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THE SPLIT IDENTITY AS AN OBJECTIVE CORRELATIVE FOR THE IRISH SOCIOECONOMIC DICHOTOMY IN BRIAN FRIEL'S PHILADELPHIA HERE I COME!

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ABSTRACT
This article proposes to examine the influence of the Irish dichotomy of place with its economic, political and religious manifestations on the art of Brian Friel with particular reference to Philadelphia Here I Come! (1964). Politically, Ireland is divided into Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland. While the former has always been part of the United Kingdom, the latter has come to be called the Free State or the Republic. The two major political parties have always been the Protestant Unionists who belong to England and the Nationalists who formed the Catholic majority in South Ireland and one third of the population in Northern Ireland. The Irish political and religious dilemma continued to shadow almost all of Friel's dramatic output with themes like alienation, displacement, emigration, economic failure, frustrated hopes and the family lack of communication. In Philadelphia Here I Come! Friel handles the theme of Irish emigration to America and the desire of the Irish youth to escape the economic and social desolation of Ireland. The play revolves around Gar O'Donnell, a young man who is about to leave for Philadelphia. The most remarkable supra-realistic device in the play is that in which Friel presents Gar's character in a split identity played by two actors: Public Gar and Private Gar. Through Gar's split identity, Friel dramatizes the love / hatred dichotomy that runs so deep in the Irish young man's soul toward the place and the people. With its technical novelty, humor, wit, irony, comic and tragic turns, the play attracted the attention of many critics and gained a wide popular and international success. Gar's split identity is manipulated as an objective correlative for the social, economic, religious and political dichotomy of the Irish society.

Key Words: Irish History, Irish Drama, Brian Friel, objective correlative, Expressionism

INTRUDUCTION
Brian Friel is an Irish playwright who was born in 1929 in Omagh, County Tyrone in Northern Ireland. His writing career began in 1952 when he started to write short stories, as an after-hour activity for the *New Yorker*. The first worldwide recognition of Friel came with his play *Philadelphia, Here I Come,* regarded by many as his masterpiece. In 1989, the B.B.C Radio devoted a season to six of Friel`s plays, being then the first living Irish dramatist to be such internationally acknowledged. Brian Friel combined in his art a deep-rooted devotion to Ireland and its crucial cultural issues, a capacity of self liberation, a fertile imagination and a high soaring ambition for renewal. He is regarded by many critics as the playwright who established the Irish contemporary drama. William Pratt states: "*Brian Friel is arguably the best living playwright, a dramatist whose works attract immediate interest in Dublin, London, or New York whenever they are introduced in these major theatrical cities*".(1999: 445)

Friel's art is always characterized by a tendency for liberation, for experimentation and a constant search of a new form that outgrows the usual fixed rules. That sense of liberation allowed Friel to be open to continental influences such as expressionism and T.S. Eliot's objective correlative. The expressionistic features found in Philadelphia Here I Come! include the free handling of time and space and the clever dramatization of Gar's fantasies and inner feelings

THE IRISH DICHOTOMY
Ireland has been suffering throughout its history from religious and political divisions. Politically, Ireland is divided into Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland; the latter has come to be called the Free State or the Republic. The two major political parties were the Nationalists and the Unionists. The former was the Catholic majority in South Ireland and they formed one third of the population in Northern Ireland. They

were opposed to the British rule and devoted to the cause of independence. Eminent among them was the famous leader Charles Parnell who managed to raise the home rule cause as early as 1886. As for the Unionists, they were the Protestant majority in Northern Ireland and they were loyal to the British crown and church; they called for union with the British Empire. Although the Home Rule Bill that was passed by Gladstone, the British Prime Minister, in 1886 did not come into actual being until 1921, when the Irish Free State was declared, it caused a great deal of agitation among the Unionists who opposed it severely on religious grounds. J.L.Mc Cracken states: *"Home rule is Rome rule" was their slogan. They believe that under a Dublin parliament in which they would always be in a minority their religion, their way of life, and their economic interests would be endangered."* In 1920, a settlement came with the Government of Ireland Act which provided for *"the setting up of two governments and two parliaments in Ireland, one for the six counties which were to form Northern Ireland and the other for the rest of the country which was to be called Southern Ireland"* (Mc Cracken, "Northern Ireland, 1921-66", 1984: 313, 314).

However, the situation in Northern Ireland was far from settled because nearly one third of the population (the Catholic Nationalists) was quite hostile to the Act. They refused to act as the official opposition in the parliament and consequently, the government was formed ultimately of the Protestant Unionist majority. As a result, the conditions of the Catholic population were increasingly getting worse. They lived as second rate citizens and suffered from unemployment and discrimination in housing and getting jobs in the Unionist government. All this resulted in violence, political strife and agitation that formed the dilemma of Northern Ireland ever since. "*Bifurcations*", Anthony Roche observes, "*are an all too inevitable component of identity in the North, where every label has its binary opposite: Catholic / Protestant, Unionist/Nationalist*." (1995:75). As late as 1991, Fintan O`Toole deplores the collapse of the idea of a "*uniform society* " in Ireland: " *We literally could not sustain the notion of a single Ireland, self-sufficient and bound in both its culture and economy*." (How Poetry Joins Dramatic Action,1991).

On the economic level the majority of Catholic population suffered a great deal from this political and religious dichotomy that afflicted Northern Ireland during that time. John Whyte refers to studies by Sydney Elliott and Richard Rose as well as a 1971 census that document the extent of discrimination the Catholics were suffering from in Northern Ireland under the Unionist rule. He also refers to an analysis of the 1971 census made by Edmund Aunger (1975), in which he demonstrates many ways in which Catholics were discriminated against. Those include unemployment, working in lower jobs than the Protestants and living in lower class conditions.

THE IRISH CRISIS AND FRIEL'S ART

This socio-economic background is always indispensable for a proper estimation of Friel's oeuvre. Brian Friel was in the middle of these conditions; he was the son of a Catholic school master who had shared in Nationalist activities, and Friel the son was a member of the Nationalist Party in Derry for a number of years. The deteriorating social conditions and the high political tension of the North, his birthplace, remained constant themes in almost all his entire oeuvre. Derry was a northern city to which he moved with his family as a boy at ten. It had a Catholic majority that suffered from social desolation, economic depression and a corrupt electoral system that deprived the Catholic population from power even within the small regions where they formed the majority[1]. The city lies very near the political border that separates Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State. A few miles from Derry is the county of Donegal – part of the Irish Free State – where Friel used to spend his holidays during his childhood. Roche states that since the late sixties, Friel has chosen to live "*Just over the border in County Donegal, on the peninsula of Inishowen, the island's northernmost point, on the margins of both Irelands* "(1995: 75). The separation of the North and South remained as a dominant shadow in his recurrent themes that included split identity, exile, emigration, dislocation and failure in communication and in family relations. Ulf Dantanus states: "*In terms of the North – South dichotomy of place, Friel is keenly aware of the problems of a split identity as occasioned by the political religious and social division that he has experienced in Northern Ireland*." (1988:18).

[1] For more on this point, see John Whyte.

Moreover, he chose the imaginary town of Ballybeg situated on the borderline between North and South as a standard setting for most of his plays. Ballybeg, Seamus Deane remarks in his Introduction to Brian Friel: Plays I, "*has fused within it the socially depressed and politically dislocated world of Derry (in the North) and the haunting attraction of the lonely landscapes and traditional mores of rural Donegal (in the South)*". (1996: 12). The Irish dilemma continued to shadow almost all of Friel's dramatic output with themes like alienation, displacement, emigration, economic failure, frustrated hopes, depression and lack of love and communication in family relations. In his Introduction to Brian Friel: Plays I, Seamus Deane observes: "*the same blend of disappointment and unyielding pressure is found time and again to characterize the experience of his protagonists*" (11). Moreover, almost entirely all his plays are located in an Irish setting and plays (like The Freedom of the City, Volunteers, The Mundy Scheme, and Translations) deal conspicuously with political and Irish subjects. Brian Friel's shift from the short story form to playwriting indicates a desire to be in touch with people and a belief that an artist should have an active role in the reformation of his society.

THE DIVIDED SELF IN PHILADELPHIA HERE I COME!

Philadelphia Here I Come! shares with many plays written by Friel, or by other Irish authors, the theme of Irish emigration to America. It was produced at the Dublin Theatre Festival of 1964, then in 1966 in New York and in 1967 in London. The play revolves around Gar O'Donnell, a 25-year-old young man who is about to leave for Philadelphia to work in a hotel. The predominant motif in the play is the sense of hesitation and self-division between staying and leaving. He has been encouraged to travel by Aunt Lizzy, the childless sister of his mother, who immigrated to America many years ago. Gar's acceptance to travel abroad is urged by his failure on many levels; he failed to marry his sweetheart Kathy, Senator Doogan's daughter who got married instead, to a rich doctor. He is also driven primarily by a sense of estrangement with his father, S.B. O'Donnell, a sixty-year-old merchant. Lack of communication and understanding with his father and the unpromising future in the latter's shop (he pays him less than he pays Madge, the housekeeper), are other factors behind his decision to leave Ireland. However, Gar is torn in a severe conflict between all these factors and his attachment to the place and the people. His love of Ballybeg, his homeland, the unexpressed love for his father and the suppressed love for Kathy are at the core of his sense of hesitation and torment. The love / hatred dichotomy runs so deep into his soul that on the eve of his departure he is mercilessly haunted by past memories of happy moments with his father, his friends and his beloved. Even before leaving to America, he suffers from an aching nostalgia for Ballybeg and its people. The play ends with his question to himself: "*God, Boy, why do you have to leave? Why? Why?". The answer is: " I don't know. I, I, I don't know*". (99).

It is only through Private Gar that we can realize the nature of Public's crisis and understand why he wants to leave Ballybeg and also why he cannot do away with his deep-seated attachment to the place and the people. Philadelphia is highly distinguished by Friel's craft in delineating his themes and in dramatizing the inner thoughts of Gar O'Donnel. The major theme of the play is the Irish youth's emigration abroad for lack of fulfillment on the economic and social levels. Ann Blake observes: "*The recurrent Irish theme of emigration is here realized with great depth and is woven into a touching presentation of the young man's relationship with his father and with his home and its surroundings*" (1987:109). The most remarkable device in the play is that in which Friel presents Gar's character in a split identity played by two actors: Public Gar and Private Gar. In his stage directions of the play Friel explains that the two Gars *"are two views of the one man. Public Gar is the Gar that people see talk to, talk about. Private Gar is the unseen man, the man within, the conscience, the alter ego, the secret thoughts, the id."* Friel explains further that Private Gar, who represents the conscience of public, is seen and heard only by the audience and not by any other character. (1996: 27). Through this genius device, the audience is allowed to overhear what is going on in the mind of Gar, his impressions about and commentaries on the other characters. This leads indeed to funny scenes, which contribute to the hilarious comic effect of the play. This device is necessarily demanded by the theme of the play. Many critics have praised this device as urgently needed by the content of the play. Among them is Walter Kerr:

> *"...the play needed this trick if it was ever going to tell its truth. The conceit of the double person was something absolutely demanded by the material, not something ingeniously added to*

> *it. The play was about man's failure to speak what he feels; but we could not have had the play at all – not naturalistically and not in prose – if we had not had one dumb ox who failed to speak and one dancing devil who felt. The core of the play was rent by contradiction; it had to have twins to plead its case. On top of that the doubleness was true*". (1970: 115).

The divided protagonist technique is pointed out by critics to have been used by earlier dramatists. Dantanus refers to Eugene O'Neill's Days Without End, (1934) where the major character, Johan Loving is played by two actors: "John" and "Loving", the latter being the other self of the protagonist. Although both characters are of the same height, figure and dress, there is an important difference that helps to "break the realism" as Dantanus puts it (91). The two characters represent the two opposite sides of one person; the good and the evil, the believer and the disbeliever. Unlike the two Gars of Friel, there is a struggle between John and Loving, which ends by the melodramatic death of the latter who represents doubt and faithlessness. Normand Berlin who points out that the play has been "an artistic failure as well as a failure at the box office", observes that "*the conflict within the split hero... reflects O'Neill's own search for faith in the modern sick world*". (1982: 122).

Ruth Niel refers to the same device in a radio play by Giles Cooper, The Disagreeable Oyster. According to him, the play had a highly acclaimed production in 1957, half a year before Friel's first radio play was broadcast. In this play, Cooper uses the split personality in a way similar to that of Friel. Mervyn Bundy is divided into two characters: "Bundy Major" and "Bundy Minor". However, Niel argues, *"... it is of no real importance whether Friel knew the play. Even if the division works in a similar way on a technical level, Friel's play is not at all like Cooper's as the subjects and the structures of the play are completely different*". (1987: 358).

THE OBJECTIVE CORRELATIVE TECHNIQUE

Gar's Public and Private selves in Philadelphia Here I Come! reveal Friel's indebtedness to T.S. Eloit's concept of the "objective correlative" that the latter adopted in his Waste Land. In his essay on "Hamlet"(1919) Eliot states that the best way to express a certain emotion is to find "*a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events, which (will be) the formula of that particular emotion.*" (n.d.: 107). This technique is applied most remarkably in Philadelphia in the divided self of the protagonist, which in itself stands as an objective correlative of self division between love and hatred, reality and illusion, staying and leaving and all the psychological dualities that torment Gar. This split identity in itself stands as a metaphor for Ireland as a split nation. The objective correlative is a device in language in which the author's personality is disguised in an image, a refrain or a recurrent quotation from other writers to be a verbal equivalent for the emotion he wants to express. Instead of stating his protagonist's emotions directly, Friel uses some refrains like the refrain song "*Philadelphia here I come right back where I started from*". As in the case of Eliot's Waste Land, such a technique seems baffling at the beginning, but gradually gains meaning by repetition. It is adapted from a popular song "California, Here I Come". It is heavily repeated throughout to serve several functions. Among these is the self-assurance of Gar to evade all the doubts or the inner attachment to Ballybeg that dishearten him. Roche significantly remarks: "*It becomes appropriately a leitmotif that underscores a process of inevitability in the same manner as 'Let's go / We can't / Why not / We're waiting for Godot' does in Beckett's drama*"(1995: 88). Similar in effect is the other refrain from Edmond Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France which is repeated recurrently without any relation to the context. Gradually it gains significance with the recurrent relatedness with the memory of his dead mother, with Kathy his beloved, with the memory of Ballybeg and Ireland, and with his efforts to build bridges of communication between him and his father. Friel uses it as a verbal equivalent of Gar's need for love, compassion, home, and communication.

LACK OF COMMUNICATION AND THE LOVE / HATRED DICHOTOMY

The lack of communication between father and son is cleverly dramatized at the eve of Gar's departure. S.B. O'Donnel is the most incommunicable figure who exacerbates the sense of isolation and exile in his son. On the realistic level, very few words about monotonous jobs at the shop, are exchanged between Public and S.B. during the during the eve of the former's departure. If we imagine that the character of Private is

nonexistent, there will be an entirely silent scene being occasionally interrupted by a few unbrilliant questions and curt answers. Madge, the housekeeper who cannot hear Private, makes an ironical commentary: "*The chatting in this place would deafen a body*"(Friel, 1996: 50). The poor Gar yearns for a warm father-and-son chat and his Private self helplessly pleads to his unhearing father to speak to him in a fatherly tone: " *... say "Gar, Son" say "Gar, you bugger you, why don't you stick it out here with me for it's not such a bad aul bugger of a place". Go on. Say it! Say it! Say it!*" During his speech, public is really suffering. (Friel, 1996: 49). At the end of episode two, after Kathy's departure, Gar is fiercely crushed by past memories and an overwhelming longing for a word from his father: "(In a whispered shout) Screwballs say something! Say something father!" (Friel, 1996: 80). This suppressed love is coupled in Gar with an alleged hatred that he fiercely announces in the farewell scene with Kathy. Gar says to her in an aggressive tone that he hates Ballybeg, *"and every stone and every rock and every piece of heather around it ... To hell will Ballybeg*"(Friel, 1996: 79).

However after her departure, Public Gar "*immediately buries his face in his hands*" while his other self is moaning for "*Kate ... sweet Kate Doogan ... my darling Kathy*." (Friel, 1996: 80). It's this love / hatred dichotomy that torments Gar's soul and stumbles his ability to take a decision and it is through the split identity genius device that Friel deftly dramatizes it. This ambivalent attitude towards Ballybeg, his father and Kate is magnificently described in the conflicting moods that Gar undergoes throughout his last night at home.

AMBIVALENT MEMORIES

At the eve of his departure, Gar remembers a moment of great happiness with his father when he was still young. It was an afternoon in May when they were fishing in a blue boat. It was a moment of great joy and S.B. was singing to his son. The importance of this memory lies in Gar's hope to remind his father of it and accordingly he may manage to summon a touch of the true fatherly love that was between them in the past. *"Private: ... Once upon a time a boy and his father sat in a blue boat on a lake on an afternoon in May, and on that afternoon a great beauty happened, a beauty that had haunted the boy ever since, because he wonders now did it really take place or did he imagined it."* (Friel, 1996: 89). This memory serves as a long-sought-for chance for Gar to remind him of the fishing day they once had in a blue boat. It is a moment of high intensity and anticipation: "*Private: he might remember – he might. But if he does, my God, ... what if he does ?*". (Friel, 1996: 94). However, the details of both Gar and S.B. do not converge; the boat turns out to have been brown instead of blue; S.B. cannot remember that he once put his jacket round Gar's shoulders and gave him his hat. Even the "*Green Coloured Ribbono*" song turns to have been "*The Flower of Sweet Strabane*". The moment of joy is lost in S.B.'s attempt to remember the unimportant details. Private immediately begins to mock: "*so now you know: it never happened! Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha*." (Friel, 1996: 95).
When Public goes out and Madge enters, S.B. tries to remind her of one day in the past when Gar was still young. That day, Gar refused to go to school and said he wanted to "*go into my Daddy's business*". S.B. is proud that it was he who could convince him to go to school and they went together "*the two of us, hand in hand, as happy as larks...*"(Friel, 1996: 97). Madge, in turn, denies the details: "*he never had a sailor suit*"(96). When Gar reenters, S.B is already out and any attempt to bring them together is utterly doomed to failure. Roche ironically remarks: "*It has taken so long for the two cagey adversaries to get to the negotiating table and attempt to engage in meaningful dialogue, but they don't sing the same songs and the symbolic emblems don't match up*". (1995: 101). Failure to share happy memories is deftly dramatized by having Gar absent when S.B. at last remembers a joyful day with Gar in the past. The play ends with Gar being still torn between the two opposite wishes: to leave and to stay.

CHARACTERIZATION

While in expressionistic plays one actor may play many roles, here we have two actors playing one character. However, the expressionistic streak is apparent in the fact that both Private and Public in their fantasies of the future play as various roles as any expressionistic character may be allowed to play. They play the ensemble roles of a football player and a sport commentator, a clerk and a president in a big hotel, a radio announcer, a Hollywood girl and a young man, a military chief and a soldier. "*In this manner*", Claire Gleitman states, " *Gar seeks to distance himself from the miserable realities of his daily life and probable*

future, reconstructing them through energetic nearly desperate play" (1997: 234). Unlike the double protagonist of O'Neill's Days Without Ends one feels a close affinity between both Public and Private, they complement each other and even share the same qualities, in spite of the fact that Private enjoys much more freedom of speech than Public does.

In spite of the striking passivity of Public on the realistic level, Private has many functions on the supra-realistic realm. Public is hesitant, shy and dump while Private is active, daring and talkative. Roche mentions three different functions of Private that are pertinent to the effect of the play. The first of these is that they "*encourage and inspire each other to a greater degree of self-expression than is possible in the Public or family domain*"(1995:87). Examples of this are abundant in the play when Gar criticizes the rigidly routine acts and predictable remarks of his father, or the absence of the Canon's role as a Christian guide in the society. The second function is "*to fill in the gap opened up by the silences between S.B. and Gar Public*"(1997:90). This is achieved in the long silent scene between Gar and S.B. when Private embarks on a parody of a father/ son intimate chat. In these scenes Private confides to his unhearing father his secrets, his hopes and his emotional need to communicate with someone. The third dramatic function of Private mentioned by Roche is "to goad Public to remember."(1997: 96). It is made clear in the play that the two flashbacks were presented after Private's insistence to remind Gar of the events he would rather avoid remembering. To these three functions we may add that Private helps to heighten the conflict within Gar's soul. He encourages him to travel by dandling his imagination with future outstanding successes, then he forces him to confront inner feelings of attachment to the now married Kathy, and reminds him of the embarrassing situation with her father Senator Doogan when he. He raises Public's fear that Aunt Lizzy will treat him as a child. This is clearly dramatized by a dialogue between Public and Private on Aunt Lizzy's offer:

Private : Regrets ?
Public: None.
Private : Uncertainties ?
Public : None
Private : Little tiny niggling reservations?
Public : None
Private : Her grammar ?
Public : Shut up ! (Friel, 1996: 66)

The inner struggle within Gar comes to a height when Private ruthlessly mocks the sentimentality of Public who has impetuously decided to travel abroad being tempted by expected love, attention and communication with Aunt Lizzy: Moreover, the most important effect that Private endows on the play is the comic effect. His humorous remarks, ironical parodies, dancing, singing and playing roles offers Philadelphia Here I Come! its entertaining characteristic. Owing to the existence of Private, the humorous mood predominates the play and this is perhaps why the play is widely accepted by audiences.

STRUCTURE

Typical of expressionistic drama, Philadelphia Here I Come! depends in its structure on no certain narrative line or any usual plot. On the surface level, the action is confined to a few hours on the eve of Gar's departure for Philadelphia. During this time, Mr. Boyle, Kathy, Canon O'Byrne and the Boys pay him visits to bid him farewell. Two long flashbacks are presented out of the limits of time and place. Gar's free fantasies about the various future jobs that he wishes to occupy in USA and his memories of past happy moments break the linear conventional time. The past, the present and the future are blended together in one single moment. The unities of time, place and action are non-existent since Friel's main concern is to depict the workings of Gar's mind. Moreover, the structure of Philadelphia Here I Come! partakes of expressionistic drama in the episodic form and the imperceptible dissolve of one scene into another. The play is built mainly on going back in time through memories and flashbacks. Neil Corcoran states: "*Friel's much-debated structural experimentation may also be read as a formal enactment of the theme of retrospection*". (1992: 15). Moreover the flashback technique in the play is always compared to that of Miller's Death of a Salesman. "*The expressionistic techniques of both playwrights*", Elmer Andrews observes, "*allow them to*

interweave fantasy and memory into the present emotional moment in order to widen it and deepen it. Expressionism enables them to take us beyond the banalities of surface reality"(85).

CONCLUSION

Philadelphia Here I Come! deserves the rank of a masterpiece because it combines both the appreciation of critics and the admiration of audiences. Kathleen Ferris states that in Philadelphia ran for 326 performances in New York, being thus, "*the longest running Irish play on Broadway to date*." (1966: 129) Although the play borrows heavily from expressionism in terms of characterization and structure, Friel never indulges in the baffling mysteries of experimentation that his fellow playwrights may have been attracted to. While others like Denis Johnston, aim at shocking his audience into a disillusionment about modern Ireland, Friel's realistic frame reveals his wish to be articulate and comprehensible to his audiences. As pre-noted, the religious and political divisions in Ireland dominates Philadelphia in terms of content and form. The sense of ambivalence is running through the play's themes, character and structure. The lack of communication between Gar and his father, the love/hatred dilemma, and the failure to share a happy memory of the past are among the central themes in Philadelphia. Such themes are reflected in Friel's choice of the divided character of the protagonist and the manipulation of T.S. Eliot's objective correlative technique as well as the expressionistic structure that is based on the free handling of time and space. The play's significance does not lie merely in its technical innovation. It lies primarily in the fact that it embodies many of Friel's artistic and thematic preoccupations. The split identity of Gar will always remain as a symbol for Ireland's political, religious and social divisions. The double figure of Private and Public is a metaphor of self / national division as a central idea of the play. The play has its intrinsic literary values and amusing qualities that attract both reader and spectator. It reflects many influences including Miller, O'Neill, Brecht and Eliot. However, it is like a genuine crystal that reflects various colors and yet has its own charm that emerges from the inside.

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