do the plays make no valid contribution to contemporary social debates, they have "no currency in an urbane present."[395] Furthermore, their "over-determined . . . Irishry" actually *repeats* the representational practices of colonialism by "implicat(ing) audiences in particular stances toward the poor, the past and Irishness."[396]

Similarly, John McDonagh argues that the plays "belong to a hackneyed theatrical past rather than the abrasive, confrontational future."[397] McDonagh particularly disputes the sometime celebration of the plays as products of postmodern playfulness. His argument that "overt references to Complan, Kimberley's, *Sons and Daughters* and Swingball are not enough to make his play notably postmodern or indeed even conventionally challenging, merely culturally perceptive", however, is undermined by his later insistence that the plays bear no relation to contemporary cultural experiences of material advancement and economic prosperity in their privilege of peasant stereotypes. Furthermore, while McDonagh identifies Friel and Murphy as the contemporary creators of "sophisticated. . . subtler dramatic environment" defined by a "hermeneutical flexibility" that effectively challenges the "formal central elements"[398] of an older theatrical tradition, it is a measure of hermeneutical *inflexibility* on the part of readings such as McDonagh's that denies potential deconstructive purposes to plays like *The Leenane Trilogy*; an analysis of their politics of representation and performance suggests a potentially greater challenge to the formal central

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[394] Lonergan, 2003, 24.
[395] Victor Merriman, 'Decolonisation Postponed: The Theatre of Tiger Trash', *Irish University Review,* Vol. 29, no.2 (Autumn/Winter, 1999), 314.
[396] Ibid.

[397] John McDonagh, '"It's surprised I am how sane I've turned out!": Martin McDonagh and the Construction of Connemara' in *Working Papers in Irish Studies,* Vol.2, no. 3. (Autumn 2002), 7.
[398] McDonagh, 2000, 6.

elements of Friel and Murphy which should not be overlooked just because of the plays' playful parodic theatrical construction.

In fact, according to more positive critics of McDonagh's work, it is the plays' ability to provoke laughter that has undermined the potential integrity of their social concerns, their obfuscation the "clear delineation of the tragic and the comic"[399] confirming the ambiguity surrounding the critical classification of the plays in the selection of oppositional critical reactions cited above. O'Toole, for example, suggests that the juxtaposition of violence and farce in the plays blurs the accepted critical categories of tragedy and comedy, as a proof that "the kind of responses implied by words like comedy and tragedy just don't work anymore"[400] and are thus inadequate for an understanding of contemporary experience or contemporary theatre practice. Academic Mary Luckhurst, meanwhile, chides *Time Out* theatre critic Jane Edwards for asserting that "'hysterical laughter is the only appropriate response'."[401] Luckhurst is appalled, expressing critical (and ethical) dissent at McDonagh's satiric purposes; yet her further analysis of the different critical responses that the plays elicit suggest that it is less the blurred generic boundaries than the plethora of critical responses to these blurred boundaries that have generated the plays' problematic critical status.

The redundancy of the critical categories that the plays' physical and thematic commitments veer between thus suggest an uncanny effect quite different to that evoked by the Friel and Murphy plays. As the dramaturgical strategies in the plays refuse to commit to the structural and ideological delineations of audience and critical expectation, an uncanny effect of form and content connects the plays' environments to the dramatic representations of the Irish Catholic family in the Friel and Murphy plays. However, the recognisable dramatic dysfunctionality of the Irish Catholic family (the uncanny home as we have identified it in Chapter Two) is in fact de-familiarised as its disturbing uncanny qualities are naturalised and diluted by laughter. Yet the sense of the uncanny in McDonagh's own plays as texts independent of the canon that they invoke is simultaneously enhanced by

[399] McDonagh, 2000, 5.
[400] O'Toole, 1997a, 179.
[401] Luckhurst, 2002, 23.

the audience's discomfort at the instinctive emotional impulse to laugh at the disturbing realities being played out on the stage.

The kinds of responses that the McDonagh plays elicit on the one hand, then, are inappropriate on the other; as the difference between the recognisable reality and the fictional frame of reference that they simultaneously foreground pushes us further away from critical clarity, the plays expose the limitations and rigidity of the critical categories, and the ideologies underlying these positions, that have structured responses to the plays. It is not the content of McDonagh's plays themselves that have engendered the critical controversy that has surrounded them, then, but the contemporary critical conscience itself with its ideological inheritance of mytho-historic ideals that privilege unified images (like the dysfunctional Irish Catholic family) over dissenting narratives of representation.

Teasing out such contradictions in critical thought, however, allow us to understand the contradictions in the plays themselves *in relation to* and as *subversive of* the work that they invoke in their textual and dramaturgical construction. Karen Vandervelde's identification of the double-edged purpose in the plays as canonical and radical can be elaborated to encompass their double deconstructive target as an integral critical structure for understanding the double-edged duality of the plays[402]; that is, understanding them both as a continuation of the legacy of ideological deconstruction that the Friel and Murphy plays have established, and as a deconstruction of the institutionalisation of their dysfunctional dramatic Irish Catholic family models in late twentieth-century drama.

Liminal Worlds and Lost Responsibilities in The Leenane Trilogy

Despite the differing strategies of representation in *The Leenane Trilogy*, identifying a continuum of canonical representation allows us to follow a pattern of thematic development already well established in the Irish dramatic tradition. While these different representational strategies contribute to the overall radical and subversive effect of the trilogy, we can actually trace a familial line of failed

[402] Karen Vandervelde, 'The Gothic Soap of Martin McDonagh' in Jordan ed., 2000, 293.

and dysfunctional authority from the Friel and Murphy dramas discussed in the previous chapters through to McDonagh's plays, even if the dramaturgical particularities of the McDonagh plays direct us towards a different set of dramatic implications (and these are metatheatrical as well as social implications) than their predecessors.

The plays in *The Leenane Trilogy* establish an intensely localised setting similar to the line of representation already established in the previous chapters. The plays are largely set within the physical site of the home, in a country-cottage setting that immediately invokes the long tradition of domestic realism in the Irish canon. The plays occasionally deviate from that single site in expressionistic dramaturgical turns, evoked mostly by spotlighting and narrative exposition which relocates the action temporarily to "*a bedsit in England*"[403] from which Pato writes to Maureen (*The Beauty Queen of Leenane*), "*a rocky cemetery at night*"[404] where Mick and Mairtin excavate the remains of the dead (*A Skull in Connemara*), or a "*bench on a lakeside jetty*"[405] (*The Lonesome West*) where Father Welsh eventually drowns himself. However, these temporary dislocations in dramatic setting do not dilute the specific rooted-ness of the action in the context of the distinct community of Leenane.

The cross-referencing of physical site and character action that is obliquely invoked in the trilogy, meanwhile, encourages patterns of identification and recognition that enhance the sense of spatial cohesiveness, as well as the sense of the community's insularity and isolation. The recurrence of characters on stage, and in the cross-narrative references within the three plays, allows McDonagh to create a sense of a community (in full physical terms), even if a renegotiation of the foundations of the concept of community is actually served by McDonagh's steady exposure of the community's perverse dysfunction. The spatial specificity creates the theatrical illusion of Leenane as a fully self-contained social world and a fully self-contained theatrical world, holding all the necessary dramatic elements and dramatic instigators of the plays' action within the context of the dramatic world itself.

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[403] *The Beauty Queen of Leenane,* 34.
[404] *A Skull in Connemara,* 81.
[405] *The Lonesome West,* 160.

The isolated domestic microcosms that enhance the uncanny domestic experience in the Friel and Murphy plays are also taken on in *The Leenane Trilogy*; McDonagh deliberately establishes Leenane as an isolated liminal world, for example, while the domestic sites within it have absorbed the dysfunction of Friel and Murphy's domestic settings as a contained version of the community outside. This reflection of microcosmic isolation in the individual homes of the trilogy evokes a wider social context and a doubled effect of isolation in which the families, familiar in their dysfunctional structure from the Friel and Murphy plays, may be understood as representative dysfunctional communities existing within the alienating framework of a wider marginalised social community.

The existence of both family and community on the peripheral borders of a wider society, simultaneously lends Leenane a contemporary cultural, and a dislocated social, context; Leenane can thus be seen as a rural outpost of globalised Ireland, like Bailegangaire in Murphy's play, a place where past and present converge without any prospect for the future. However, although the physical site of Leenane is frozen in a theatrical conception linked to the past, time has been accelerated by the rapid growth of Celtic Tiger Ireland, and it has provided the characters with an entirely different set of cultural contexts than its dramatic origins suggest and which a socially committed understanding of the play must take into account.

In line with such considerations, Leenane can be understood as a world left behind by the Irish economic boom: the certainties of the past - family, church, state - have disappeared, but they have not been replaced with the enabling structural mechanisms of the future. Instead the outward cultural form of the peasant community still gives Leenane its representational shape as a society, even as an inward social chaos is destroying it; this Leenane exists in a world in which all authority (cultural, spiritual, social and domestic) has entirely collapsed, even if these authorities still hold the outer, institutional, trappings of authority.

While the collapse of domestic order and patriarchal authority will be duly examined towards the end of this chapter, the failure of other, more formal, modes of authority contribute a significant heightening of dysfunction in the plays by reinforcing the reading of the liminal world of Leenane as a fallen state. Before examining the secondary effects such hierarchical collapse may bear on the town, it is interesting to examine how the religious authorities, as just one example of

the disintegrating frameworks of authority in the trilogy, are portrayed without moral control over their *own* behaviour, let alone moral authority over the wider community.

In Brian Friel's plays *Living Quarters* and *Dancing at Lughnasa* a destabilisation of the authority of the priesthood was used to reflect both the failure of patriarchal control as we have already examined it and the shaky ideological and spiritual foundations on which the Irish Catholic family model itself was constructed. Murphy's plays also placed their destabilisation of religious authority within a wider context, implicating the oppressive structures of Catholicism as a perverse power in the regulation of individual lives. *The Leenane Trilogy* can be considered to continue this exposure of the destructiveness of the Church's institutional authority through the ironic celebration of the Church's last remaining function in the town of Leenane, where the priests "know how to make a nice vol-au-vent, now."[406]

In *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, for example, the clergy are associated not just with failed authority but with varying degrees of amorality that in fact draw on some of the high-profile revelations of the Catholic Church's recent history. "There was a priest in the news Wednesday had a babby with a Yank!"[407] Ray informs us, while he also reveals the violent tendencies of the local priests, though "It's only the older priests who go punching you in the head."[408]

A wider awareness of the collapse of church authority seems significant when we turn to examine the young parish priest character, Father Welsh, in *The Lonesome West*, whose despair suggests that the structures of Catholicism can no longer contain, nor defend, the consequences of the social value-system that their ideologies espoused, even as a younger hierarchical generation have identified their failure and desire change. In *The Lonesome West* the importance of the religious and spiritual crisis to the play is made particularly significant by the figure of Father Welsh, whose crisis of faith is as crucial to the dramatic action as the murderous intents of the warring brothers.

Father Welsh is a self-deprecating alcoholic whose spiritual crisis is reflected as a failure of the Church's authority to provide guidance for him to

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[406] *The Lonesome West,* 179.
[407] *The Beauty Queen of Leenane,* 10.
[408] *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, 9.

resolve the social problems in the parish. Although Father Welsh feels personal responsibility for the moral regulation and development of his parish, the community do not actually seek such a function of guardianship in the institution of the church anymore; their identities and values, which will be investigated with further consequence later on in the chapter, are now textually constructed, by the movies and television programmes that they watch, and, of course, by the dramatic canon that has preceded them.

The dysfunctional relationship of the Connor brothers becomes the key to Father Welsh's belief in the potential salvation of the town, while it is also their relationship that ensures his own downfall. The brothers enhance his insecurity and despair, however, by exploiting his vulnerability and implicating him directly in the spiritual crisis of the town's moral collapse. Valene, for example, taunts Father Welsh for his approach to the guidance of the town, insisting that Father Welsh needs to take a stronger moral standpoint: "A great parish it is you run, one of them murdered his missus, an axe through her head, the other her mammy, a poker took her brains out, and it's only chit-chatting it is you be with them?"[409] However, Valene's own actions expose his accusations as mere playful deflections of Father Welsh's concern. For even Father Welsh has to admit that "God has no jurisdiction in this town. No jurisdiction at all."[410] Within the microcosmic space of the Connor household alone, for example, nuns function as sexual objects, while religious figurines function both as false icons and as symbols of the brothers' material greed; the Catholic value system and its symbols and signifiers have been emptied of their traditional associations and refilled with perverse meanings that undermine their original significance.

In line with this understanding of the play, Father Welsh's suicide bears testament to the absolute depths of the spiritual crisis in the play as a reflection that traditional religious values have been emptied of meaning. Meanwhile, his suicide enacts a cardinal sin that betrays his own uncertainty in the fundamental tenets of the Catholic faith and further undermines the shaky foundations of the contemporary Catholic hierarchy. While the act itself confirms this, his earlier reaction to Tom Hanlon's death articulates not just an uncertainty in the construction of suicide as a sin, but in the ethical rationale that supports it: "It's

[409] *The Lonesome West*, 134.
[410] Ibid.

great it is. You can kill a dozen fellas, you can kill two dozen fellas. So long as you're sorry after you can still get in to heaven. But if it's yourself you go murdering, no. Straight to hell."[411] While Father Walsh thus constructs his suicide as an act of self-sacrifice for the redemption of the Connor brothers, suicide is really the only means through which he can take any sort of control of his life as it slips into the moral vacuum left by the collapse of his belief system. This conclusion is mirrored in the hindsight acknowledged in Tom O'Hanlon's suicide in *A Skull in Connemara*, where the failure of another familiar system of authority can be understood as a confirmation of the total breakdown of moral order within the community.

In *A Skull in Connemara* the last bastion of law and order - the local police service – can also be understood through the lens of hierarchical collapse. The uselessness of the resident policeman, Tom Hanlon, is exposed with sardonic postmodern irony; while real murders are being enacted under his nose, Tom finds greater identification with the criminals of a fictional underworld in his favourite TV show. Instead of a defender of the community, he is the town joke; even Maryjohnny, Tom's grandmother, manages to elude the long arm of the law that Tom claims to be wielding, continuing her bingo-racketeering even as he continually reprimands her for it. As his brother Mairtin observes "you'd have trouble arresting a shop-lifting child, if the child confessed with the chocolate round his gob. Or if you did arrest him you'd arrest him for killing the Kennedy's."[412]

Mairtin's reference to the Kennedy's is significant, as it is Tom's American aspirations which create the bizarre incongruity of character and context through which the character gains his comic effect. Yet this incongruity is undermined by prevailing circumstances in Leenane in a manner that paradoxically heightens the play's comedy; the domestic and social world of Leenane is in fact more dangerous and more exciting than the criminal underworld of *Starsky and Hutch* or *Petrocelli*. Apart from the inherent comedy that Tom's unconscious imitations of his heroes projects, Tom's reliance on his favourite TV shows for the public manifestation of his identity further disables him from identification with the community he serves, as they, in turn, are distanced from

[411] *The Lonesome West*, 154.
[412] *A Skull in Connemara*, 121.

him as he fails in his role as guardian of the peace. The complete irony of his position is made clear in the attribution of the only physical act of onstage violence in the play to Tom himself, when he strikes his brother across the head with a mallet. Meanwhile, the knowledge of his suicide forthcoming in the final instalment of the trilogy, *The Lonesome West,* completes the recognition that, in this socially-inflected context of understanding the play, even the authorities themselves have lost faith in the community's future.

The Uncanny Home as the Ideal World: "I'd have to have killed half me fecking relatives to fit in to this town"[413]

The juxtaposition of the physical excess in the plays with the community's nonchalant response contributes to an exhausted morality that defines the uncanny dramatic effect of *The Leenane Trilogy* too, particularly in relation to the plays' audience; the small-town West of Ireland idyll that the immediate dramatic context and meticulous stage design invokes is replaced with the disturbing stage reality that Leenane is the "murder capital of fecking Europe."[414] By confining the plays to a specific Irish Catholic domestic context, McDonagh can use the violence and dysfunction of interfamilial relationships in the plays to deconstruct the Irish Catholic family ideal, as well as the dramatic canon that the plays self-consciously draw on.

The plays' physical setting invokes an early twentieth-century type of peasant play that pioneered a rural ideal set out in Chapter One; while this ideal is shattered by the standardised dramatic paradigm that the dysfunctional families of the Friel and Murphy plays provide McDonagh with, the extremes to which McDonagh pushes these paradigms opens up a different context for their critical analysis - one that reveals differences, as well as similarities, in their dramatic construction and intent and has provoked the divided critical responses already discussed in this chapter.

An identification of canonical influence in the first intertextual references in *The Leenane Trilogy* (the rural peasant play) suggests a possible continuum of ideological destabilisation in line with the Friel and Murphy plays, which the

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[413] *The Lonesome West,* 162.
[414] Ibid.

socially inflected understanding of the plays in the previous section implicitly directed us towards. However, the plays' second citation of canonical influence (the Irish Catholic family play) divests the potentially oppositional ideological intents of McDonagh's plays, as they reconfigure the traditional discomfort, dysfunction and disillusion of the Friel and Murphy plays with growing hilarity. If the Friel and Murphy plays gained their deconstructive effect by juxtaposing individual dysfunctional domestic experience against a background of mytho-historic idealisation, the national ideological security of mythory has completely disappeared in *The Leenane Trilogy*, leaving merely the remnants of a deconstructive dramatic model behind it and invoking its own sense of the uncanny familiar turned frightening for the audience. Thus, where the rural ideal of early twentieth-century drama is simultaneously projected and destabilised, so the dysfunctional ideal of deconstructive purpose in the Friel and Murphy plays is at once projected and parodied as well.

It is at this point - the point of canonical intertextuality - that negative critics of McDonagh's work claim that his plays have no social relevance to contemporary society and thus no place within the canon. Such an understanding of the plays suggests that the comparative disjunction between an ideal world and an unbearable reality - the residual ideology that the Friel and Murphy plays have been resisting– has disappeared with the natural 'progress' of history, and thus that a similar uncanny theatrical effect is impossible in McDonagh's work; his representations have no familiar social context outside of their fictional (intertextual) form from which to draw a frightening effect.

However, defending this understanding of McDonagh's work demands an examination of the intertextuality of the plays and their relationship to (exploitation of) the Irish canon, paradoxically revealing that the plays' naturalisation of domestic dysfunction exposes the dysfunctional dramatic Irish Catholic family as a residual ideology itself, encoded in dramatic form, which McDonagh's plays themselves can then defamiliarise through the use of excessive and ironic effects. It is precisely the conjunction of the plays' violent excess with the frame of reference of an earlier dramatic tradition that creates a different kind of uncanny effect than that produced by the collision of accepted ideologies of the Irish Catholic family and domestic dysfunction in the Friel and Murphy plays.

McDonagh's establishment of the dramatic site of home within an isolated rural frame of reference, for example, begins the association of *The Leenane Trilogy* with the Friel and Murphy plays, as we have already seen. However, a pattern of domestic disruption can also be traced from the earlier dramatic tradition through the invocation of pathology in the plays (the biological imperatives of heredity, as well as the idea of generational recurrence) and the cycles of family violence that define the trilogy's narrative progress. The disruption of hierarchical systems of authority - which, as we have seen above, may be understood to link the plays to wider social concern - gain particular prevalence in a comparative textual reading through absences in the family hierarchy. However, if the actual or metaphorical absence of mothers or fathers were used to underline the hierarchical lacunae in the Friel and Murphy plays, in *The Leenane Trilogy* the exile of matriarchal and patriarchal figures from the stage is predicated on acts of matricidal and patricidal violence which, while potentially removing them from a claim to realist relevance, as a negative critique might suggest, could be alternatively understood to further subvert the standard nuclear structure assumed by the Irish Catholic family model.

The patricidal impulses in *The Lonesome West*, for example, may be understood to exemplify the extremes of moral breakdown within a domestic setting. Meanwhile in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* and *A Skull in Connemara*, the corruption inherent in the expression of matriarchal authority on stage - embodied in characters like the embezzling Maryjohnny in *A Skull in Connemara* and the spiteful figure of Mag in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* - destroys the possibility of authoritative redemption, while any audience expectation of familial reform is completely killed off with the blow of a poker to the back of the head.

The maternal figure of Mag in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane,* for example, may in fact be examined in relation to the archetypal mother of twentieth-century Irish drama - a figure of authority recognisable in a series of recurring incarnations in the Irish canon, from one of the long-suffering heroines of Sean O'Casey's tragic-comedies to a fearless figure of unyielding power familiar from the melodramas of J.B.Keane. However, Mag's physical incapacity compromises the authority and hierarchical power accorded to her predecessors. Her physical weaknesses are reinforced by her repeated invocations to her physical hunger for shortbread fingers and Complan, rather than any deeper spiritual longing. While

the centrally positioned rocking chair provides a visual embodiment of Mag's central domestic position - a theatrical signification of the security of her hierarchical position - the ironic transformation of this signifier at the play's end through a series of violent encounters between Mag and her daughter Maureen – including the on stage re-enactment of the dreaded chip-pan incident – deliberately subverts the traditional hierarchy of authority and gives Maureen the upper hand.

Where the Friel and Murphy plays understood the collapse of parental authority as the key signifier of domestic dysfunction, McDonagh's play can be seen to subvert this by placing Mag as both willing perpetrator and deserving victim of the domestic disorder, thus naturalising domestic violence as a physical act of revenge for emotional abuse. Mag's physical subordination to her daughter, for example, is matched by a surprising emotional dependency, despite the cruelty that she has levelled upon Maureen and that she has received in turn. Mag's dependency on Maureen is best expressed by her unwillingness to let Maureen make something of her life away from the family home - two of her daughters have already left to accede to matriarchal positions themselves in marriage; if Maureen joins them by marrying Pato, Mag will have no outlet from which to assert the authority and exert the (psychological) violence that defines her identity. On a straightforward textual level, the assignment of these paradoxical emotions might be understood as motivating factors in the plot too; when Mag decides to burn Pato's letter, it is because she is desperately afraid of the prospect of being alone.

While the Friel and Murphy plays characterise domestic dysfunction in a linear, top-down structure of inheritance, a comparative reading of *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* suggests a mutual, binary strategy of offence, as a similar dynamic of dependency and loathing is the underlying structure of Maureen's experience of the mother-daughter relationship as well; for although Maureen is prepared to exercise her loathing for her mother in physical terms, she is still bound by her own dependencies in her relationship with Mag. If Maureen wields the upper hand in physical terms, as the previous plot exegesis suggested, Mag holds a certain emotional authority over Maureen too, which has so far frustrated her attempts to leave home. Mag recognises Maureen's vulnerabilities, her hidden desires and her physical and spiritual loneliness. Mag knows how to blackmail

Maureen, by playing on her emotional weaknesses rather than invoking her responsibilities as a daughter; she knows that Maureen has no emotional support outside the domestic framework from which to begin a bid for freedom, as her attempts at leaving home before illustrated. Mag's destruction of Pato's letter, then, is a gesture that destroys the spiritual support that signalled Maureen's only link to potential salvation, both by destroying the possible future that Maureen and Pato could have shared and by undermining her sexual maturity by revealing it as a false authority.

While the invocation of Maureen's sexual frustration suggests a stunted sexual development that a comparative reading would place within a template of arrested adulthood that echoes the geopathic experiences of the male characters in the Friel and Murphy plays - and thus implicate Mag as the barrier to Maureen's accession to the full status of womanhood – Maureen's *performance* of sexuality actually subverts such a straightforward reading by pushing her character's action into the realm of the grotesque, just as her actions at the end of the play do. McDonagh achieves this firstly by setting up a dramaturgical ruse, a reversal of audience expectation that creates an uncanny sense of the expected plot resolution (the wedding of Maureen and Pato) turned frightening. Maureen exposes the complications of the potential options available to her in a narrated version of an encounter with Pato, who acts as the interrogative voice of reason: "'Would an old folks home be too harsh?" he asks. "'It wouldn't be too harsh but it would be too expensive.' 'What about your sisters so?' 'Me sisters wouldn't have the bitch. Not even a half-day at Christmas to be with her can them two stand.'"[415]

While McDonagh sets this moment up as a potential resolution of Maureen's crisis, he actually uses it to deliver the play's theatrical coup. As we wait for Maureen to inform Mag of her ordained fate, the rocking chair stops in its motions and Maureen's definitive action towards her own future is revealed as "*Mag starts to slowly lean forward at the waist until she finally topples over and falls heavily to the floor, dead. . . .*"[416] Pato's brother Ray, meanwhile, lets the audience know that Maureen's conversation with Pato was a deluded fantasy; because of Mag's interception, Maureen missed the train and missed her chance, and Pato has since been engaged to marry another woman. Maureen's desperate

[415] *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, 50.
[416] *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, 51.

deed thus may have freed her from the ties of dependency and loathing that have so far kept her at home, but there is no brighter future, no reconciliation, available to her outside of the oppressive domestic world that has both defined her character and destroyed her life.

In *A Skull in Connemara* the dysfunctional domestic background of the Friel and Murphy prototype can be extended to a encompass a simple comparative reading of McDonagh's play, in which the central character, Mick Dowd, a gravedigger "who drove his wife into a wall"[417], could be seen to carry on the tradition of dysfunctional interfamilial relationships. However, while the action of the play ostensibly seeks to establish, for both the audience and its cast of characters, the truth of the circumstances of Mrs. Dowd's death, the resolution of the mystery allows the macabre tastes, moral corruption and domestic dysfunction of the traditional Irish Catholic family to be played out on a grotesque level that subverts the traditional dramatic framework that the play invokes structurally by invoking comic effects.

The action of the play takes place around the time of the annual grave clearance in Leenane, during which Mick O'Dowd digs up and disposes with the decayed bodies of dead locals, making room for fresh corpses as the year goes on. The processes by which he disposes with the bodies every year generate as much intrigue in the local community as the mysterious circumstances of Mick's wife's death, certainly for Mairtin Hanlon anyway, who is sent to help Mick in his annual duties as punishment for disrupting choir practice.

The methods of excavation and disposal are used by Mick to tease Mairtin, and by McDonagh to tease the audience with macabre accounts of the community's carelessness towards death and Mick's own nonchalance as the locals' remains are "pegged...be the bucketload into the slurry."[418] The absurdity of the details that Mick teases Mairtin with, however, are just as grotesque as the reality of their disposal; he smashes the bones of the disinterred on the kitchen table before dumping them at the bottom of the local lake.

Meanwhile, in this year's annual graveyard clearance Mick's own wife, Oonagh, is due for disinterment. Oonagh's excavation will provide Tom, the town

[417] *A Skull in Connemara*, 79.
[418] *A Skull in Connemara*, 73.

policeman with a second chance to examine her corpse and solve the murder-mystery (the mystery of whether her death was a murder at all) once and for all. Meanwhile Mairtin, Mick's designated helper and Tom's younger brother, is similarly interested in finding out the truth, although he has already exercised his curiosity several months ago when he plundered Oonagh's grave in an amateur detective job that rewarded him with the silver locket that had hung around her neck.

When Mick discovers the depravity of Mairtin's curiosity he abandons the skittering of corpses for the skittering of human flesh, and acts on his impulses in a recreation of the accident that killed his wife with another victim in her place. In a dramaturgical twist, however, undoubtedly indebted to *The Playboy of the Western World*, the crime that the audience thinks Mick has committed this second time round remains unfulfilled at the end of the play, heightening the question mark surrounding both Oonagh's 'murder' as well as the processes by which Mick goes about disposing of the dead.

If we try to understand the play on a simple comparative level as a continuation of the familial dysfunction of the Friel and Murphy tradition, *A Skull in Connemara* is the weakest play in the Leenane trilogy, most likely because it doesn't enact onstage the (potentially) violent and dysfunctional relationship between husband and wife that carries the central weight of the plot. Although Mick's reference to the possible justifications for murdering his wife are both normalised, and made ridiculous - "She'd never wrap up cheese properly . . She'd just leave it lying about, letting the air get to it. The same with bread . . And she was terrible at scrambled eggs, and I don't know why, because scrambled eggs are easy to do"[419]- the relegation of the marital relationship to a distant past dilutes the dramatic effect of the play on this level. However, it enhances the play's success in terms of its own postmodern particularity at the same time, providing a different quality of uncanny experience to the play by reducing the familiar psychology of violence of the dramatic tradition that it feeds on to the absurd. The altercation between Mick and Mairtin, which is not enacted on stage either, reinforces this too, by placing McDonagh's dramaturgical games at the forefront of the drama .

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[419] *A Skull in Connemara,* 114.

The relationship between brothers Mairtin and Tom Hanlon can be successfully understood to pre-figure the destructive and violent relationship of dependency inherited from its dramatic predecessors, which will be played out fully in the relationship of the Connor brothers in *The Lonesome West*. Mairtin and Tom's oppositional relationship is defined by a mutual antagonism that is exemplified in their contrasting social positions; Tom is the local (if completely inept) policeman, while his brother Mairtin is one of the town's many petty criminals. While Tom's mission in the play is to force Mick to admit responsibility for his wife's death, Mairtin's actions continually undermine his brother's objectives. Meanwhile, it is actually Mairtin who commits the only crime that can be proven in the play - an act of grave-robbing that manages to further frustrate his brother's quest towards justice. In fact, the only stage violence that occurs (unless, of course, the violation of the dead is seen as such) is vested upon Mairtin by Tom, who takes a mallet to his younger brother's head in a gesture of frustration that undermines his position as guardian of the peace. It is a gesture, too, that mirrors the repeated fraternal violence that structures the Connor brothers' relationship in *The Lonesome West,* and this prefiguring narrative of fraternal conflict provides a template for an analysis of the representational strategies of the dysfunctional domestic climate as it functions in the final instalment of *The Leenane Trilogy.*

The Lonesome West can be understood to take up the violent vicissitudes of the fraternal relationship where *A Skull in Connemara* leaves off, with warring brothers Coleman and Valene caught in a relationship of dependency and loathing that can be traced down from *Long Day's Journey Into Night* to *A Whistle in the Dark* through to its embryonic form in the relationship between the Hanlon brothers in *A Skull in Connemara.* However, the relationship that is played out over the course of *The Lonesome West* is characterised by a further instance of familial dysfunction that has its origin in the textual form of *The Playboy of the Western World* and brings domestic dysfunction to murderous levels. While the famous dramatic 'patricide' of *The Playboy of the Western World* functions as a dramaturgical ruse in Synge's play, in *The Lonesome West* the patricide is fully enacted before McDonagh's play begins. The energy that sustains the dramatic conflict in both plays, however - the desire for liberation from prevailing

patriarchal structures – can still be understood comparatively, where the potential *re-enactment* of the patricidal crime that provides the dramatic coup in *The Playboy of the Western World* is transferred on to the fraternal relationship in *The Lonesome West*. However, the patricidal act is so close to repeating itself in fraternal form in *The Lonesome West* that the survival of both - or either - brother until the end of the play, remains a continual surprise, if not a dramatic accident and enhances the play's simultaneous exploitation and subversion of dramatic tradition.

The Lonesome West opens on the evening of the Connor father's funeral, as Coleman and Valene are returning home after indulging in the vol-au-vents and sausage rolls served after the burial. Although the details of their father's death are revealed immediately, Coleman's responsibility for his death is only gradually exposed. However, the eventual revelation of the ludicrous premise on which his patricidal inclinations were indulged sets a ridiculous, rather than a shocking, tone from which to understand and receive this crime. While father-son relations are revealed within a wider context of dysfunctionality as the play goes on, one that could possibly compare to the play's dramatic predecessors, Coleman's patricidal act is enacted over the most inconsequential of incidences: "I don't take criticising from nobody", Coleman insists, "'Me hair's like a drunken child's.' I'd only just combed me hair and there was nothing wrong with it! And I know well shooting your Dad in the head is against God, but there's some insults that can never be excused."[420]

Although it is Coleman who has committed the physical deed, Valene is implicated in the crime through his continuing blackmail of his brother for material gain; he agrees to cover up the crime in exchange for the boons of their father's insurance policy. Valene's resultant economic authority, however, does not translate to hierarchical dominance; for, even if Coleman is beholden to Valene to keep the secret of his crime, Valene has revealed his personal weaknesses (for figurines and cookers) to his brother, who exploits them in all their triviality.

From the opening of the play, we can read the brothers' relationship as defined by a tension that is disruptive of both the actual and the symbolic

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[420] *The Lonesome West*, 158.

domestic environment. Paradoxically, this tension is simultaneously deflated by the pettiness of their arguments - the poitin-measuring, the figurine-switching, the methodical counting of pennies. Their abuse of each other becomes a competition in which each brother vies for superiority, yet without the concrete achievement of any particular end, or, most notably, any particular alteration in the structure of their personal relationship.

Although the brothers' mutual abrasiveness is thus invoked as a normalised function of their relationship, a comparative reading might suggest that the external ramifications of their actions (Father Welsh's death, for example) indicate that the secondary effects of their relational dysfunction are perhaps even more disruptive than the domestic chaos that their relationship engenders. The implications of this dramatic point, however, are reversed by the continuing politics of power play in their relationship. As they attempt to fulfil Father Welsh's last wishes, the litany of abuses that their lengthy confessionals reveal turn into taunting revelations of cruelty which ultimately fail to change the structure of their relationship or to alter the bizarre rituals of violence that are an integral part of their mutual dependency despite their good intentions. Thus Father Walsh's suicide - an act of despair in their relationship, as much as it is an act of faith for their redemption - is revealed as a ridiculous gesture by the comic deflection of the brothers' genuine attempts at expiation in favour of the revelation of their immutable dysfunction.

Thus labelling the brothers' relationship dysfunctional is slightly disingenuous. For while the dramatic precedents that the play follows suggest that enslavement to cycles of revenge and reconciliation can indeed be understood as a widespread reflection of wider cultural and social conditions, as the possible readings of *A Skull in Connemara* and *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* have also suggested, *The Lonesome West*'s insistence that the Connor brothers' dysfunction is in fact a dramatic norm, both in a wider international canon and within the representational standards of the Irish Catholic family in twentieth-century drama, reinforcing the exclusions that a simple reading of plot and character, without full recognition of their postmodern representational strategies, demands. As the ending of the play invokes the ending of Sam Shepard's *True West*, where the warring brothers' dramatic lives are suspended in a desperate and dangerous final embrace, it reinforces the explicit debt to dramatic precedent from which

McDonagh's plays derive, suggesting that the plays have not merely inherited the concerns of their dramatic predecessors but that the dysfunctional, uncanny dramatic world of Leenane is an ideal, functional dramatic form.

"I'll tell you who's a fecking loon lady. You're a fecking loon!" [421] *Geopathology and the Postmodern Personality*

This subversion of a straightforward reading of the plays in line with the dramatic canon can be most convincingly reinforced by an analysis of character construction in the plays. If we understand the uncanny domestic environment in the McDonagh plays as the ultimate dramatic form for expressing the Irish Catholic family on the twentieth-century stage, the attendant spiritual crises that have defined individual experience in the dysfunctional dramatic home are given a different meaning, as the characters' existential crises become predetermined superficial plot devices rather than emotional breakdowns. If we push this reading further, *The Leenane Trilogy* then uses the identitarian politics that structured the Friel and Murphy plays less as means of exposing a crisis of subjectivity, than as a crisis of signification; for the subversive function of the trilogy, if we choose to follow this metatheatrical reading, drains the cultural and dramatic construction of the dysfunctional Irish Catholic family of the signifiers by which it gains its significance (and its authenticity), and the belief in character as fixed subjectivity disappears into a miasma of meaninglessness.

The semiotic vacuum into which concepts of authenticity and authority consequently vanish relieves the plays of the weight of inherited identitarian politics. However, the intertextual construction of character in the plays nonetheless forces a discursive crisis on the understanding of identity politics in the plays; for if the McDonagh plays refuse to participate in the inherited identity crises identified as a key catalyst in the dramatic representation of the dysfunctional Irish Catholic family, the plays suggest a different kind of crisis, a metatheatrical crisis in which the replacement of the environmental conditioning of character with dramaturgical influence as the key to character conception

[421] *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, 58.

implicates the characters' crises in the play as a crisis of the inherited dramatic form.

Michal Lachman's suggestion that this superficial formula of character construction is made possible in *The Leenane Trilogy* because McDonagh denies the characters the "self-reflexive complexity"[422] that defines the problematic personalities and spiritual crises of the Friel and Murphy plays supports the postmodern reading of the plays as self-contained (inter-)textual constructions. Thus as the uncanny home functions in the plays as a dramatic inheritance, so the characters' crises issue more from their dramatic than their domestic history, opening up an existential paradox that reinforces the postmodern politics of the plays' construction. If such crises are identified as inherited dramatic tropes through which the deconstructive functions of the McDonagh plays can be both subverted and confirmed, so the characters must turn to their theatrical predecessors, rather than in upon themselves, for a dramatic model of resolution.

The politics of identity that govern and condition the experience of home in the Friel and Murphy plays issue from an understanding of the function of the stability of the modern self as a negotiated process between exterior (public) reality and individual (private) subjectivity. In light of an alienating social world, the Friel and Murphy plays focus on home as the exterior reality engaging the individual subject; the Irish Catholic family and its uncanny environment is the central ideological determinant of the individual characters. The concept of geopathology allowed us to ground the ideological inflection of individual identity theoretically in such site-specific dramaturgical and thematic analysis, and revealed the deeply problematic nature of identity construction as a dependency on a particular place already destabilised by its problematic ideological foundation.

The characters in the McDonagh plays can be discussed in light of their exhibition of similar self-destructive tendencies to those identified in the Friel and Murphy plays as symptomatic of geopathology. Maureen and Pato, in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane,* for example, could be understood to display symptoms of the dependency/loathing binary, both in their respective domestic environments and in

[422] Michal Lachman, 'Happy and in Exile?- Martin McDonagh's Leenane Trilogy' in *Engaging Modernity: Readings of Irish Politics, Culture and Literature at the Turn of the Century,* ed. Michael Boss and Eamon Maher (Dublin: Veritas, 2003), 201.

the intensified crises of their respective emigrations. In *The Lonesome West,* Father Welsh's suffering and suicide could be interpreted by way of the geopathic weight of his parish placement in Leenane, while the Connor brothers' addictions (to alcohol among other things) bear similarity to the escapist tendencies of the geopathic victim. In *A Skull in Connemara,* meanwhile, Tom Hanlon's temporary self-fulfilment through performative mechanisms adopted from American detective T.V. shows, along with his suicide as revealed in *The Lonesome West,* might complement the strategy of performance as a coping mechanism which *A Touch of the Poet* and *A Whistle in the Dark*, for example, presented to tragic effect.

Using these particular markers of geopathology to identify spiritual crises within the trilogy, however, prove both disingenuous and inadequate for continuing the discussion of McDonagh plays in line with their postmodern context of construction. Even so, Chaudhuri's theoretical extension of her geopathic thesis to facilitate an investigation of postmodern literary, dramatic and ideological evolution can provide a productive starting point for developing a discussion of subjectivity in McDonagh plays, allowing a continuation of the dialogue with his dramatic predecessors, while defining their potentially simultaneous subversive and complementary effect.

The final chapter and concluding after-word of *Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama* focuses on the evolution of the home-self binary of modern realist drama in light of late twentieth-century mobility in the globalised world. In the globalised world the idea of a single site capable of conditioning and containing a unified subjectivity is deeply problematised by communication systems and virtuality; as the very idea of spatial particularity is eroded by the "ubiquitous. . .dispersal of subjective experience over multiple electronic channels"[423] the contradictory struggle between the desire for rootedness and the impulse to emigrate necessarily dissipates.

In accordance with the logic of Chaudhuri's argument, the mytho-historic function of home that we have identified in singular Utopian terms as a projected ideal place in the Friel and Murphy plays must be *re*placed in postmodern terms with the multiple functioning of the heterotopia, to become "a place capable of

[423] Chaudhuri, 1997, 4.

containing within it many different, incompatible, places."[424] The destabilising ideological foundations of modern drama's geopathology, which revealed the problematics of place (home) as the determinant of subjectivity and the crucial quest for its recovery, must then also be reformulated in postmodern dramatic form; the individual subject determined by place must be reconfigured as a multiple self, capable of containing within it the idea of manifold malleable identities.

While the schizophrenic identities manifested by the pressures of the inadequate functioning of home in the Friel and Murphy plays may have pointed towards a realisation – if not an accommodation - of identity as a multiple entity rather than a unified whole, the crisis of subjectivity at the end of the plays suggested the incompatibility of individual subjectivity with such plural definitions of selfhood. With his superficial construction of character, however, McDonagh could be understood to fully embrace the multiple self in the postmodern strategies of identity construction that structure the characters' interactions with each other in the intertextual fictional world of Leenane. However, postmodern subjectivity in *The Leenane Trilogy* is not merely *dispersed* over multiple texts, as Chaudhuri's argument concludes, it is fundamentally *created* by multiple texts; the many-layered modern identity crises that structured the Friel and Murphy plays thus give way to a single dimension of inherited theatrical form where identity is configured as a negotiated process defined by theatrical inheritance, rather than specific places (even if they are multiply defined) that hold any particular relationship to reality.

The resultant depthlessness of character construction that this intertextual form creates in *The Leenane Trilogy* is often understood as a superficiality of dramatic construction in comparative readings of the plays, and thus served as another means through which dissenting critics can level their concern about the implications of McDonagh's dramaturgical practices. Dominic Dromgoole, for example, has argued that McDonagh's characters are ultimately impossible to believe in because "the rub and resistance of life is absent"[425] in the plays. Mary Luckhurst, meanwhile, expresses a similar concern that "We have no sense of

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[424] Chaudhuri, 1997, 5.
[425] Dominic Dromogoole, *The Full Room: An A-Z of Contemporary Playwrights* (London: Methuen, 2002), 199.

McDonagh's characters interacting as family members or as people who need to earn a living, no sense of their geographical ties or social community, no sense of how they have become what they are. . . They certainly do not show signs of an intellectual or emotional life."[426] The capacity for sympathy, empathy and dramatic identification among the audience, such readings suggest, is entirely absent from the plays.

Although this reading insists that the characters do not reveal individual essence or psychological depth during the dramas' enactment, the depth of the origins of their identity are never far from the textual surface of the plays, and by foregrounding the cultural and textual references from which the characters identities are constructed, the characters can be given a different dramatic implication - and the idea of constructed subjectivity a different, heightened, significance. Mag in *The Beauty of Leenane*, as we have already seen, may be understood as a contemporary version of J.B. Keane's eponymous *Big Maggie*, although Mag's cruelty is divorced from the justification of social/individual context that Keane gives his anti-heroine. Meanwhile, warring brothers Coleman and Valene in *The Lonesome West* are locked in a violent relationship of dependency and loathing indebted to the Tyrone and Carney brothers in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* and *A Whistle in the Dark*, as well as to brothers Austin and Lee in Sam Shepard's *True West*, particularly in their material destruction of potent symbols of domesticity. Tom Hanlon's identity in *A Skull in Connemara* is also variously sourced, an assimilation of the personality quirks of his favourite American detectives from TV. Ray Dooley in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane,* meanwhile, is little more than a container of various cultural influences and commercial products; Mikado Biscuits, Australian soap opera and European football championships provide the key touchstones to his self-definition.

Yet even as the characters draw their subjectivities from a specific theatrical canon and a wider cultural context, the second-hand reality that this identification process creates complements the simulated, mediatised environment already established by the juxtaposition of historical events and commercial consumer culture as they defined environmental conditions in the plays. The absence of personal history as means of self-definition that we have already noted

[426] Luckhurst, 2004, 36.

in the plays, for example, then, is actually intensified by this peripheral textual presence in character construction and by the centrality of consumer culture to their self-development.

This allegiance of character and consumer culture can be extended to examine the function of history in the plays, in its wider sense, as it gains its value through its currency as popular culture. The victims of the Chernobyl disaster, for example, gain significance for the characters only through the double-page spread in a Woman's Weekly magazine, while the extreme strategies of dismemberment witnessed daily in the civil war in Eastern Europe function as a form of sensationalist entertainment. The morbid fascination with the true-life news stories of tabloid journalism is complemented by the privilege of televisual form over social reality. Fictional television characters, for example, are accorded more concern and sympathy than real people in the plays; the fate of a dead T.V. cop is regarded with more consequence than the suicide of a local policeman. The valorised site of Australia, meanwhile, is defined by its on-screen form, while even more ironically, Connemara - the site in which the action of the play is set and the geographical location of a real town called Leenane - is more recognisable for the characters in its picture-postcard format than in its real physical presence.

Comparing Ray's disillusion at the Irish landscape ("All you have to do is look out your window to see Ireland. And it's soon bored you'd be."[427]) with the calendar keepsake that Maureen uses to comfort herself in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* brings us straight to the postmodern point that has proved so problematic for traditionalist critics of McDonagh's work to accept, particularly in relation to an understanding of his characters as composite cultural constructions whose identities have been formulated by the appropriation of cultural forms. The co-existence of the dramatic environment that the characters inhabit, and the simulated environment of the mediatised world that influences their perception of the world, forces audience attention on the on-stage world itself as a simulated environment imagined for theatrical purposes, in which the exterior reality that the plays apparently draw from gains its most significant political edge by virtue of its dramatic familiarity rather than from its potentially contemporary social relevance as his defenders have argued.

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[427] *The Beauty Queen of Leenane,* 53.

The evolution of stage design in the production of the plays lays testament to an increased understanding of this paradox. The seminal Druid Theatre Company productions imagined Leenane as a self-enclosed world that was realised on stage through the full physical exploitation of a century of rural domestic realism; a confident approach to the subtleties of the text that was mimicked in most of the subsequent international productions of the play, and an approach that provoked dissenting critics arguments about McDonagh's originality. A 2005 Lyric Theatre production of *The Lonesome West,* however, brought an added edge to the understanding of McDonagh's play by combining the naturalistic detail of the set with a self-conscious theatricality of stage design; instead of creating the sense that Leenane is a world in and of itself, Sabine D'Argent's sliced cottage set placed the Connor home at an angle to the audience that foregrounded the surrounding empty stage and its stage apparatus, and highlighted the self-conscious theatricality of the play.

Thus, in as much as an understanding of *The Leenane Trilogy* as a representation of a section of society disenfranchised by the economic boom can be defended,[428] so a more theatrically engaged reading of the plays' postmodern function suggests that Leenane is not configured as a microcosmic metaphor for the wider social reality but, more convincingly, as a self-conscious dramatic world for audience entertainment. This reading understands that McDonagh deliberately establishes the boundaries of his theatrical world in line with its cultural inheritance, so that Leenane functions as a self-contained universe in which a less social, and more broadly cultural, commentary can be observed. This commentary complements the contemporary reality that "culture as social critique has given way to culture as economic commodity"[429] both on the immediate textual level of the plays and in relation to their commercial success on a global scale. The depthlessness that critics would indict the plays for, then, may be understood as precisely the point; the external referents that *The Leenane Trilogy* draws from can function without any wider ideological inference, and the critical strategies that have so far divided critics must thus be widened to allow for this potential subversive effect as well.

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[428] p.p. 227-229.
[429] Cronin, Gibbons, Kirby, 2002, 2.

The final moments of *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* allow us to draw out the implications of this claim. As Maureen sits down on her dead mother's rocking chair, taking up the position of authority that the mother she murdered held throughout the play, she recreates the opening image with which the drama began. The irony created by this visual reminder of the mother's absence, and the pathological replacement implicit in Maureen's temporary occupation of the seat of domestic authority, is clear to the audience; the similarities between mother and daughter have only been enhanced by their growing hatred of each other, and the differences between them have been elided as their oppositional personalities are subsumed in one.

Although Maureen then picks up her suitcase and exits off stage, closing the door behind her as she goes, her departure is deceptive, as an understanding of Leenane as a purely theatrical world suggests that there is no outside world for Maureen to lose herself in. Just like the empty space from which Pato writes his letter of loss and longing, and the squalid set in *The Cripple of Inishmaan* from which Cripple Billy laments the loss of his home, the world that Maureen steps out into is a world that is as artificial and as superficial as the stage world that McDonagh has created for his audience. If the country cottage of the play's setting is an entirely self-contained world for the characters, their fate is wholly contained within the text(ure) of the play itself; Maureen's fate reaches its fulfillment in the very moment that she leaves the stage.

"That's Ireland anyways. There's always someone leaving" [430] *: The Postmodern Possibilities of Emigration*

In light of such a closed site-specific understanding of the plays in their fictional context within the theatre, it is interesting to examine the inherited theme of emigration in *The Leenane Trilogy,* which both enhances and subverts the relationship between McDonagh's plays and the established dramatic tradition of his predecessors. The established emigration-exile binary in the Friel and Murphy plays functioned in organic relationship to the problems of the uncanny Irish

[430] *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, 21.

Catholic home, augmenting the particular problematics of the domestic context by bringing the key issue of identity development to cathartic effect away from the home. However, while a similar emigration theme in *The Leenane Trilogy* might be used to defend the trilogy's connection to the Friel and Murphy plays on a deep textual level, the trilogy's rejection of the exile formula simultaneously enhances their subversion of the tradition that they draw from; for, where a social or historical backdrop permits an extension of the determining condition of the exilic consciousness (place) beyond the site in which it was nurtured (the site of the Irish Catholic home of the Friel and Murphy plays), the familiar dramatic trope of migration merely provides McDonagh with another entry point into the representational tradition from which his plays can both subvert and reinforce the standard representational function of the Irish Catholic family on the twentieth-century stage.

The social and historical reality of emigration permeates the intertextual and intra-textual discourse that provides the context for exploring the McDonagh plays. The extra-textual level of McDonagh's own "migratory biography"[431], however, has been the greater area of critical discussion and, in fact, the primary source of the critical anxiety that we have already identified; McDonagh's hybrid cultural identity as a second-generation member of the Irish immigrant community in London has offered critics extra fuel with which to fire the debate about the authenticity and authority of McDonagh's dramatic representations of Ireland.[432] McDonagh's conceptualisation of emigration and the emigrant experience in the plays, however, actually invites this debate about authenticity, undermining the standard configuration of emigration as exile which the Friel and Murphy plays use as a precondition for their dramatic treatments.

In the Friel and Murphy plays emigration is imagined as the means through which the characters see a potential escape from the oppressive spiritual and environmental pressures of the uncanny Irish Catholic home. In practice, however, the characters' personal alienation is actually doubled by their departure

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[431] Lachman, 2003, 194.

[432] The continuing (and largely irrelevant) debates about the authenticity of McDonagh's representation has degenerated into a racially inflected debate about representational authority, with dissenting critics questioning the authority of the artist to represent a culture that he stands outside of. This has revealed far more about the limitations of the nationalist-inflected post-colonial discourse that dominates contemporary critical conditions in Ireland than it has revealed about the plays themselves.

from home; their physical experience of emigration reinforcing the individual's consciousness of the alienating experience of the home and necessitating a re-imagination of the failed domestic ideal that was resisted by the very act of departure. In the McDonagh plays, meanwhile, the colonial and national history that lends the emigration-exile binary conviction (if not authenticity) is jettisoned in favour of a dramatic history, which is not necessarily the version of emigrant history found in drama but the dramatic tradition as a version of the history of emigration itself. Placing the McDonagh plays against the backdrop of their dramatic predecessors then reveals the double level of McDonagh's deconstructive intents by exposing both their traditional and their subversive effects as the differing implications of emigration are made known.

Michal Lachman argues that the "concept of exile, or being outside, is no longer useful"[433] in the McDonagh plays. However, his related assertion that "No-one is an outsider"[434] in the world of Leenane proves more valuable when reconfigured to propose that *everyone* is an outsider in the liminal social space of Leenane, where the boundaries between here or there, outside or inside are insignificant to lives lived without consequence of a wider reality. For, if the mytho-historic narrative against which the Friel and Murphy characters measured their own dysfunction have been eroded by the rapid acceleration of a post-modern world that has misplaced its' history, the narratives that *The Leenane Trilogy* finds itself confronting instead are the dramatic narratives of the original texts that once served to deconstruct such ideological versions of reality.

If the different generational contexts between Friel and Murphy's interrogative realist functions and McDonagh's postmodern plays have shaped their representational strategies as we have so far examined them, the similar social contexts evoked in the thematic treatment of emigration are filtered down through these differing representational processes as a reflection of their different aesthetic and ideological concerns. The historical time in which *The Leenane Trilogy* is set provides a not-dissimilar social context to the 1950s/60s Ireland that Friel and Murphy were writing from, taking place in the late 1980s at the tail end of a period in which emigration figures reached almost the same heights as the

[433] Lachman, 2003, 199-200.
[434] Ibid.

decimating figures of departure during the late 1950s.[435] However, *The Leenane Trilogy* was written during the early years of the Celtic Tiger boom, when Irish emigrants were returning home to settle in the newly prosperous state rather than turning abroad for social satisfaction. Thus as the Friel and Murphy plays project the emigration-exile binary as a function of the conflict between the past (or conceptualisations of the past in ideological narratives) and the spiritual and physical dislocations of the present, the tension between past and present in *The Leenane Trilogy* has been rewritten by an accelerated concern with the future that is characteristic of the narrative of global capitalism into which Celtic Tiger Ireland was being gradually absorbed.

As the polarisation of past and present provided a structural mechanism for the Friel and Murphy plays, they absorbed this structure as an acknowledgement of their concern about the disparity between mytho-historic narratives and individual reality within a broader social context. The double-tension was made possible in the Friel and Murphy plays because these "extreme notions existed, could be recognised, were impossible to ignore and . . . had to be identified with"; they "were driven by values passionately believed in."[436] However, in the McDonagh plays such a value system only exists aesthetically, in the captured narratives of cultural expression that the Friel and Murphy plays were writing against, and in the oppositional narratives that the Friel and Murphy plays themselves reify despite their deconstructive purposes. So, while the characters in the Friel and Murphy plays were suspended between oppositional ideas of home and exile, between competing constructions of an idealised home and their living reality, McDonagh's plays reflect "the dissolution of clearly defined oppositions and conflicts"[437] in a world where such tensions are structural narratives first and foremost, rather than reflections of the reality of an external world. Furthermore, by continually foregrounding the theatrical artificiality of the plays in a self-conscious divorce from referent reality, the privilege of dramatic form in *The Leenane Trilogy* suggests a strategy by which the trilogy may reserve itself from

[435] Just over a quarter of a million people left Ireland between 1982 and 1988, and, according to Jim McLaughlin, this figure excluded the large number of illegal immigrants in the United States in the late 1980s. For a comprehensive account of the social and economic effects of emigration in the 1980s see Jim McLaughlin's account of the 'The New Vanishing Irish' in McLaughlin ed., 1997.

[436] Lachman, 2003, 199-200.

[437] Lachman, 2003, 198.

reifying any value system of its own, either within the geopathic representational tradition of the Irish Catholic family on the twentieth-century stage, or within the context of a wider concern with the identitarian obsessions of Irish culture. The dual concepts of home and exile as concepts of self-identification are redundant in the fluid borderless globalised world, which the residents of Leenane may not actively participate in, but the structures of their experiences cannot help reflect.

Emigration thus functions in *The Leenane Trilogy* without the shaping ideal of departure as an act of heroism or exile as an ideological salve against emigrant isolation. Divorced from any aspirational function it is configured in the McDonagh plays as an inevitable step in both the natural life cycle of the characters within the plays, and as an essential component of the dramatic formula that the plays follow. Furthermore, while a comparative textual reading could argue that the Leenane emigrants are rooted within the same dramatic landscape of rural deprivation as the Friel and Murphy emigrants, it would simultaneously have to admit that emigration, even as a thematic device, is conceived as a natural step in the accession from rural anomie to sophisticated city living that the characters participate in vicariously through the imported soap operas that dominate their TV-watching schedules; foreign lives are more attractive to the youth of Leenane than the Irish social (and dramatic) landscape, which promises the continual repetition of a cycle of limited possibilities (including tightly controlled dramatic ones, as McDonagh's parodic dramatic form suggests).

In *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, Ray's equation of Ireland's televisual inadequacy with his own desire to emigrate is a case in point:

> "Who wants to see Ireland on telly? . .All you have to do is look out your window to see Ireland. And it's soon bored you'd be. 'There goes a calf.' I be bored anyway. I be continually bored. London I'm thinking of going to. Aye. Thinking of it, anyways. To work, y'know. One of these days. Or Manchester. They have a lot more drugs in Manchester."[438]

For Ray emigration is not just a social necessity, it is a lifestyle choice, where chemical stimulation, at least, can compensate for the personal and environmental anxiety that characterises his experiences at home. As Ray's nonchalant attitude

[438] *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, 53.

expresses, the psychology of emigration-exile that we have witnessed in the psychic crises of the geopathic victims in the Friel and Murphy plays is almost wholly absent from *The Leenane Trilogy*, whose concentration on character as intertextual cultural composite dilutes the trauma of the emigration-exile continuum established by their predecessors.

Juxtaposed against the apathy of the younger generation, however, a comparative analysis of the emigrant character of Pato Dooley, Ray's brother, might reveal a darker reality to the naturalised condition of emigration as it functions in the plays. Pato's experience of emigration is "all drunk and sick, and . . . pee-stained mattresses"[439] and pints alone on a Friday or Saturday night. Yet even as the social reality of emigration is revealed in all its deprivation and loneliness, Pato's ambivalence towards his emigrant experience is conceptualised without the mytho-historic nostalgia for the homeland that transforms the experience of emigration into the discourse of exile in the dramatic narratives of the Friel and Murphy plays.

John-Joe's insistence in a *A Crucial Week in the Life of a Grocer's Assistant* that emigration is not just a case of staying or going is reformulated by Pato in different terms: "when it's there I am, it's here I wish I was, of course. Who wouldn't? But when it's here I am. . .it's not there I want to be, of course not. But I know it isn't here I want to be either."[440] While Pato may be materially optimistic about his relocation from London to America, he crucially fails to display any of the exile's longing that we have identified as characteristic in the conceptualisation of emigration as exile within the dramatic site of the dysfunctional Irish Catholic home. Pato is a willing refugee for whom home does not serve as a potential site for the realisation of his future.

The case of Cripple Billy in *The Cripple of Inishmaan* reinforces this reading, as the postmodern plot device that emigration provides for McDonagh is reflected in Billy's materially aspirant attitude, which lacks the nostalgia of the exile conceptualised in the Friel and Murphy plays; when he travels to America to take a screen test for the part of an Irish cripple it is for financial, rather than emotional gain. When we witness his devastating breakdown in a squalid Hollywood hotel room in Scene 7, the accepted dramatic strategy of exilic

[439] *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, 22.
[440] Ibid.

nostalgia - complete with the invocation and citation of a familiar traditional Irish ballad that links it to mytho-historic discourse - is readily accepted by the audience. However, in a doubly shrewd dramatic twist, it is revealed that not only was the emotional outpour part of Cripple Billy's screen test, but that the film's producers didn't even want Billy "for the filming . . . A blond lad from Fort Lauderdale they hired instead. . He wasn't crippled at all, but the Yank said 'Ah, better to get a normal fella who can act crippled than a crippled fella who can't fecking act at all."[441] The easy replacement of the real (the authentic that Cripple Billy stands for) with the simulation (the American actor) reveals the double-edged deconstructive tactic of the play; while exploiting the dramatic expression of the exilic consciousness for commercial success, it can also be used to provocative effect by manipulating and exposing concepts and assumptions of authenticity.

Fintan O'Toole has argued that the nostalgia we fail to find in the conceptualisation of home and exile in the plays can be linked to McDonagh's manipulation of ideas of authenticity. However, while he empties out the reified forms of nostalgia and exile, O'Toole argues, he replaces that nostalgia with "a less tangible but more unsettling sense of loss", an "inability to pine for the idyllic landscape"[442] whose physical reality is maintained even if the ideological and cultural background that has invested it with meaning has disappeared; the unsettling loss that replaces the exile's lost nostalgia, then, according to O'Toole, must be linked to the unsettling insecurity of the individual when the accepted ideological and cultural conception of Ireland (or the Irish Catholic family) itself disappears.

With its value invested entirely in its commercial potential, the future of the real Ireland is ambiguous. "Ireland mustn't be such a bad place so if the Yanks want to come to Ireland to do their filming"[443], the island community insist in *The Cripple of Inishmaan,* but Billy's revelation that America is "just the same as Ireland really"[444] speaks to the globally-inflected awareness that Ireland's heritage, its 'authenticity', is really its only marker of identity in the globalised world of cultural trafficking.

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[441] McDonagh, Martin. *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, 92.
[442] O'Toole, 1997c, xiii.
[443] *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, 14.
[444] *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, 90.

As the cultural ideals of landscape, community, family and spiritual identification that O'Toole laments are depleted in the plays, so too, our metatheatrical reading suggests, are the canonical ideals of dramatic representation, which McDonagh empties of their serious deconstructive intent. However, it is McDonagh's refusal to replace them with any other signifying values which creates the real sense of loss in the plays and the real sense of the uncanny for the audience that the critical anxiety surrounding the plays has certainly reflected. While the tendency of national nostalgia to elide reality - reflected in the competition between mytho-historic ideals and the dramatic world in the Friel and Murphy plays - is unwittingly indulged in by the playwrights in their contribution to the development of the dramatic ideology of the dysfunctional Irish Catholic family, such a tendency is displaced in *The Leenane Trilogy* by the plays' refusal to commit to anything more than their own textual surface. This postmodern self-awareness in the plays bears particular resonance for deconstructing the authenticating processes by which mytho-historic ideology gains its authority over representational processes. It also creates an astute exposure of the redundancy of the critical positions that have focussed their interest on comparative textual readings or wider social with the aims of exposing or defending the (in) authenticity of McDonagh's plays.

Conclusion

By combining traditional canonical form with a radical representational aspect *The Leenane Trilogy* is enabled in its subversive dramatic effect. By echoing the social and domestic dysfunction that the Friel and Murphy plays used to ideologically deconstructive effect, *The Leenane Trilogy* invokes both the dramatic canon and the social, economic and political conditions that shaped it. However, the parodic postmodern strategies of dramatic representation that the trilogy employs turns the original ideologically deconstructive mode on its head so that the uncanny Irish Catholic home of twentieth-century drama, as well as the ideological processes of mythory that necessitated its dramatic function, become both the subject and object of deconstruction in the McDonagh plays.

By refusing an either/or reading of McDonagh's plays – that is as authentic or inauthentic representations of Irish life – this chapter has opened up the possibilities of a more metatheatrical reading of the plays. Yet, paradoxically, by using the canonical status of the dysfunctional Irish Catholic family for parodic purposes, and normalising domestic dysfunction in his plays, the deconstructive purposes of the Friel and Murphy can be extended to argue that *The Leenane Trilogy* has its own ideological purposes; exposing how the dysfunctional Irish Catholic family has come to function as a dramatic narrative in much the same way as the Irish Catholic family ideal functions as an ideological narrative in the mytho-historic tradition explored at the beginning of this thesis.

Thus, the postmodern diffusion of the uncanny dramatic domestic experience in *The Leenane Trilogy* gains its own uncanny effect by making the familiar recognisable uncanny of the dramatic Irish Catholic domestic experience frightening (or uncanny) in its subversion of audience expectation of the subject of its ideological deconstruction. The critical discomfort that *The Leenane Trilogy* has generated would certainly suggest that McDonagh has used such canonical-radical ambiguity to its greatest effect; to destabilise both the audiences' experience of watching the play, and the ideological and literary foundations on which this destabilisation was made possible.

Conclusion

"A given culture is only as strong as its power to convince its least dedicated members that its fictions are truths"[445]

The culturally specific exploration of an Irish Catholic domestic ideology has facilitated a discussion of the conflict between the public expression and private experience of home that has structured uncanny representations of the Irish Catholic family on the twentieth-century stage. By exploring the function of domestic ideology as a mytho-historic narrative, this thesis has traced the evolution of the Irish Catholic family from a primary economic and social unit in society to a codified ideological model that could contain the ideals of the cultural and political nationalist movements, and the ideologies of the Catholic Church and the Irish Free State. If the contradictory functions of its social and ideological status, on the one hand, and its individual meaning, on the other, pulled the cultural value of home in opposite directions, this thesis has argued that dramatic representations of the Irish Catholic family on the twentieth-century stage have reflected this paradoxical pull by staging a tension between a familiar ideal of home and a dysfunctional experiential reality that is reflected in both the physical and psychic spaces of the uncanny dramatic worlds.

While the textual and dramatic analysis largely focused on the structural relationship between place and identity – that is in the Irish Catholic family and individual development within it - the identitarian interest has had a wider significance in relation to the historical politics surrounding competing narratives of identity in post-independence Ireland. The central historical interest of this thesis has thus co-opted the Irish Catholic domestic space as a microcosmic expression of a wider cultural problem rooted in the narratives of ideological construction in twentieth-century Ireland. If this ideological construction has been exposed as an active combination of historical facts and mythical idealism in a

[445] Hayden White cited in David Cairns and Shaun Richards, 'Trope and Traps: aspects of "Woman" and nationality in Twentieth-century Drama' in *Gender in Irish Writing*, ed. David Cairns and Toni. O'Brien Johnson (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991), 189.

single ideological, mytho-historic narrative, so the plays that have been discussed in this thesis have deconstructed such narratives in their representation of the Irish Catholic family on the twentieth-century stage. By isolating the dysfunctional dramatic Irish Catholic family as an expression of an alternative narrative to the value-systems projected in official ideological discourse, we have seen how dramatic representations of the Irish Catholic family have deconstructed both the mytho-historic version of the Irish Catholic family, as well as the processes of mythory, whereby actual experience is adapted to the ends of wider ideological objectives.

As the chapters of this thesis have progressed from isolating the mytho-historic model towards isolating its dramatic deconstruction in the O'Neill, Friel and Murphy plays, it has pushed these ideas forward to their contemporary conclusion: a deconstruction of the *dramatic* model of the uncanny Irish Catholic home in an analysis of the plays of Martin McDonagh. However, the deconstructive intents of this thesis do not end with such a neat linear narrative of conclusion.

By placing the postmodern context at the forefront of the discussion of McDonagh's plays, this thesis has seen the original deconstructive purposes of the original dramatic models diluted and exposed within a potential template of dramatic essentialism. However, by engaging the domestic representations of McDonagh's plays with political issues unfolding in the twenty-first century as this thesis draws to a close, the real value of an analysis of his plays to the ideological interests of this thesis is made clear. The validity and utility of applying such a form of historical hindsight to McDonagh's plays, written in London in the 1990s, is open to question, but the light that it throws upon the wider cultural interests of this thesis cannot be ignored.

The year 2005 proved to be an important year for re-evaluating the ideological model of Irish Catholic family as it is set out in the 1937 Constitution. At the beginning of the year the long over-due revision of the constitutional clause of Section 41, recommended in the 1996 report of the All-party Oireachtas

Committee on the Constitution, finally began to consider possible changes to the constitutional definition of the family, which had remained unchanged since 1937. Various social groups, lobbyists and members of the public were invited to submit proposals on the projected widening of the definition of the family, which traditionally held the rights of the collective unit above those of individuals within the unit.

Among these proposals were reports representing single-parent families and same-sex partnerships calling for the State to place an obligation on the State to respect and support all forms of family life. Lone-parent families argued that the constitution "simply does not countenance that there may be families situated outside the confines of the nuptial state" despite the fact that twelve per cent of all households (154,000 families) are headed by lone-parents.[446] Meanwhile a report from the Women's Health Council called for the family to "be defined in terms of what it does rather than on how it is constituted. Moreover, constitutional provisions must reflect the reality of family life in contemporary Ireland."[447] The statistical reality in contemporary Ireland reflected a multitude of family forms: the 2002 census recorded 153,900 one-parent families, 35,100 divorcees couples, 133,800 individuals separated from a marriage partnership and 228,600 cohabiting couples in the State, while it recorded more than one-third of all births to parents who are not married to one another.

However, traditional Catholic lobby groups held a different opinion on the proposed constitutional change. The Irish Episcopal Conference and the office of public affairs at the Dublin archdiocese, for example, insisted that changing the Constitution would "run the risk of emptying or removing the special position of the family based on marriage."[448] "Is it not appropriate for a constitution to seek to shape civil society rather than merely to follow sociological trends?" they asked.[449] For their purposes, the Constitution existed not merely to regulate Irish

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[446] Liam Reid, 'Lone-parent families seek recognition under the Constitution', *The Irish Times* (February 16th 2005).
[447] Carol Coulter, 'Many submissions received on family', *The Irish Times* (March 7th 2005)
[448] Humphreys, 2005.
[449] Patsy McGarry, 'Bishops say definition of family should be retained', *The Irish Times* (March 31st 2005).

life but "to hold out values which the society would aspire to."[450] Former Taoiseach John Bruton made a personal statement to the committee that complemented the Church's understanding of the constitution as a document through which "the State should continue to promote marriage as the norm towards which people would aspire."[451]

At the end of January 2006 the committee came forward with its decision against a new definition of the Irish family; the constitutional definition of the family would not be extended to cover unmarried or same-sex couples, although the committee did find reason to recommend strengthening the rights of children and to substitute a gender-neutral wording that would remove the ideological privilege of the woman's place within the home. The committee's statement read thus:

> Despite the considerable change in demography and ethos, the committee does not find a consensus that the definition of the family in the Constitution should be extended. Indeed, in the submissions, the committee was faced with sharp division. Many wish the articles related to the family to remain unchanged. They fear that any change would threaten the position of the family based on marriage. It would undermine the stability of the traditional family and the enhancement of the common good that flows from it . . . In the case of the family, the committee takes the view that an amendment to extend the definition of the family would cause deep and long-standing division in our society and would not necessarily be passed by a majority. Instead of inviting such anguish and uncertainty, the committee proposes to seek, through a number of other constitutional changes and legislative proposals, to deal in an optimal way with the problems presented to it in the submissions."[452]

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[450] Humphreys, 2005.
[451] Arthur Beesley, 'Thousands join call for no change in status of family', *The Irish Times* (March 11th 2005).
[452] Stephen Collins, 'Committee does not favour new definition of family', *The Irish Times* (January 25th 2006).

In accordance with the committee's statement, any amendment to the constitutional definition would transform the family from an ideological unit to a social construct; as the traditional family model is the basis of stability in society, "the State could not realise the common good if it were to destroy the source of that stability in this way."[453]

First produced in 1996, *The Leenane Trilogy* can in no way reflect the complexity of the contemporary ideological debate about the Irish Catholic family model. However, while the discussion of his plays in this thesis focussed on the implications of postmodern representational practices on the dramatic narrative of the Irish Catholic family, placing his work in a wider framework of this contemporary ideological debate allows us to connect McDonagh's intertextual playfulness with the wider deconstructive practices of the domestic representational tradition as fostered by O'Neill, and developed in the Friel and Murphy plays. Particularly, placing the critical controversy surrounding the reception of his plays alongside the Oireachtas Committee's conclusion that 'an amendment to extend the definition of the family would cause deep and long-standing division in our society and would not necessarily be passed by a majority' suggests that while social and economic conditions have changed radically in Ireland, the ideologies through which Irish cultural and social narratives find their expression have not. Mythory still has the capacity to shape Irish historical discourse and the narratives of present experience; it is not merely the images of the past that need renewing, but the narratives with which we choose to represent our present and our future.

The closing words of *Translations*, which served as an introduction to this thesis, still bear resonance as this thesis closes; "It is not the literal past, the "facts" of history that shape us, but images of the past embodied in language . . . we must never cease renewing those images, because once we do, we fossilise."[454] Hugh's warning, however, can be applied to encompass the necessity of renewing the

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[453] Oran Doyle, 'Delicate task of defining partnership', *The Irish Times* (April 27th 2005).
[454] Op.cit.

images that express our present experience too; if mytho-historic ideologies of national life must be continually subjected to reinterpretation in line with wider, more objective histories, so the deconstructive dramatic narratives that challenge such ideologies should also maintain a continual dialogue with both the historical traditions from which they are being written and with the ideological assumptions of their own present time.

However, so too should the arguments of this thesis remember and acknowledge the various forces conditioning its exploration of the dramatic, narrative and ideological function of the Irish Catholic family in twentieth-century drama. Having created the transdiscursive space that Foucault called for in his conceptualisation of a rigorous, systematic history, this thesis hopes both to have enlightened its readers of the multiplicity of discourses that influence our understanding of the Irish Catholic family, and to have risen above the singularity of ideological discourses that have shaped the narratives through which it has traditionally been mediated.

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