

Summer 2013

# An Examination of the Representation of Irish Catholic Priests in Contemporary Irish Theatre

James Patrick Jeans  
*San Jose State University*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd\\_theses](http://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses)

---

## Recommended Citation

Jeans, James Patrick, "An Examination of the Representation of Irish Catholic Priests in Contemporary Irish Theatre" (2013). *Master's Theses*. 4345.  
[http://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd\\_theses/4345](http://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses/4345)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses and Graduate Research at SJSU ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of SJSU ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@sjsu.edu](mailto:scholarworks@sjsu.edu).

AN EXAMINATION OF THE REPRESENTATION OF IRISH CATHOLIC PRIESTS  
IN CONTEMPORARY IRISH THEATRE

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Television, Radio, Film and Theatre Arts

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

James Patrick Jeans

August 2013

© 2013

James Patrick Jeans

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Thesis Titled

AN EXAMINATION OF THE REPRESENTATION OF IRISH CATHOLIC PRIESTS  
IN CONTEMPORARY IRISH THEATRE

by

James Patrick Jeans

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF TELEVISION, RADIO, FILM and  
THEATRE ARTS

SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY

August 2013

Dr. Matthew Spangler	Department of Communication Studies
Dr. David Kahn	Department of Television, Radio, Film and Theatre Arts
Dr. Ethel Walker	Department of Television, Radio, Film and Theatre Arts

## ABSTRACT

### AN EXAMINATION OF THE REPRESENTATION OF IRISH CATHOLIC PRIESTS IN CONTEMPORARY IRISH THEATRE

by James Patrick Jeans

Modern Irish theatre can trace its origins to the creation of The Irish Literary Theatre by W.B. Yeats and Lady Gregory in 1899, which later became the Irish National Theatre Society, and eventually, the Abbey Theatre. For more than 100 years, Irish theatre has served as a mirror for reflecting Irish identity and as an oracle of future possibilities. A decade into the Twenty First Century found Irish identity challenged by a child abuse scandal of tragic proportions whereby over 30,000 children suffered at the hands of a duplicitous and negligent Catholic Church. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the various ways in which the theatre has represented the Irish Catholic priest in the wake of this scandal.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	5
Part 1: Theatre's Long-Term Role in Reflecting Irish Identity	6
Part 2: Irish Identity in Period of Transition	18
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	36
CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS	50
The Ineffective Priest	50
The Priest Portrayed as a Comic Fool	61
The Priest as an Abuser	72
The Redemptive Priest	78
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION	83
WORKS CITED	89

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Analytical Plays, Influential Plays, Films, & Literature by Category	49
--	----

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“(Irish brogue)”; two simple words, set parenthetically to inform would-be actors, directors, and any reader of the script that the abusive priest Father Brendan Flynn is, no doubt about it, Irish. In his Pulitzer Prize winning stage play, *Doubt*, John Patrick Shanley characterizes Flynn as speaking with an “Irish Brogue” when delivering a gospel regarding the evils of gossip as heard in a confession by Father O’Rourke—a surname with more Irish innuendo. The Irishness of the play seems contrived and unnecessary in the telling of the story. Could not the same story be told just as effectively if the characters were assigned the surnames Smith and Jones or in a French or Spanish accent—or no accent at all? Why identify the Irish?

Amy J. Berg’s 2006 Academy Award Best Documentary Feature nominee, *Deliver Us From Evil*, tells the true story of Irish Catholic priest Father Oliver O’Grady and his crimes of child molestation and rape. In the John Hay College of Criminal Justice Report conducted for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), 4392 American priests were identified as being publically accused of sexual abuse, but according to the USCCB’s own website, ([bishop-accountability.org](http://bishop-accountability.org)), only 5% of those accused bore surnames beginning with “Mc” and “O’,” common Irish prefixes. This once again begs the question: why identify the Irish?

Shanley and Berg’s distinguished and highly acknowledged American works of art are acts of stereotyping and branding that have arisen in the aftermath of Ireland’s newest area of “troubles”—the scandal of child abuse committed by the clergy of the Catholic Church. As much as the Irish have historically been associated with things like

potatoes, alcohol, “the gift of gab,” green fields, music, and dance, they have, in recent years, also come to be associated with abusive priests.

In this thesis, I will examine the changing landscape of Irish identity, both historical and modern, as it is revealed in the representation of Catholic priests in contemporary Irish drama. In addition, I will explore the trope of the Irish priest as a child abuser and speculate on whether or not this could potentially become, following Patrick Lonergan, the next “brand” of Irish identity in much the same way it is already stereotyped as alcoholics and fighters (Lonergan 188).

Patrick Lonergan states in his book *Theatre and Globalization* that, “The success of Irish theatre internationally has been predicated on a ‘branding’ of Irish identity as representing a narrow set of characteristics...[and]... appears largely determined by their use of familiar Irish stereotypes” (196). In the United States, we are exposed to numerous advertisements encouraging drinking to celebrate Saint Patrick’s Day (Guinness, Murphy’s Irish Cream, and the consumption of green beer by everybody else who wants to be Irish for the day—i.e., Budweiser, Miller, and Coors). The University of Notre Dame is branded with the “Fighting Irish” mascot—a leprechaun dressed in green posed in a classic boxing stance ready to fight. This drinking and fighting trope is preponderantly displayed in John Ford’s *The Quiet Man* (1952)—arguably one of the best known American films about Ireland (surely, for baby boomers and their parents).

Certainly, part of the Irish identity is branded with the ability to find humor in the most difficult situations—“Murphy’s Law”—an acceptance that “what can go wrong, will go wrong” or “The Luck of the Irish” is often used tongue-in-cheek to lament the

irony of a situation where there is no luck at all. This thesis will also note how audiences are exposed to both the Church and priests' wrongdoings through the playwright's frequent utilization of comedy as the medium of choice to convey the tragedy of child abuse.

The body of this thesis will focus on the representation of the priest in contemporary Irish drama, from the Celtic Tiger era (1990-2005) through the period of priest scandal reports (2005-09), and include current stage productions up to 2012. This choice of dates includes a time when Irish identity is in flux due to the economic boom and bust and the ensuing immigration associated with the boom era. As the Irish were patiently tolerating the economic downturn and government corruption following the Celtic Tiger, their identity was shaken again with the release of three reports on child abuse: The Ferns Report (2005), The Murphy Report (2009), and The Ryan Report (2009).

The analysis in Chapter 4 is divided into four parts: The Ineffective Priest, The Priest Portrayed as a Clown, The Abusive Priest, and finally, The Redemptive Priest. In the first three categories, the degenerate Catholic priest trope deepens and becomes starker as playwrights present and explore an element of Irish society that needs examination. The final category balances this examination by observing priests that behave in a more positive predictable way.

The theorist Christopher Murray conveys the "...idea of the artist as one who provides a structure of feeling...as a new way of seeing ourselves and our world" (Murray 10). The road to recovery begins with close self-examination that allows the

healing process to evolve through knowledge and understanding of the victims' plight. Jill Dolan, in her book *Geographies of Learning*, states, "Think of theater as pedagogy, in which performers and spectators learn from one another something about their commonalities and differences and how to honor them in their communities" (Dolan 63). Augusto Boal, founder of Theatre of the Oppressed, discusses theatre as "...our belief that we that we must re-establish the right of everyone to exist in dignity. We believe that all of us are more, and much better, than what we think we are. We believe in solidarity" (Boal 1).

The significance of this thesis, in its examination of how Irish priests are represented in contemporary Irish Theatre, relies on some of drama's inherent attributes referred to above: theatre's healing power to the population as they try to make sense of the child abuse insanity, theatre as pedagogy, and the reflective influence of drama that allows us to self-examine our purpose on this planet along with our responsibility towards our fellow man. Drama's healing power, pedagogy, and dignity underscore the significance of this thesis in examining how Irish priest are presented in contemporary Irish theatre.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review in this thesis has been divided into two parts: the first part covers Irish theatre's long-term role in reflecting Irish identity, and the second part focuses on extra-theatrical Irish forces that have played an important role in shaping Irish identity.

Three primary theorists and their contributions to Irish drama will be examined in Part 1: Christopher Murray, Nicholas Grene, and Patrick Lonergan. The examination of these three writers, widely regarded as among the leading theorists on Irish theatre and identity, will establish the close relationship between Irish drama and Irish identity. Murray's key focus is on the "mirror"—reflecting on oneself, and the "dream"—imagining what one can be. Grene centers on expression, telling the Irish who they are, and on interpretation and elucidation, why they are this way. Lonergan's focal points are branding, stereotyping good and bad characteristics, and globalizing Irish identity. These three theorists are cited and referenced quite often by critics and scholars in the many articles regarding Irish drama researched for this paper.

Part 2 of the literature review will take a close look at how Irish identity has changed during the current period of volatile transition: from the Celtic Tiger era (1990-2005), through the economic bust, and into the present day. An overview of the Celtic Tiger era and financial corruption in Ireland will be looked at through the lens of Fintan O'Toole's, *Ship of Fools: How Stupidity and Corruption Sank the Celtic Tiger* (2009).

Matthew Spangler's article published in the *James Joyce Quarterly* (Fall 2007) titled "Winds of Change: Bloomsday, Immigration, and 'Aeolus' in Street Theatre" serves to spotlight the challenges of immigration and racism in Ireland. The role of the Catholic Church in shaping Irish society will be presented through two books: Tom Inglis' *Moral Monopoly: The Catholic Church in Modern Irish Society* (1987) and Eamon Maher's *'The Church and its Spire': John McGahern and the Catholic Question* (2011). Finally, the second part will conclude with an abbreviated look at the introductions to The Ferns Report, The Murphy Report, and The Ryan Report in order to grasp the significance of the charges and crimes committed.

#### Part 1: Theatre's Long-Term Role in Reflecting Irish Identity

Christopher Murray concludes his book, *Twentieth-Century Irish Drama: Mirror up to Nation*, with the statement, "Irish drama both records cultural conditions and generates fresh possibilities," and thus, he summarizes "the mirror and dream" symbolism used throughout the book in his definition of theatre's long-term role in reflecting Irish identity (247). He quotes William Butler Yeats, "'It was the dream itself enchanted me', [and Murray continues with] ...and so it has always been. The dream is always waiting to be fulfilled; the nation is always awaiting completion" (247). Yeats's remarks came after nearly 700 years of British rule; it only stands to reason that Irish theatre would be reflective of the journey towards nationalism, but always with a vision towards the destination—a dream of becoming its own nation. It is this vision which begins Murray's book on one hundred years of Irish drama.

The dream of becoming its own nation found within modern Irish drama can be traced to W. B. Yeats, Lady Gregory, and a handful of others with the idea to create the Irish Literary Theatre in 1897 (the Irish Literary Theatre would not officially be founded until 1899), which would lead to the creation of the Irish National Theatre Company (1903), and finally, the famed Abbey Theatre in 1904. Lady Gregory states their intentions:

Our desire to bring upon the stage the deeper thoughts and emotions of Ireland will ensure for us a tolerant welcome, and that freedom to experiment which is not found in theatres of England... We will show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and of easy sentiment, as it has been represented, but the home of an ancient idealism. (Gregory 402)

Lady Gregory and her associates no longer wanted the Irishman of British stereotype, but rather they wanted to create a national theatre of which the Irish could be proud. They wanted to perform in front of an Irish audience appreciative and educated in Irish oratory and with deepening reflection about being Irish. Murray goes on to explain, “The early writers...in however amateurish a fashion showed how authentic Irish experience might be recast as vision, the dream of an alternative reality” (Murray 3). Murray continues on with, “...the assumption that in the Irish historical experience drama (texts) and theatre (production) were both instrumental in defining and sustaining national consciousness” (3). Most of the Irish no longer wanted to be England’s colony and live by their rules, but they wanted passionately to become their own nation—and theatre was the vehicle to put a mirror in place so that the reflection allowed them to see themselves in this dream moving towards their destination of Irish independence. Murray further explains:

Whether in poetry or prose, whether mythic or naturalistic, the drama would engage with the conditions of Irish experience. Art for art’s sake

was not on the agenda. It is fair to say that this broadly defined aesthetic of engagement was the one firmly established in the modern Irish drama. (6)

The conditions of the “Irish experience” at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were nothing if not tumultuous and included the founding of Sinn Fein in 1905, the Easter uprising in 1916, the vicious guerrilla warfare between the IRA and the British Black and Tans, the sudden Free State status that divided the country into the pro-British north and the Republican south resulting in civil war between treaty supporters and detractors. It is for these reasons that Murray states that there was no room for “just art”, unless it fit their agenda. An understanding and appreciation of this Irish identity foundation, how it was established, the numerous, and unending obstacles conquered, is critical if one is to fully comprehend the significance of present day representation of Irish priests.

This stage mirror held up to Irish society can be best appreciated by Murray’s observation that:

...Yeats’s ‘Advice to Playwrights Who are Sending Plays to the Abbey Theatre’, written sometime before 1910: ‘A play to be suitable for performance at the Abbey should contain some criticism of life, founded on the experience or personal observation of the writer, or some vision of life, of Irish life by preference, important from its beauty or from some excellence of style.’ (6)

And so, Yeats and Gregory laid the groundwork with extremely high ideals, a vision, and a dream. Their goal was to inspire the nation toward cultural freedom from the British through theatre. Great playwrights soon followed, starting with John M. Synge and then Sean O’Casey—each writing dramas that excelled in vision and a complex reflection of Irish life.

Religious consciousness becomes a key mirror reflection as Ireland is often associated with a population in the midst of an identity crisis of sexual suppression and a conflict between the dichotomies of sin juxtaposed with the normal human condition of wants and desires. Murray states: “Daniel Corkery’s notorious argument in *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature* that the three great ‘forces’ which distinguish authentic Irish literature are religious consciousness, nationalism, and the land” (165). Murray continues:

There is a connection between the change in public attitudes towards sexual matters and the changes in legislation affecting rights and gender roles. ...In rural drama prior to the 1960s there was, of course, love and marriage. Sex, however, was taboo. ...The challenge to Puritanism was a major feature of Irish drama in the 1960s.” (171-172)

Irish identity is not static, but quite dynamic, as, certainly, the major events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including the British and American sexual revolution of the ‘60s with its provocative music and art, had their influence on Ireland. Murray adds, “Irish playwrights of the 1960s and 1970s took a dim view of religion. They saw the old bonds loosening, moral and spiritual values collapsing, and the question of identity become more problematic than ever” (175). Murray cites a 1972 referendum in the Irish constitution that deleted the special position of the Catholic Church as keeper of Irish morality; however the change made no difference to the majority of Irish citizens (175). Murray singles out Brian Friel and Tom Murphy as two playwrights who, “...took a more somber and critical view of the role of the church [to which]...it is implied, the priest is no more than a figurehead in society” (176).

Murray published his book in 1997, while the Celtic Tiger was still a cub and well before the corruption of state and Church (reported later in this paper) dramatically left its stamp on Irish identity like no other time in its history. And yet, Murray states, “It seems fairly clear that in Ireland in the 1990s it is not possible to invoke the ‘nation’ in the same terms as obtained even a generation, much less a century, ago. The country has undergone massive changes which are still causing moral and social upheaval” (245). He goes on to quote Gemma Hussey of *Ireland Today*:

Irish society has changed more in the two decades leading up to the 1990s than in the whole of the previous one hundred years. ... An inward-looking, rural, deeply conservative, nearly 100 per cent Roman Catholic and impoverished country has become urbanized, industrialized, and Europeanized, ... And still the hunger for change is there. (245)

Murray summarizes the mirror and dream symbolism as being two sides of the same progression of Irish identity in Irish theatre (247). In conclusion, Murray sees Irish drama as a means to learn about oneself from life’s experiences. The reflection and the dream identifies the nation’s attitude about who they are and what they want to be, which appears to be free of Britain to retain their own Irish identity. Murray puts it best as he states, “Drama helps society find its bearings; it both ritualizes and interrogates national identity” (9).

The above views from Murray on Irish Theatre and its reflection upon Irish identity is significant as he lays the necessary criterion foundation to build upon the representation of Catholic priests in Irish drama. The course of Irish identity has been established through the reflection of numerous historical events in conjunction with the continuous dreams of Irish freedom and distinctiveness.

*The Politics of Irish Drama: Plays in Context from Boucicault to Friel* by Nicholas Grene begins with the identical Lady Gregory quote on “buffoonery” as does Murray’s book. The difference lies in that Grene is concerned not only with “how the Irish are portrayed?” but also the significance of “why the Irish are portrayed the way they are?” He suggests that “...there is more to the politics of Irish drama than merely a theatrical mimesis of the national narrative. ...[but a]...three-way set of relationships between subject, playwright and audience has to be considered in the complex act of negotiation which is the representation of Ireland on the stage” (1). He also claims that, “The drama is directed simultaneously at those who know Ireland as the dramatists claim to know Ireland, and at those who do not: it is an act of expression and an act of interpretation” (6). In essence, the focus of Grene’s book is not only on the politics that represent Ireland, but more importantly, by whom and for whom. The point Grene is making is that theatre goes through transformations to reject stereotypes of previous generations as a correction and to establish their own true national identity. Is it self-examination, an educational presentation for those that seek understanding or a combination of examination/interpretation? This concept is important when considering the representation of Catholic priests in Irish drama as globalization allows any playwright in the world to examine Irish Catholic priests.

The sexual revolution of the sixties signals a strong shift in modern Irish culture; Grene states that the 1960s was a decade that saw the emergence of a fresh generation of playwrights including Brian Friel and Tom Murphy with their plays *Philadelphia Here I Come!* (1964) and *A Crucial Week in the Life of a Grocer’s Assistant* (1969) respectively.

The subject of both plays is the emigration of young, poorly-paid, under-educated, male protagonists from the strictly compulsory have-not section of society that are driven from home. Grene writes:

The emphasis in both plays is on deprivation, on the economic, cultural, and spiritual poverty of the Irish small-town experience. The strongly held control of a puritanical Catholic church associated sexual repressiveness with the authoritarian family ethos of home, sexual liberation with fantasies of escape. (199)

As Grene dissects each play, the themes of the 1960s appear to have a political shift from an Ireland faced with the external issue of independence to an Ireland with the internal issues of morality and social status.

Both plays offer a social anatomy of the life-denying features of the Irish provincial scene: late and loveless marriages, frustrated sexuality, a petit-bourgeois economic situation just above poverty, an unenlightened controlling Church, a meanly conservative social hierarchy, a cultural wasteland. This was a familiarly bleak view of Ireland by the 1960s, familiar from the critical realist traditions of Irish fiction and poetry as well as drama. (203)

As will be explored in the Catholic Church section of the literature review, the younger generation of Irish from the 1960s could not resist the temptation to emigrate in an effort to find the freedom to be young and alive without Church dominance shaping their morality.

Healing, regardless if it is a broken leg or a broken country, begins with the process of close examination. Green concludes, “As the partitioned island has continued to manifest symptoms of its fractured state, so the dramatist have returned repeatedly to probe and examine, to attempt therapies of self-analysis” (267). These “therapies of self-analysis” are exemplified with the contemporary works regarding the examination of the

Irish priest. For some playwrights, whether Irish or not, the expression of the Irish priest experience is extremely personal, while for others it is an interpretation of the pain felt by victims as the crimes are revealed.

Whereas the two above books looked at Irish drama of approximately the past 100 years (Murray the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while Grene went back an additional 40 years to 1860 to include Irish playwright Dion Boucicault), Patrick Lonergan narrows his study to, "...the so-called 'Celtic Tiger' period of c. 1990 to 2005" (Lonergan 5). In addition, Lonergan focuses his lens on the social and economic changes of Irish theatre due to the influence of globalization. He divides his study into four units each consisting of two chapters with supporting theatrical examples. This thesis will briefly review Parts 1 and 2 as related to the representation of priests in Irish drama.

In Part 1, "Globalization and Theatre: Definitions and Contexts," Lonergan presents the goal of his book: "...to analyze and clarify the relationship between social change arising from globalization, and the different modes of theatre production that have emerged as a result of those changes" (30). He states that there are three reasons to mull over theatre, Ireland, and globalization: "...the transformation of Ireland by globalization, the fact that Irish theatre has historically tended to function internationally as well as nationally, and Irish theatre entered a new period of vibrancy and creativity while the county itself was becoming more globalized" (23). The first chapter of this book demonstrates an in-depth exploration of interpretation much along the same vein as Grene. Lonergan uses Marie Jones' play, *Stones in His Pockets* (2000) to demonstrate that Irish culture, as interpreted by theatre (and other art forms, as well), is spread

globally and can be seen more often on an international scale than ever before. But which Ireland is to be shown: Belfast or Dublin; Loyalist versus Republican; Catholic rural juxtaposed urban liberal; colonial in contrast to post-colonial; or an Ireland as home to good or bad priests? The dichotomy of Ireland appears to be endless and must be considered in the exploration of the representation of Catholic priests in Irish drama.

Loneragan uses Brian Friel's play *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990) to illustrate his next point on globalizing Irish theatre, "Friel's play is not about globalization, but it can help us to understand better the impact of globalization on our societies—and on our theatre" (31). The award winning play toured internationally after it premiered at the Abbey theatre in 1990, inspired *Riverdance*, and was adapted into a Meryl Streep film" (31). *Dancing at Lughnasa* was revived at the Abbey Theatre in 1999 with a much different reception: "...the Ireland of 1999 was considerably different from the Ireland of 1990 – so Friel's play might have been seen as having come from an Ireland that had decidedly been left behind" (43). There are several events and/or elements that can be described as being left behind, like emigration being replaced by immigration, the economic rise of the Celtic Tiger, the Good Friday peace agreement, and an inkling that the social position plunge of the Catholic Church was imminent. Lonergan states that the elite position of Ireland's Catholic Church was drastically changing in the decade of the nineties and he describes the representation of Catholic priests in the 1990s as:

The representation of Father Jack was also much more likely to shock in 1990 than in 1999. During that decade, a series of absurd or flawed priests would appear on the Irish stage. Father Welsh in McDonagh's *Leenane Trilogy* (1997) and Father Billy in Tom Murphy's *The Wake* (1998) and two prominent examples of an altered attitude to religious authority on the

Irish stage, as is the appearance during the decade of the television series *Father Ted* (1995). (44)

Loneragan goes on to detail the characteristics of Father Jack, a very sympathetic character that would have most theatre-goers favoring him over the Church, even though he rejected Catholicism in favor of the customs of the Swahili culture, including the recommendation of having “love children” (44). Friel’s play takes on Church doctrines and challenges the morality of such policies that many Irish people struggle to obey. Lonergan points out, “Another taboo challenged by the original production of the play was its morally and ethically neutral presentation of single parenthood” (44). Friel puts the issue directly in front of the audience by having the illegitimate child in the play serve as the narrator.

In summation of Part 1 of Lonergan’s book, the reader is introduced to the rapidly changing dynamics of Irish national identity in the decade of the 1990s. With the Celtic Tiger comes the immigration of many non-Irish peoples with cultural values and characteristics that collided with a largely conservative Catholic culture that had not yet been modernized until the later globalization process began to seep into Ireland.

Loneragan confronts gender, dramatic form, and branding identity with two plays, Michael Keegan-Dolan’s *Giselle* (2003) and Gerard Mannix Flynn’s *James X* (2003). Dance and monologue, respectively, to a degree have replaced dialogue as the theatrical form of expression.

The reception of both *Giselle* and *James X* was very positive, with both plays being seen as evidence of Irish society’s increased willingness to come to terms with the sexual and physical abuse of so many of its citizens, both in domestic and institutional settings...A comparison of the two shows that in both cases there is a movement away from verbal

performance towards an unadorned expression of a truth, but whereas the male character's response to violence is represented through speech, the female's is represented through dance. (168)

Loneragan observes that global audiences want to match their expectations of Irish stereotypes with Irish plays utilizing the monologue form (185). He comments that "the prevalence of the monologue form during the late 1990s is that, at that time, it allowed writers to present figures who corresponded with international audiences' expectations about Irish masculinity, and hence about Irish plays" (180). The dichotomy of masculinity and celibacy of priesthood has been, and continues to be, a controversial criticism of Catholicism.

The globalization of Ireland also includes the immigration of many workers to fill the needs of the Celtic Tiger's economic growth. Racism now becomes a new issue for Ireland to deal with as the definition of what is Irish is constantly in flux. There is a great deal of irony when dealing with the race card in Ireland. Lonergan notes, "The relationship between Irish identity and race is thus shown to be deeply entangled. Race is sometimes imposed upon the Irish as a form of degradation; at other times, it is invoked with pride by the Irish as a form of self-expression" (206). As far as degradation goes, the Irish know all too well the pains of racial prejudice; as Lonergan remarks, "Both in Britain and in the United States, the racialization of the Irish was a means of control – in the former case, the system of control was colonialism; in the latter, it was class" (202). Lonergan cautions that the historic Irish brand may no longer be recognizable as a new broaden representation of identity may not include "white, Catholic, or rural' and thus becomes less attractive to global audiences (215). Lonergan finishes the branding and

race issue with, “In short, Irish practitioners may be faced with a choice: they can represent their country as it is, or they can exploit international audiences’ stereotypical views of the country for economic gain” (215).

Lonergan concludes his book with a couple of key statements that are worth noting for this paper. First he states that “...to see a play that is branded as ‘Irish’ does not mean that we encounter a work that literally originated in Ireland itself. It means that we consume a work that accords with our predefined notions of Irishness” (217). His second finishing statement is very astute, especially when considering the books by Murray and Grene, as the decade of the 1990s comes to a close. There are tremendous “factors” for the Irish and Irish theatre to contend with. Lonergan states: “Because of economic growth, peace in Northern Ireland, and many other factors, Irishness in the Celtic Tiger era has become increasingly indeterminate, leading to attempts to reconcile, or at least accommodate, the many contradictory versions of Irish identity that are now available” (222). When contrasting the three books on Irish identity and Irish drama, Lonergan’s book separates itself from the other two as the complexity of being Irish during and after the Celtic Tiger era is as different as trading for bread flour a century ago with a pale of milk drawn that morning is to purchasing sushi today with Euros earned assembling computers the night before. Ireland is rapidly changing, its identity reflective of the diversity of an encroaching, relentless world.

## Part 2: Irish Identity in Period of Transition

### Rise and Collapse of the Celtic Tiger

The primary purpose of Fintan O'Toole's book *Ship of Fools: How Stupidity and Corruption Sank the Celtic Tiger* is to analyze the fall of the Irish economy; however, it also provides valuable information on the co-dependence of the Irish State and the Catholic Church. O'Toole states, "The institutional Church was not edged out by the governing culture of the Celtic Tiger – it was closely allied to it...the great nexus of amorality, Fianna Fail, was arguably never more closely aligned with the Church than it was under Bertie Ahern" (O'Toole 183). Fianna Fail has been the dominant party in Irish politics since 1932 and Bertie Ahern was Taoiseach (Prime Minister) from 1997 through 2008. During this period, according to O'Toole, Ahern "...used over €1 billion of public money to save the Church from the legal and financial consequences of its tolerance for child abuse when he agreed a deal to indemnify the religious orders against being sued" (183).

The detrimental relationship of the Irish State and the Catholic Church is echoed several times by sources used later in this paper; for example, Eamon Maher states, "After independence, Church and State became inseparable, with unhealthy consequences for both" (Maher 26) and Gerald Mannix Flynn, in his Foreword, to his play *James X*, on three occasions mentions State and Church together as the culprits to child abuse (Flynn 5-7). Tom Inglis provides a third example in *Moral Monopoly: The Catholic Church in Modern Irish Society* adding "...the relationship between Church and the State in Ireland is best described in terms of a grand alliance in which each

maintained the power of the other” (Inglis 94). Certain members of the Irish Catholic Church and the State of Ireland were in a kind of partnership, whereby each was aware of the other’s level of deceitfulness and corruption, and did nothing to stop it. This dishonesty, at the highest level, is directly related to Irish identity and, in turn, how the priest is represented on stage.

Before the corruption and inevitable decline of the Irish economy, Ireland enjoyed a phenomenal period of wealth and prosperity. Fintan O’Toole gives the following account regarding the rise in the economy during the period known as the Celtic Tiger: “There is no doubt that Ireland’s economic performance in the late 1990s was genuinely remarkable” (O’Toole 12). He gives the following statistics to support the “remarkable” quality of Ireland’s economic performance.

- The rate of unemployment was cut in half, from a desperately high 15.6 percent to 7.4 percent (and shortly afterwards to less than 5 percent). (12)
- The level of consistent poverty fell from 15 percent of the population to 5 percent. (13)
- In 1986, Irish GDP per head of population was a miserable two-thirds of the EU (European Union) average, and even in 1991 it was just over three-quarters. In 1999, it was 111 percent of the average, and significantly higher than that of the UK. (13)
- The Irish share of foreign investment by US-based corporations rose from 2 percent to 7 percent. (13)
- By 2000, Ireland had \$38,000 of foreign investment for every man, woman, and child – more than six times the EU average. (13)
- World-leading corporations like Pfizer (which makes all of its Viagra in County Cork) or Intel (whose European base is in County Kildare) created good, well-paid and increasingly highly skilled jobs. (13)

- By the end of the 1990s, Ireland had become the largest exporter of computer software in the world. (13)
- The overall value of exports more than doubled between 1995 and 2000. (13)
- In the ten years to 2004, the growth of Irish national income averaged over 7 percent, more than double that of the USA and almost triple the average growth rate in the Eurozone. (13)
- The population rose at a phenomenal rate. While the rest of the EU added one person to every 1,000 between 1998 and 2008, Ireland added ten. (14)
- In 1986, every ten workers in Ireland supported 22 people who were too young or too old to work, who were women working in the home, or who were unemployed. By 1999, those ten workers were supporting just fourteen dependants, and by 2005, just five. (17)

The above statistics support the notion that the strength of the economy in Ireland was changing drastically like no other time in its history. This economic change would result in a serious alteration of Ireland's demographics. O'Toole states that, "Coming to Ireland to look for work would have been, at the start of the 1990s, like going to the Sahara for the skiing. [However]...mass emigration, with all of its debilitating economic, social and psychological effects, ended and was gradually replaced by large-scale immigration..." (13). For many decades, Ireland was watching its youth emigrate to foreign lands, leaving Ireland's identity relatively static, conservative, and Catholic. The Celtic Tiger and the immigration it brought from overseas changed Ireland's identity immensely as non-Catholics and technology savvy foreigners came in masses with a strong influence on new wants and needs; Catholic Ireland charged forward into the future. O'Toole adds:

Ireland shook off much of its authoritarian religiosity and became a more open and tolerant society. ... Ireland was young, buoyant and energetic,

and to those who complained that older spiritual values were being lost, the ready answer was that having a job and a house and a choice about staying in your own country can be pretty spiritually uplifting too. (14)

Additionally, more good news arrived in 1998 with the Northern Ireland Good Friday peace agreements.

The thriving economy did not last long. O'Toole spends the next 200 plus pages of his book detailing what went wrong and how the Celtic Tiger collapsed. One area detailed is the approximately 90 percent of Ireland's primary schools under Catholic Church control. Education has always been an ignored public institution in Ireland since the hedge schools of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. "Nowhere was the smugness, indolence and incompetence of Irish governments more obvious than in the yawning chasm between the rhetoric of a high-tech, cutting edge, innovative society and the reality its education system scarcely bothered to acknowledge" (151). The irony of the situation is that the country that shipped the most computer software in the world did not have the broadband to become the global leader in technology, nor did it have the education infrastructure to support information technology and its inevitable growth (156). The "have-nots" of Ireland were subjugated again and with little knowledge that they had been exploited by that new gentry of the "haves." This recipe for disaster had been in place for years. The Church, in control of education and left unchecked by the state, proved to be a tragedy for Ireland's youth that in turn left a powerful impact on Irish theatre and how the Catholic priest would be portrayed.

O'Toole uses the "double-think" theory from George Orwell's classic novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as an analogy of the events of the Celtic Tiger's collapse in regards

to the long-suffering and sometimes gullible Irish people. O'Toole references Orwell with a condensed version of double-think with:

The power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them...To tell deliberate lies while genuinely believing in them, to forge any fact that has become inconvenient, and then, when it becomes necessary again, to draw it back from oblivion for just so long as it is needed, to deny the existence of objective reality and all the while to take account of the reality which one denies. (181-2)

O'Toole continues his analogy of double-think as he exposes Irish Catholic concern with changing its identity with the slow deterioration of the once dominate Catholic Church; a church once in control of public identity and personal morality for a "majority of the population from the middle of the nineteenth century until the institution began to implode in the 1990s" (182). In their search for identity, the Irish, with the aid of technology, was able to observe the cultures of Britain and America opposed to the child abuse crimes of the Church in their country (182). O'Toole presents an explanation that "...the Church was not a beacon of moral certitude – it was a deeply corrupt institution that tortured and enslaved children in its industrial schools and that placed the need to protect its own reputation by covering up child abuse ahead of the safety of vulnerable children" (182-3). He continues to describe how the Catholic Irish had no public morality replacement for the Church. The double standards of the Church translate into challenging obstacles for the playwright to accurately represent the priest on stage.

O'Toole finishes his book with a summation of the crimes and the call to action that there needs to be a new, re-found Republic. Critical to this re-founding is the need for "...a general recognition that the crisis is moral as well as economic. It is, indeed, a

perfect illustration of the economics of morality – the absence of a sense of propriety, of restraint and of right and wrong, was not just obnoxious, it was economically disastrous” (219). The result is a priest represented in Irish drama coming from an era in which society is economically, and to a certain extent, morally weakened.

### Immigration

A significant upward swing in immigration would have a significant impact on Irish theatre as the population’s demographics would change dramatically. Immigration had a correlation with Irish identity, which in turn directly affected the plays being written for the Irish. Patrick Lonergan asks the question: what entitles people to call themselves Irish? Is it their residence, where they were born, where their parents were born, religion, national identity, or a certain combination of all of the above? He goes to state that by 2004-5, it becomes clear that “...Ireland transformed from a country of emigration to one of immigration... [and the change] occurred rapidly” (Lonergan 191).

The numbers are staggering, as he reports:

- In 1996, 6 percent of the population of Ireland had been born outside of the country and by 2006 over 10 percent will have been born outside.
- In 1996, there had been just under 5000 people living in Ireland who were born in Africa; by 2002 that number was 26,000 and by 2006 it had risen to 35,000.
- People originally from Asia grew from 8000 in 1996 to 28,000 in 2002 and to 46,000 in 2006.

Globally, these are rather small numbers, but for a small country like Ireland and considering the short period of time the numbers are quite significant.

Matthew Spangler presents a great example of the new issues now faced by the Irish in his article published in the *James Joyce Quarterly* in Fall of 2007 titled, “Winds of Change: Bloomsday, Immigration, and ‘Aeolus’ in Street Theater.” Spangler reports that the 2004 street performance *The Parable of the Plums*, of the “Aeolus” episode of *Ulysses* featured “...eight-foot-tall puppets, live music, and Asian, West African, and Irish dancers...with 170 performers and several thousand people in the audience” (Spangler 47). He goes on to report how many of the festival supporters and fans, of *Ulysses* author James Joyce, went away from the experience feeling confused and puzzled by what they had just witnessed. Interestingly, Spangler states that this story of a changing Dublin may be more relevant today than it was in 1904 (47). Spangler adds that the show “...captured the spirit of *Ulysses*...Through a nonverbal parable of music and dance, it told the story of a changing Dublin in the midst of an economic transformation and populated by large numbers of migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers” (47). Spangler explains that the decision for diversity in this performance was a major theme of the performers in blending Asian, African, and Irish dancers together on the streets of Dublin, in that they “sought to make a statement about the changing face of Irish identity” (57). He concludes his article by stating, “It demanded that Ireland’s migrants and refugees, often seen as foreign interlopers, be recognized for what they actually are: unquestionably Irish” (61). The importance of Spangler’s statement can be better appreciated when looked at in combination to a poll quoted in the article, by Lentin and McVeigh for the European Commission that reports in the late 1990s that 55% of the Irish considered themselves as a racist (53).

With over half of the Irish reporting themselves as being racist, it is of no surprise that over 79% of the population voted for the 2004 “citizenship referendum” where Irish born children of non-Irish parents were no longer considered Irish or EU citizens (53). In order for the child to obtain his or her Irish citizenship, at least one of the parents must be an Irish resident or both parents must have lived in Ireland for three of the four past years prior to the birth. Ironically, the referendum vote was held five days prior to the provocative performance of *The Parable of the Plums*.

### The Catholic Church’s Role in Irish Society and Identity

In his book *Moral Monopoly: The Catholic Church in Modern Irish Society*, Tom Inglis states his purpose for writing the book: “to provide some alternative explanation as to why the Irish adhere so strongly to the Catholic Church, and to examine critically how the Church came to have such power and influence in Irish society” (1). It should be noted that Inglis published his book in 1987, prior to the “Celtic Tiger” and the child abuse accountability reports, and before the many changes in Irish society over the past two and one-half decades. Despite these many changes, there is still much to learn about the Catholic Church’s dominance over Irish society and its influence on everyday life. Inglis states that his sociological study is not meant to be a complete work on the Catholic Church in Irish society, but an effort “to provide a reasonable and coherent explanation of its power” (6). In this paper, I will select significant points from the book in an attempt to enlighten the reader as to how the Church, through its power, was (is) able to greatly influence Irish identity, Irish drama, and how the Catholic priest might be portrayed on the modern theatre stage.

Inglis presents several tables of statistics to provide the reader with background knowledge about Irish Catholics. One table of particular interest is a population table from 1981 where it is reported that the Roman Catholic population percentages for all of Ireland was at 76.8%; 38% in Northern Ireland (six counties that are still part of the United Kingdom) and 93% in the Republic of Ireland (the remaining twenty-six counties). He concludes the chapter by surmising the main difference in Irish Catholics from other Western European countries is the high level of adherence to Church sacraments, rules, and laws. In addition, there is a general acceptance to the Church as the legislator and arbiter of morality. He goes on to report that "...the weekly attendance at Church by Irish (82 per cent) was found to be three times higher than the general European average (25 per cent), and twice as high as traditionally Catholic countries such as Spain (41 per cent) and Italy (36 per cent) where the proportion of Catholics in the population is also nine in ten" (32). Another point Inglis makes is that other European societies are moving forward with a personal, individualized responsibility towards ethics, while at the same time, in Ireland, there is still obedience to the rules and regulations of the Church and recognition of the Church's authority and decision making ability on what is right or wrong.

One of the main avenues taken by the Church to maintain its high level of loyalty and devotion is through the numerous organizations established to help keep the population within the rules. Inglis lists over 25 such organizations with tens of thousands of lay members all working to keep a "virtual monopoly of Irish morality" within the Church's control (61). These organizations, along with the Church's control of

education, health, certain areas of government, and even the home, maintains a highly disciplined morality of the Catholic Church over every man, woman, and child in Ireland.

The power of the Catholic Church lies in social prestige, its political position, economic possessions, and its status as a power bloc. There was a tremendous amount of prestige given to those Catholics who were able to behave at the uppermost peak in the social and cultural practices of the rules and laws of the Church. According to Inglis, the Church has always maintained that to be poor is God's will—that the poor need to accept their position in life and follow the example of Christ's life of penance and atonement (72-3). The way in which Irish people act was controlled by two power blocs: the State and the Church, and, somewhat surprisingly, they did so in alliance with one another. Inglis describes it rather effectively with, "The State exercises its power through laws enforced by such apparatuses as the courts, police and army. The Church maintains its power through rules and regulations enforced by priests, nuns and brothers, as well as by committed members of the laity" (74). He goes on to explain how the focus of the Church with the Irish is on social and moral affairs. Inglis lists, however, sixteen legislative acts between 1923 and 1965 that the State was responsible to create law and yet there was "...a direct input from one or more bishops" (75). The political power of the Church has always been guaranteed as the Catholic population of Ireland did not want to be deprived of spiritual salvation.

The Irish have had an extremely long history of a domineering and influential religious burden dating back to Saint Patrick's arrival in 432 A.D. (130). Within a couple of centuries, the development of penitentials was introduced and is still influencing

Ireland over 1000 years later. According to Inglis, there were three parts to the penitential: extreme penance, a shift from public confessions to private (thus the priest becomes more powerful), and an emphasis on celibacy and virginity. These penitentials played a central role in the Western civilizing process (130).

Inglis sees the Church as a large bureaucratic organization, which, like any other organization, is primarily interested in maintaining its position and influence in society. The Church has developed this organization over the past century through its control of education, health, and social welfare via a strict observance to its rules and regulations.

In *'The Church and its Spire': John McGahern and the Catholic Question*, and published twenty-four years after Inglis' book, Eamon Maher looks at Catholic Ireland from an entirely different perspective in that Maher investigates the illogical association of novelist John McGahern had with the Catholic Church. McGahern, influenced greatly by his mother, had an extremely religious upbringing and remained a devout Catholic until his book *The Dark* (1964) was banned in Ireland and he was fired from his teaching position.

Maher uses the Introduction of his book to relay some of the national issues regarding the crimes of the Church as it related to McGahern and his work. The emerging State and the Catholic Church worked in concert to control a population with violence that permeated not only the industrial schools, but the home as well. The father of the home was the unquestionable authority supported by Church and State. If he was drunk, in a fit of rage, and hit his spouse and children, so be it. The victims learned to keep silent as they knew there was nowhere to turn. Maher writes, "Complicit silence is

what allowed the horror of the industrial schools to go undetected for such a long time...”

(Maher 18), and the practice of shuffling the abusive priest from parish to parish with a total disregard for future victims who were mainly innocent children. Maher continues,

[McGahern’s] novels and short stories are full of characters who suffer at the hands of powerful figures—who use their authority in an inequitable manner. Although he never laid blame for the ills of Irish society at the door of the Catholic Church, he believed that its alliance with the emerging State led to the establishment of an unhealthy theocracy in Ireland. (21).

On the other hand, McGahern writes in his book, *Memoir*, how the Church played such a big role in his everyday life and that of his family. He fondly remembers how “cleansed” they felt after attending mass and confession, the beauty of the priest’s robes and the stained-glass windows of the Church, and the traditions, processions and pageantry. As he grew older, however, he left the Church and the Church left him.

Maher reports how important the Church was to post-Independence Ireland in the beginning of Irish Free State status and the vision of then Prime Minister Eamon De Valera. But during the 1960s when the television set brought the world into their homes and showed people living lives much differently than that of Irish Catholics, it became apparent that change was occurring. Add in the dance hall phenomenon wherein young people could mingle more freely, form casual male/female relationships, and the status quo was no longer meaningful or relevant. Maher quotes Fintan O’Toole:

The words “Irish Catholic” did not denote merely a person of specific faith born in a specific country. They also had come to stand for a country, a culture, a politics. Catholicism in Ireland has been a matter of public identity more than of private faith. For most of its history, the Republic of Ireland was essentially a Catholic State, one in which the limits of law and of behavior were set by Church orthodoxy and the beliefs of Catholic bishops. (26)

Even though the Irish Catholic world can be often times presented rather bleakly, Maher remarks that, “both the Church and McGahern would have acknowledged how far the Ireland of 2006 had moved on from the really bad repressive, intolerant days” (31).

The book’s appendix includes a published transcript of a December 2000 interview between Maher and McGahern revealing important insights into Irish Catholicism. When asked about the rules governing how religion and sexuality were entwined, McGahern replies, “When I was in my 20s it did occur to me that there was something perverted about an attitude that thought that killing somebody was a minor offence compared to kissing somebody” (187). When Maher states, “Strangely enough, it’s almost becoming ‘sexy’ to be Irish, which certainly wasn’t the case a few decades ago,” McGahern replies, “...Everything that we inherit, the rain, the skies, the speech – and anybody who works in the English language in Ireland knows that there’s the dead ghost of Gaelic in the language we use and listen to and that those things will reflect our Irish identity” (190). And finally, when asked, “What sort of Irish identity do you see emerging in the coming decades?” McGahern answers, “...We will have an identity, but I think we wouldn’t have it long if we started worrying about it” (198). It is fairly clear that this closing remark presents an Irishman that is not going to dwell on the past, that Irish identity is a combination of good and bad that one must learn to accept, and move on.

### The Ferns Report, The Murphy Report, and The Ryan Report

Eamon Maher's book introduces the next section of the literature review with "...many horrific descriptions of clerical child abuse are chronicled in the Ferns, Murphy, and Ryan reports. All speak of how children's safety was put at risk because of systemic failures, cover-up and the failure of those who knew what was happening to intervene" (19). The three reports are a not to be denied burden on Irish identity that has already been referenced in this paper with the books written by Lonergan, O'Toole, and Maher.

Patrick Lonergan gave the Keynote Presentation at 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of The American Conference For Irish Studies, West at San Jose State University, San Jose, California on October 22, 2011. His speech, entitled, "Performance, Nation, Globalization: Imaging Ireland After the Celtic Tiger" ends with a reference to the play *Freefall* (2009) by Michael West. Lonergan asks the audience to look at the *Freefall* introductory quote by Annie Ryan (wife of Michael West). Annie Ryan writes that the theatre company she was a member of, The Corn Exchange, started work on *Freefall* in late Autumn 2008 just as the Celtic Tiger crumbled. She writes:

As our man's story began to unfold in the summer, The Ryan Report was released after a nine-year investigation into the systemic rape and abuse of 30,000 children in the care of Catholic orphanages and industrial schools in Ireland, stretching back to the 1930s. Stories poured into the airwaves and newspapers, on the streets, in our rehearsal rooms. Ireland was overwhelmed with grief and remorse. It broke. It fell to its knees. Amidst job losses, the unknown future, the change in status, in life-style, this report was shocking reminder of everyone's roots. (West vi)

She goes on to state that the play is not about the Celtic Tiger or the Catholic Church, "...but the attempt at finding the human experience within all this confusion, corruption,

darkness and denial” (vi). The significance of these three reports on Irish identity cannot be overstated as the Church that ruled their lives and their souls was devastated.

The Ryan Report, also known as “The Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse,” was concerned with, “...establishing whether or not abuse occurred and the nature and scale of that abuse...[with regards to]...the treatment of many thousands of children, over many decades, in residential institutions, including industrial schools, run by various religious orders and congregations” (Ryan 2). This report dealt with “a representative sample of complaints and suspicions of child sexual abuse by priests in the Archdiocese of Dublin between the years 1975 and 2004” (2). In article 1.8, the report states that “The Commission received information about complaints, suspicions or knowledge of child sexual abuse in respect of 173 named priests and 11 unnamed priests” (2). The report makes clear that “It is important in the commission’s view not to equate the number of complaints with the actual instances of child sexual abuse” (2). For example, two priests have admitted to over 750 instances of child abuse, but there are only 70 documented complaints against them. In Article 1.10 “The Commission examined complaints in respect of over 320 children against the 46 priests in the representative sample. Substantially more of the complaints relate to boys – the ratio is 2.3 boys to 1 girl” (3). The overview section of The Ryan Report is 28 pages in length and contains 113 articles, ranging from Article 18, “There is a two thousand year history of Biblical, Papal, and Holy See statements showing awareness of clerical child sex abuse” (5), to Article 35, “As can be seen clearly from the case histories, there is no doubt that the reaction of Church authorities to reports of clerical child sexual

abuse...was to ensure that as few people as possible knew of the individual priest's problem" (10). Article 90 contains a key statement pertinent to this paper:

"Unfortunately, it may be that the very prominent role which the Church has played in Irish life is the very reason why abuses by a minority of its members were allowed to go unchecked" (23). The Church made "major contributions to the lives of the citizens of Ireland by providing various social services including schools, hospitals and services to socially excluded people" (23). In the concluding article, the Commission reports, "The welfare of children, which should have been the first priority, was not even a factor to be considered in the early stages. Instead the focus was on the avoidance of scandal and the preservation of the good name, status and assets of the institution and of what the institution regarded as its most important members—the priests" (28).

The Executive Summary of The Murphy Report centers on evidence gathered from 1,090 men and women who reported being abused as children in Irish institutions. In the "Conclusions" section, there are 43 numbered points made and broken into the sub-headings of Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Neglect, and Emotional Abuse. Points numbered 18-20 focus on how:

Sexual abuse was endemic in boys' institutions...The schools investigated revealed a substantial level of sexual abuse of boys in care that extended over a range from improper touching and fondling to rape with violence. Perpetrators of abuse were able to operate undetected for long periods at the core of institutions...Cases of sexual abuse were managed with a view to minimizing the risk of public disclosure and consequent damage to the institution and the Congregation. This policy resulted in the protection of the perpetrator. (Y. Murphy 20)

The Executive Summary of The Ferns Report states: "The Ferns Inquiry identified over 100 allegations of child sexual abuse made between 1962 and 2002

against 21 priests operating under the aegis of the Diocese of Ferns” (F. Murphy 1). Of the 21 priests, six died before any allegations of abuse were made against them and three more died subsequent to the allegations. Of note:

Between 1960 and 1980 it would appear that Bishop Herlihy treated child sexual abuse by priests of his diocese exclusively as a moral problem. He penalized the priest in respect of whom the allegation was made by transferring him to a different diocese for a period of time but then returned him to his former position...Equally inappropriate was Bishop Herlihy’s decision to ordain clearly unsuitable men into the priesthood when he knew or ought to have known that they had a propensity to abuse children. (1)

Once again, besides the actual allegations against the perpetrators, there is significant evidence in all three reports of cover-ups on the part of those who were in a position to put a stop to these criminal activities. The crimes were horrific enough, but the cover-up was absurdly unthinkable.

John Littleton, of *Catholic World*, writes that the “Pandora’s Box had been opened...with the arrest of pedophile, Father Brendan Smyth in 1994” (Littleton 1). Littleton continues: “One wonders if the survivors of abuse...had not been so courageous, whether the general public would ever have learned about the extent of the problem in Dublin? What would have happened if [they] had chosen to remain silent? One thing we can say with certainty is that there would have been no rush on the part of the Church to deal with the problem adequately” (2). He writes of the centuries of cover-up with no action taken by the Church to deal with the pedophilia, only a persistence to keep moving the problem, from parish to parish. Playwrights, film makers, and novelists may be considered courageous themselves as some may have put their writing careers on the line, or certainly their family’s relationship within their respective communities in

jeopardy, by standing up to the Catholic Church. Many of the selected writers reviewed may have, more than likely, heard the stories, rumors, and gossip about the Church for many years before the three reports were published.

The purpose of this literature review is to examine the unique characteristics that combine to influence Irish identity which is reflected in Irish theatre. Christopher Murray's "mirror" motif succinctly captures the essence of how drama works to depict the Irish and plays a significant role in their self-evaluation. Also, this literature review reviewed the parameters of the powerful and influential Catholic Church within Irish society, along with the Church's role in conjunction with the government corruption that devastated the Irish economy. Mass immigration has dramatically altered Irish demographics to the point that the Irish must consider redefining their global brand in selling itself to the world. Finally, the three reports outline the horrors of the child abuse crimes which shocked the nation. Together, these characteristics form the foundation to how playwrights choose to represent Catholic priests in contemporary Irish drama.

### CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The evolution of this thesis started in Fall 2011 with Dr. Matthew Spangler's TA220 Seminar in Performance Cultures: Contemporary Irish Theatre and Film. Throughout the course, it was noticeable that the texts and films examined contained many references to priests and the Catholic Church even though Church issues were not part of the intended curriculum. Most of the commentary on the clergy came in the form of comedy, an efficient genre for delivering messages concerning ineffective, foolish, or abusive priests. The trend of representing priests in tragic situations utilizing comedy was also evident in additional material gathered at the American Conference of Irish Studies – West, both in San Jose, CA (2011) and Park City, UT (2012). As examples multiplied, it became evident that a systematic method of organization was needed to effectively handle the wide range of comedy being used to represent the Irish priest archetype.

My research did not reveal any significant prior work on the subject of comedic representation of Irish priests; however, the theory of tragic events as presented in comic form has been explored by Louis Kronenberger in his essay, "Some Prefatory Words on Comedy." He states:

Comedy appeals to the laughter, which is in part at least the malice, in us; for comedy is concerned with human imperfection, with people's failure to measure up either to the world's or to their own conception of excellence. Comedy is criticism, then, because it exposes human beings for what they are in contrast to what they profess to be. (Kronenberger 194)

It is hard to imagine a better example of Kronenberger's "...contrast to what they profess to be" than in the priest as pedophile, unless of course, one considers the Church's protection of the pedophile and its disregard for innocent victims. Thus, Irish writers, by the use of comedy, are able to provide commentary on the Catholic Church's dark secrets: child abuse, the exploitation of the forgotten females, and the corresponding criminal cover-ups. Therefore, when assessing such tragic situations, why not do it from a comic perspective with the power of laughing while crying, pulling emotionally and simultaneously at the hearts and minds of the audiences?

The gathered comic forms from the over two dozen works of art range from higher comedy (satire and irony), to lower comedy (slapstick and farce), to the lowest forms of gallows and dark (black) humor. This thesis will utilize the Folger Shakespeare Library to sort and organize the genres by classification and the genres' relationship with irony and laughter. The Folger website defines the following types of comedies:

- Comedy of Ideas:
  - Characters argue about ideas
  - Characters use wit and clever language to mock and lampoon
  - Characters use satire to laugh at that which is dear—family, friends, religion, politics, marriage, etc.
- Farce:
  - Plot is full of coincidences, mis-timings, misunderstandings, mistaken identities
  - Characters are puppets of fate
  - Loss of identity because of fate or an accident
- Low Comedy:
  - Slapstick
  - Pratfalls, dirty gestures, jokes about bodily functions, sex, and physical deformities
- Theater of the Absurd:
  - Plays that make us uncomfortable, uneasy, unsure of whether there is any order, sense, or meaning in existence

- “Theatrical” rather than realistic, often setting forth obviously impossible situations with obviously unreal characters
- Serious but often comic, especially satiric
- Basic themes include:
  - Human loneliness in a world without God
  - The inability to communicate
  - The dehumanization and impotence of individuals in a bourgeois society
  - The meaninglessness of life (Folger 1)

The above list of comedies will be used to help define the four categories developed in Chapter Four of this thesis to help with the exploration of the representation of priests in Irish drama.

Along with comedy, the use of irony in a variety of ways was quite apparent throughout most of the works reviewed. Irony is a complex literary device, closely related to satire, defined by Katherine Beers in Holt’s *Literature and Language Arts* textbook as having three general types: verbal, situational, and dramatic.

- Verbal Irony – a writer or speaker says one thing but really means something completely different.
- Situational Irony – occurs when there is a contrast between what would seem appropriate and what really happens or when there is a contradiction between what we expect to happen and what really does take place.
- Dramatic Irony – occurs when the audience or the reader knows something important that a character in a play or story does not know. (Beers 1184-85)

In addition to comedy and irony, further research led to the discovery of different types of laughter that can be aligned with the diverse forms of comedy. Mikhail Bakhtin in the Introduction to his book, *Rabelais and His World*, describes two polar-opposite types of laughter from the Medieval and Renaissance periods—the polite snicker and the more grotesque belly laugh. Bakhtin quotes Victor Hugo who proclaims Rabelais as “...the greatest poet of the ‘flesh and belly’” to which Bakhtin describes the “bodily-

functions” humor that is associated with Rabelais (Bakhtin 18). In summation, the snicker is a gentler laugh that would be associated with verbal irony and puns, whereas the gross belly laugh would be related to the sophomoric jinks found in situational irony and the lower comedies of farce and slapstick.

Even though Bakhtin details only two kinds of laughter, several psychology web sites list up to ten types of laughter (i.e. A web article from *Time* magazine, “Your Brain on Laughter” by Maria Szalavitz quotes a study published in *PLOS One* that references seventy different sources on laughter). Sara Abdulla, in her article “A Serious Article About Laughter” adds that, “Human laughter isn’t just a response to jokes. People laugh when they’re nervous, excited, tense, happy, or simply because someone else is laughing” (1). This thesis will add the nervous laugh, found in response to uncomfortable situational and dramatic irony utilizing the lowest forms of comedy, and the cerebral smile or the silent chuckle acknowledging to oneself that “I get it” found in this thesis with the non-comic redemptive priest category.

I have created four categories of priests in order to group comedy genres, irony types, and laugh styles for better analysis of priest representation in contemporary Irish drama. Each category addresses the dominate kind of irony being used, the comedy genres exhibited, and the prevailing laugh style associated with each cluster of comedy/irony. This study used over two dozen works of art (described later in this chapter and labeled as “Influential Plays”) in developing these representations of priests to better analyze the significance and complexity of the dramatic material. The four categories are:

1. The Ineffective Priest – with sub-headings: Name Game, Out Dated, Neighbors, and Suicide
  - Comedic genres: satire, puns, slapstick, self-deprecating, farce, highbrow.
  - Irony: verbal
  - Laugh Type: snicker.
2. The Priest Portrayed as a Comic Fool – with sub-headings: Costumes, Confession, Marriage, and Priesthood.
  - Comedic genres: parodies, slapstick, burlesque, blue, farce, satire, lampooning, ridicule, mockery.
  - Irony: situational.
  - Laugh Type: belly laugh.
3. The Priest as an Abuser – with sub-headings: Pedophiles, Physical/Mental Abuse, and Cover-up.
  - Comedic genres: dark/black/gallows/morbid comedy.
  - Irony: dramatic.
  - Laugh Type: nervous laugh.
4. The Redemptive Priest – with sub-headings: Positive Traits and Forgiveness.
  - Comedic genres: Very little; more stoical in nature.
  - Irony: situational and dramatic.
  - Laugh type: cerebral smile.

As listed above, each category is further divided into sub-headings containing trait components to better develop and comprehend the analysis. The explanation of these trait details are found in Chapter Four and are listed in a cross-reference table at the end of this chapter on page 49.

The four representative tropes chosen to symbolize the levels of atrocities committed by the Catholic Church and fallen priests will enable the reader to better understand how some Irish artists have chosen to comment on the crimes committed, while others have focused on the healing process. The “Influential Works” are a combination of plays, films, and literature dating back to the beginning of the Twentieth

Century that were predominately studied and discussed in the aforementioned seminar and conferences. These works served as the inspiration for this thesis and are used to help establish the foundation and define the four analysis categories.

The next step in the process was to select three contemporary Irish plays to analyze in juxtaposition to the four categories. Three plays will serve as the main sources of this study: *Christ Deliver Us!* (2010) by Thomas Kilroy, *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990) by Brien Friel, and *The Lepers of Baile Baiste* (2002) by Ronan Noone. These three plays were chosen for a variety of reasons including, the priests portrayed in each of these plays fall in at least three, if not all four, of the categories; each play was cross-referenced in the influential works and/or discussed at length at the two conferences, providing a significant time lapse between them yet still fall in the time period being studied in this thesis; and finally, a contrast between Friel and Kilroy's plays being performed at the Abby, in comparison with Noone, an Irishman writing in America.

#### A Short Synopsis of the Analytical Plays

It would be very easy to surmise that the source of Thomas Kilroy's *Christ Deliver Us!* must come directly from the Ryan and Murphy reports. The setting for the play is "A provincial Irish city with its own Diocesan College (Secondary School) and its own Industrial School for 'difficult' boys" with the time being "Late 1940s / early 1950s" (Kilroy 7). The large cast includes five priests, two Christian Brothers, and several groups of teenagers and industrial school boys. The play, which covers all four categories being studied, pits the wants and needs of the children against the corrupted, cruel, and conniving clergy. Children are physically and psychologically abused by the

adults in the play, while the symbolism of the stuttering Father Seamus, the voice of reason, stands out as added frustration for the audience trying to make sense of the irrational behavior of those in authority. Kilroy's play became part of this study because of the speech given by Patrick Lonergan at the American Conference of Irish Studies-West at San Jose State University (Fall 2011).

Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa* is also represented in all four categories even though it has only one priest that appears on stage. Since the play was referenced by all three of the theorists that contribute to the analytical frame of this thesis —Greene, Lonergan, and Murray—it becomes an obvious choice to be part of this thesis. Michael, the play's narrator, tells his memories from August 1936 when he was seven years of age living with his mother, four aunts, his Uncle Jack, and an extended visit from his father Gerry. Friel presents a world where the household begins to fail both economically and spiritually within De Valera's Ireland of the 1930s. Both pagan rituals of the festival of Lughnasa and ex-priest Jack's African customs are juxtaposed with the strong Catholic beliefs of Ireland in general and family matriarch Kate in particular.

*The Lepers of Baile Baiste* by Ronan Noone is the third major play to serve as source material in this analysis. The play centers on four schoolmates and their decade-long silence of a dark secret of clerical sexual abuse against them while in parochial school. Accusations dominate a night of drinking at the local tavern as the police sergeant and priest come to terms with the continued cover-up that results in the suicide of an unseen fifth friend.

### A Short Synopsis of the Influential Plays

There are two dozen plays, films, and short stories that were influential in the formation of each category and they will be used sparingly as an introduction to establish traits and characteristics. The chart following this chapter lists the analytical plays being examined and the influential works of art utilized for category clarification, cross-referencing with the characteristics of each category. A short synopsis of each of the influential plays is list below:

- *By the Bog of Cats* (1998) by Marina Carr. The setting is near an Irish bog where Hester Swane lives with her daughter Josie Kilbride in a caravan. Somewhat in the style of *Medea*, Hester feels forced to commit filicide to keep her ex-husband Carthage Kilbride and his new bride, Caroline Cassidy, from victimizing Josie. Although Father Willow plays a small part, the eighty year old priest symbolizes how out-of-touch the Church has become in Irish society.
- *Doubt, a parable* (2004) by John Patrick Shanley. One priest, two nuns, and a mother completes the cast of this drama set in a Catholic Church and school in the Bronx, New York, in 1964. The older nun is principal of the school and confronts Father Brendan Flynn when her suspensions prove true about Flynn being a pedophile. He gets transferred with a promotion as the bishop takes the side of Flynn over the principal—a solid example of cover-up.
- *Eclipsed* (1992) by Patricia Burke Brogan. A play set in 1992 with flashbacks about a convent laundry in 1963 at St. Paul's Home for Penitent Women in

Killmacha, Ireland. The unwed Irish mothers were treated like slaves by the nuns running the Church-run laundries. The evil nuns take the place of the priest in this play and symbolize the wayward Church.

- *The Field* (1987) by John B. Keane. The love of land dominates the theme of this play with Bull McCabe willing to commit murder and pit an entire community against priest, bishop, and Church to secure what he believes belongs to him. The Church's authority comes into question and its ability to hold the kingdom of heaven over the heads of the congregation.
- *Frank Pig Says Hello* (1992) by Patrick McCabe. This stage adaptation of McCabe's novel and film, *The Butcher Boy*, drops the sub-plot of child abuse to accommodate the layers of psychosis developed in protagonist Francie where he proudly defends his family's low community status against society's upper hierarchy and fights for friendship.
- *Freefall* (2009) by Michael West. A man's life flashes in front of him in random order as he tries to make sense of the web of events that put him in the hospital and made him the man he is today. The priest role is symbolic of old age and hiding behind a masquerade.
- *Hurl* (2003) by Charlie O'Neil. The protagonist priest is forced to leave the priesthood, but this act becomes beneficial for him and community as he now can truly help immigrants prosper in Dublin by managing their hurling team.
- *Is the Priest at Home* (1954) by Joseph Tomelty. Father Malan, a good and fair priest, uses a combination of practicality, philosophy, and steadiness to cope with

the well intentional but gossipy residents of small town Marifield, Northern Ireland. In each adventure, Malan is able to plot a moral course despite the obstacles and challenges employed by the locals to test his fortitude and fiber.

- *James X* (2003) by Gerard Mannix Flynn. This one-man show explores the mental reservations of a child abuse victim preparing to testify against his tormentor and the Church that ignored the crime. James contemplates telling the fabricated story he created to survive in opposition to the truth he must recall in order to recover.
- *The Leenane Trilogy* (1997) by Martin McDonagh. The three plays featuring Father Welsh are: *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *A Skull in Connemara*, and *The Lonesome West*. The influential character of Welsh figures predominately in establishing the Name Game, Suicide, Confession, and Priesthood characteristics of the first and second categories from the analysis chapter of this thesis. Although the character of Welsh only appears in the final play, his name and actions are battered around significantly to establish his ineffectiveness and buffoonery.
- *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907) by John M. Synge. A stranger, who claims to have killed his father, comes into the mundane lives of a group of tavern patrons; however, he is not chastised for his dastardly deed, but rather is elevated to hero status for his ability to tell a great story. This classic is included in this study because it demonstrates the power of the priest even though his presence on stage is not required. As Shawnee is rendered powerless and cannot protect his

fiancé Pegeen, so to is the Church and in turn is lampooned as an ineffective leader of the tavern people.

- *Spreading the News* (1904) by Lady Gregory. A clever story demonstrating the power of gossip within Irish society.
- *Stones in His Pockets* (2000) by Marie Jones. Brother Gerard is ineffective in helping suicide victim Sean in a play presenting American influence upon Irish society.
- *The Wake* (1998) by Tom Murphy. Father Billy represents the corrupt Catholic Church of old Ireland and the futility of the new Church. Finbar, the local drunk and friend of protagonist Vera, was physically abused as an industrial student by the Christian Brothers, but ends up drinking and singing like old chums with Father Billy.
- *The Weir* (1999) by Conor McPherson. An evening of drinking and telling ghost stories takes a dramatic turn as Jim relates the “true” tale of a priest allowing a pedophile to be buried next to his victim.
- Hollywood movies from the ‘30s, ‘40s, and ‘50s. Six films: *Angels with Dirty Faces*, *The Bells of St. Mary’s*, *Boy’s Town*, *Going My Way*, *On the Waterfront*, and *The Quiet Man* all cited in this paper utilize the stereotype of the Irish priest as being good, trustworthy, and nothing but pious is quite a contradiction to the priest portrayed in most contemporary Irish theatre.

- *The Butcher Boy*, novel (1992) by Patrick McCabe and film (1997) directed by Neil Jordan. This dark comedy explores the mental illness of protagonist Francie Brady and possible sources including being physically abused by Father Sullivan.
- *Deliver Us From Evil* (2006), documentary directed by Amy Berg. In this Academy Award nominated documentary, Berg exposes Irish-born Father Oliver O'Grady and his infamous sexual abuse crimes in the Central Valley of California with interviews from O'Grady, the victims, and those responsible for the cover-up.
- *Father Ted* (1995), BBC television comedy directed by Declan Lowney. Father Ted Crilly is constantly providing stability to both the parish house and the fictitious Craggy Island residents. He shares the parish house with the passionately tea-pouring Mrs. Doyle and two dysfunctional priests: the dimwit Father Dougal McGuire and the swearing drunkard Father Jack Hackett.
- *The Magdalene Sisters* (1997), film directed by Peter Mullin. The story of three young Irish women forced into a dehumanizing existence who find their only source of compassion from within their relationships with one another. The clergy is portrayed as the evil antagonist.
- "Eveline" (1914) and "Counterparts" (1914), two short stories from *The Dubliners* by James Joyce. Both stories are influential with establishing characteristics of early commentary and the questioning of the Catholic Church's authority in Irish society.

The following table presents the selected plays, films, and literature listed directly above and shows how each work contains the different characteristic traits of the four categories explained in the beginning of this chapter.

Table 1: Analytical Plays, Influential Plays, Films, and Literature by category.

Priest Categories:		1) Ineffective				2) Comic Fool				3) Abuser			4) Redemptive Priest
Play / Author Film / Director Literature / Author	Year	Name Game	Out Dated	Neighbors	Suicide	Costumes	Confession	Marriage	Priesthood	Pedophiles	Physical Abuse	Cover-up	
<b>Analytical Plays</b>													
<i>Christ Deliver Us!</i> / Kilroy	2010			X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X
<i>Dancing at Lughnasa</i> / Friel	1990	X	X	X		X		X	X	X		X	X
<i>Lepers of Baile Baiste</i> / Noone	2002	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
<b>Influential Plays</b>													
<i>By the Bog of Cats</i> / Carr	1998	X	X					X					
<i>Doubt, a parable</i> / Shanley	2004								X	X	X	X	
<i>Eclipsed</i> / Brogen	1992	X	X	X		X		X	X				
<i>The Field</i> / Keane	1987						X	X	X				
<i>Frank Pig Says Hello</i> / McCabe	1992					X			X				
<i>Freefall</i> / West	2009		X			X							
<i>Hurl</i> / O'Neill	2003								X				X
<i>Is the Priest at Home</i> /Tomelty	1954												X
<i>James X</i> / Flynn	2003								X	X	X	X	
<i>Leenane Trilogy</i> / McDonagh	1997	X			X		X		X				
<i>The Playboy...World</i> /Synge	1907					X	X						
<i>Spreading the News</i> / Gregory	1904			X									
<i>Stones in His Pockets</i> / Jones	2000			X	X								
<i>The Wake</i> / Murphy	1998			X				X	X	X	X		X
<i>The Weir</i> / McPherson	1999									X			
<b>Influential Films and TV</b>													
<i>Angels with Dirty Faces</i> /Curtiz	1938												X
<i>The Bells of St Mary's</i> /McCarey	1945												X
<i>Boy's Town</i> / Taurog	1938												X
<i>The Butcher Boy</i> / Jordan	1997			X		X			X	X			
<i>Deliver Us From Evil</i> / Berg	2006								X	X	X	X	
<i>Father Ted</i> (TV) / Lowney	1995	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X
<i>Going My Way</i> / McCarey	1945												X
<i>The Magdalene Sisters</i> /Mullan	2002			X		X			X		X		
<i>On the Waterfront</i> / Kazan	1954												X
<i>The Quiet Man</i> / Ford	1952	X		X			X						X
<b>Influential Literature</b>													
<i>The Butcher Boy</i> / McCabe	1992			X	X			X	X				
<i>Eveline</i> / Joyce	1910	X											
<i>Counterparts</i> / Joyce	1910					X					X		

## CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS

The analysis chapter of this thesis will be divided into four parts: The Ineffective Priest, The Priest Portrayed as a Comic Fool, The Abusive Priest, and The Redemptive Priest. The “influential plays” will be reviewed in the beginning of each category to establish the characteristics used in defining the criteria for analysis.

### The Ineffective Priest

The Ineffective Priest is sub-divided into four components: Name Games, Old Dated, Neighbors, and Suicide. Verbal irony dominates the Name Games element as there is a prevalent play on words throughout Irish drama as a means of poking fun at the Church while at the same time making a serious comment on how ineffective the priest and Church have become in Irish society. In addition, this ineffectiveness can be underscored by the priest being portrayed as old and insular, not only out of touch with his congregation in particular, but certainly with Irish society in general. A great preponderance of the Irish church going population is characterized as Nosy Neighbors who gossip and spread rumors concerning other parishioners standing within the local Church. This characterization is supported by the clueless parish priest and distant Church out of touch with its congregants. Both tropes play a noteworthy role in defining the ineffective priest. The dominate laugh type is the snicker, while comedic genres include: satire, puns, slapstick, self-deprecating, high-bow, and farce.

An example of “Name Games” irony can be found in James Joyce’s short story “Eveline” (1914), which, while not from a contemporary Irish play, is still worth mentioning here. In the story, the title character considers leaving her belongings behind as she contemplates marriage and moving far away. One of the items is the portrait of a priest who had been a high school friend of her fathers. She thinks, “And yet during all those years she had never found out the name of the priest whose yellowing photograph hung on the wall...” (Joyce 27). The imagery and message are mixed and can be interpreted in two ways: first, that the general public’s regard for the Church has lapsed to the point that it is no longer important to take the time to learn the names of priests. The portrait has been on the wall her entire life, and yet she was never curious enough to learn his name. The clear message is that priests are nameless and remote individuals who have little relevance in the daily lives of the average Irish Catholic. A second interpretation could be how important religion is to the lives of the Irish Catholic in that they would have a photo of a nameless priest hanging on their walls. This second scenario supports the fourth category of the redemptive priest where the Irish Catholic gives respect to their religion by having religious artifacts to acknowledge their belief in God.

The next “Name Game” example comes from Martin McDonagh’s “Leenane Trilogy.” Not knowing the proper pronunciation of the parish priest’s name signifies how unimportant the Church has become in the daily lives of the population. This verbal irony is demonstrated with the saying “Walsh” when referring to Father Welsh a total of twenty-one times in the trilogy, beginning with the second scene of *The Beauty Queen of*

*Leenane* (1996) and throughout *The Skull of Connemara* (1997). The mispronunciation of Welsh's name finally comes to a head in *The Lonesome West* (1997), when Father Welsh can stand it no longer and, in utter frustration, puts his hand in a bowl of molten plastic and runs out the front door yelling, "Me name's *Welch!!!*" (McDonagh 208). The gag continues until the final line of the trilogy when clueless Valene, an unrepentant parishioner, states, "Father Welsh Walsh Welsh" (259). This extreme example communicates to the audience that Welsh's suicide was pointless and underscores how unimportant the Church has become in the daily lives of the parishioners.

In Marina Carr's play *By the Bog of Cats* (1998), the confusion over names is an opposite situation whereby it is the priest this time who cannot remember the congregation's names. Father Willow confuses the names of bride to be Caroline with outcast bride Hester:

Fr Willow: Thank you, Hester, thank you.  
 Carthage: You mean, Caroline, Father Willow, this is Caroline.  
 Fr Willow: Whatever.

Father Willow's confusion becomes bewilderment; and, much like the Welsh/Walsh example above, this confusion of names makes the audience laugh but it also allows them to question whether or not the Church really knows its congregation and what they want in life.

Another example of the Name Game comes from the movie *The Quiet Man*, where Sean Thornton, the American protagonist played by John Wayne, goes to Vicar Playfair for advice, instead of his Catholic priest, Father Lonergan. The "play fair" versus "loner" play on words regarding their last names, along with the action, hint at

how the writer may feel about the Catholic Church. The writer has established that “fair play” resides with the Protestant camp while the parish priest, who spends much of his time “alone” fishing, is of no help to his congregation when they seek the help of the clergy.

Being old and out of touch with reality is the second characteristic of the Ineffective Priest. The cantankerous Father Willow in *By the Bog of Cats* represents an old idea that has outlived its use. The priest is characterized as being senile which undermines the current Church’s influence on Irish society. Hester, the protagonist, laments about the past, her mother, how her mother was treated, and questions with disbelief, “Christian compassion! That what it’s called these days!” (369). Once again, Father Willow represents the Church of the past and too old to communicate with his congregation.

Brother Lawrence in Michael West’s *Freefall* uses a cane, a symbol that might suggest that the Church is old and possibly no longer relevant in the protagonist’s life. The cane could also symbolize that the Church needs support and that it can no longer stand on its own two legs. *Freefall* uses minimal props and set pieces, and thus the cane becomes sub-textually significant with, one can safely assume, meaningful implications.

“What will the neighbors think?” is a recurring theme found more often than one might expect in Irish drama. Although not critiquing the Church, Lady Gregory’s *Spreading the News* (1904) does illustrate the power of gossip and rumors, an Irish phenomenon that when coupled with Church control seems to be a bit unusual in the

twentieth century. Rumors fly fast and soon enough a man who simply borrowed a hayfork is accused of murder when no murder has been committed.

The “neighbors” motif continues in Patricia Burke Brogan’s *Eclipsed* (1992) whereby the Penitent Women (Unmarried mothers) have the following conversation:

Nellie-Nora: I often think about Our Lady the time she got pregnant! Did the neighbours point at her too? (Women smile). She must have had a terrible time, when she began to show!

Mandy: But she had Saint Joseph! Didn’t he stay with her?

Nellie-Nora: I wonder did the neighbours whisper and sneer?

Brigit: Gossiping neighbours going home from Mass like holy-water hens! Bloody hypocrites! (Burke Brogan 69)

In this short exchange between two of the unmarried women the “neighbors” motif is explored on a far greater level. The Virgin Mary’s pregnancy is brought into question, which in turn may lead an audience to question the “Immaculate Conception.” Finally, it is presented that the gossiping neighbors are nothing but hypocrites.

In the opening scene of Tom Murphy’s play *The Wake*, Mrs. Conneeley twice tells the protagonist, Vera, that “I’d be ashamed if people were to think us bad neighbours” (Murphy 6, 9). This superficial line underscores a very real concern in Irish society and, as discussed by Inglis above, infers gossip and rumors always leads back to the Church and its cliques. Later in the play, Mary Jane, consumed by greed and embarrassment tells Father Billy and her brother Tom how her sister and drunken friends paraded for two and half days naked and partying without a care for the people out in the streets watching them. The ensuing gossip, along with its economic ramifications, consumes her to such an extent that she is oblivious to the health of her sister.

The nosy “Neighbors” motif is a cancerous characteristic of the ineffective priest as he cannot control his congregation from the self-destructiveness of gossip. Of course, on the other hand, the ineffective priest encourages feedback from the laity of the Church, as reported by Inglis in Chapter Two, to ensure he maintains control of his flock.

Suicide is a form of murder that the Catholic Church views as a mortal sin—one that will send the unfortunate to eternal Hell. Because suicides leave little time to confess, most victims end up eternally damned. The topic of suicide comes up in *The Lonesome West* with Father Welsh offering this idiotic explanation, “It’s 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 into heaven. But if it’s yourself you go murdering, no. Straight to hell” (202). In a society where, considering the “Troubles” starting in 1969, a fair amount of the population could possibly know someone who has committed a murder or has been murdered, Father Welsh’s comments may be cause for concern. In essence, he is saying, “Murder who you want and as many as you want, say you’re sorry, and we’ll meet in heaven.” It is funny hearing a priest say these words but not so funny when the truth sets in. *The Lonesome West* has two suicides: Tom Hanlon, a police detective and Father Welsh, the local priest. Welsh’s suicide is the more tragic of the two as he is the more sympathetic character and Hanlon, a character from the trilogy’s previous play, *A Skull in Connemara*, does not appear on stage in this final play of the trilogy.

Another play that features suicide as part of its plot is Marie Jones’ *Stones in His Pockets*, whereby young Sean commits suicide because of an insult. Brother Gerard, Sean’s teacher, is unable to help Sean, lamenting that an, “...imagination can be a

damned curse in this country” (Jones 66). In this example, Jones may be commenting that the flip side of the mirror, the dream, may not be healthy for Irish identity.

Thomas Kilroy’s *Christ Deliver Us!* employs verbal irony as a tool to symbolically represent the voice of reason misunderstood. Father Seamus is a good soul who speaks the truth. Unfortunately, he stutters and is somewhat hard to understand; the truth he speaks therefore comes out in an ill-fashioned manner. The audience is given an aural sense of the issue at hand, namely, that none of the priests are listening to the only member of their group making sense.

As mentioned above, there is a preponderance of Irish plays addressing the theme of “What will the neighbors think?” As reported by Inglis, this theme may be rooted in a combination of Church morality doctrine, the Church’s need for control, and the relatively small country of Ireland. If Inglis is correct, then the representation of the priest will support this theory. In *Christ Deliver Us!* there are two examples that illustrate this point, both seem harmless at first, but later end in rather tragic fashion. Mrs. Butler decides to send her pregnant, out-of-wedlock, daughter Winnie to a convent in Waterford, because as Winnie tells a friend, “She is always thinking of the neighbours. What’ll the neighbours think?, says she” (Kilroy 48). Michael, Winnie’s paramour, is being sent to St. Joseph’s Industrial School by his father who states, “. . . nothing will come out into the open. No scandal for anyone. No scandal waiting to jump out and get you when you make your moves” (54). Both parents react to perceived disgrace and humiliation, rather than listening to their children and doing what is best for them.

Winnie ends up dead on a failed self-abortion and Michael runs away to avoid the abuse by the Christian Brothers who run the school.

Mossy Lannigan, of *Christ Deliver Us!*, commits suicide by shooting himself in the chest to free himself of the daily stress of dad, Church, and girlfriends. Mossy's friends are freaked at the funeral because of where he is being buried. Carey: "Why're they buryin' him over there in the corner?" To which Tess replies, "He's been buried with the unbaptised babies, God help him!" (Kilroy 49). The message from Kilroy is the priest (Church) decides who goes to heaven or hell and suicide to Catholics means eternal hell, regardless of the reason for doing so.

Michael, the narrator of Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*, opens the play with a monologue taking the audience back to 1936 when he was just seven years of age. There were two big events during that summer which sparked several significant changes in the family that altered their lives forever. Both events tie into the Name Game category and influenced the proceedings of the play. The first is the naming of the wireless set (radio). Aunt Maggie wanted to "call it Lugh after the old Celtic God of the Harvest. Because in the old days August the First was *La Lughnasa*, the feast day of the pagan god, Lugh" (Friel 1). His Aunt Kate, however, the staunch Catholic of the family, said, "it would be sinful to christen an inanimate object with any kind of name, not to talk of a pagan god" (1). With that, the wireless was called Marconi, the brand name written on the set. Friel juxtaposes the Christian world with the pagan world in the simple and seemingly innocent gesture of naming a radio. The second event Michael refers to is the homecoming of his Uncle Jack after twenty-five years of missionary service as a Catholic

priest in Africa. His sisters begin the play by calling him Father Jack but, once his past becomes clear, the formality of addressing their brother as Father is dropped altogether and he becomes just Jack.

The next characteristic of the ineffective priest, the Church being out dated, is presented with, the much too old for his age, Jack and his senile actions. Jack is old and out of touch with the religious needs of his sisters and the community as well. He is no longer anywhere near the traditional priest he was as Africa has changed him and, even if he wanted to, he is too old to change back to an acceptable version of what the town of Ballybeg, County Donegal would deem appropriate.

Friel also explores the nosy “Neighbors” motif. Michael mentions how proud the town and entire county was of his Uncle Jack and “...every so often when a story would appear in the *Donegal Enquirer* about ‘our own leper priest’, as they called him...it was only natural that our family would enjoy a small share of that fame” (9). This fame came in spite of the shame Michael’s birth put upon the family, for this part of Ireland is no different than any other and, what your neighbors think, Inglis’ theory, is an important aspect of the Irish identity. Twice during the play, Kate the matriarch, worries too much about the neighbors and puts her siblings’ health at risk. The first scenario involves a response to the wild stories of pagan ceremony described by Jack. It frightens Kate and Maggie to such a degree that Kate begs, “This must be kept in the family, Maggie! Not a word of this must go outside these walls – d’you hear? – not a syllable!” (49). The second situation occurs when her mentally challenged sister Rose goes missing. As the four remaining sisters decide on a search plan, Maggie volunteers to go into town to tell

the police, to which Kate responds, “You’re going to no police, Maggie. If she’s mixed up with that Bradley creature, I’m not going to have it broadcast all over” (56). Maggie defies her older sister, clearly putting the health and well-being of her missing sister before townsfolk gossip. Sadly, it is too late for Kate; she shows her true identity by putting gossip and rumors above the safety of her family. Rose returns and explains she was on a date with a man Kate deems as questionable. In response, Kate laments, “What has happened to this house? Mother of God, will we ever be able to lift our heads ever again...?” (59). Michael continues his monologue and noting that the neighbors finally quit asking about Jack performing Mass and Jack no longer appeared in the *Donegal Enquirer*.

The Name Game motif is found extensively throughout Ronan Noone’s *The Lepers of Baile Baiste*. The four young men of the play have a dark secret rooted from their school days when they lost their innocence to a Christian Brother. The unspoken secret is hidden behind a swift moving word game of aphorisms, clichés, and idioms, which slowly leads the audience to an understanding of the play’s conflicts and climax.

*The Lepers of Baile Baiste*, set present time, winter, outside of Galway in the fictional title town, takes place in a local tavern and Catholic Church. The first major conflict of the play begins with the arrival of Daithi O’Neil on a quest to find Brother Angelus, the pedophile responsible for all his pain and suffering. Daithi baits the parish priest by stealing Church statues and confronting him both in the privacy of the confessional and publicly at the tavern. The audience discovers many levels to the Name Game motif as the priest consistently refers to Daithi by his surname of O’Neil and in just

as many instances the repetitive reply comes, “My Christian name is Daithi. Use it Fadder” (Noone 22). The other boys also have nicknames covering their Christian names until the end of the play when it is discovered that the two victims that suffered most at the hands of Brother Angelus were Simon and Peter. The biblical allusion cannot be missed as the audience discovers that Simon and Peter are not homosexual lovers, as suggested by the gossip of the group, but are two victims who were raped in the bathroom by Brother Angelus and have found support in each other. All of the boys were fondled and suffer a combination of alcoholism, impotence, and an inability to sustain a relationship, doomed to be bachelors for life. Daithi, which means “swiftness” in Irish Gaelic, was verbally quick enough to avoid the “toilet” where the rapes occurred, but Peter was the slow and Simon the slowest making them vulnerable to Brother Angelus’ severe abuse.

Simon, the schoolmate who does not appear on stage, the son of the local police sergeant, commits suicide as the pain becomes too much to bear. His father realizes the irony of the situation as it was the police who helped the Church hide Brother Angelus by moving him and keeping his whereabouts secret. The layers of irony are thick as those for whom the protection of children should be paramount—the parish priest, the Church, the police, and the parent—all fail Simon. Simon signs his suicide note with a postscript to Peter, “A nod is as good as a wink to a blind horse. I wish I knew that when I needed it” (76). Peter contemplates cutting the righteous Daithi open with a hook-knife, but dismisses the thought when he realizes that the impotent Daithi has suffered too, in his own painful way. Thus, Brother Angelus’s “phrase” game ends with the final line of the

play, wherein Peter laments, “you might as well be hung for a sheep as hung for a lamb” (80). As the tavern returns to normalcy, the ineffective priest, along with the revealed truth of Brother Angelus, saves no one.

### The Priest Portrayed as a Comic Fool

Part Two of the examination of the priest portrayed in contemporary Irish drama finds an escalating critique of the Catholic priest, the seven sacred Sacraments, and the Ten Commandments. The priests and Church doctrines are attacked through the comedic genres of satire, parodies, slapstick, burlesque, mockery, lampooning, farce, and ridicule. The critique is no longer a side show of verbal irony and relatively harmless puns; but rather, a severe lambasting that cannot be missed by the audience. The dominant laugh type is the belly laugh, while the prevailing irony is situational. The components of this category consist of costume, confession, marriage, and priesthood.

The lampooning of the priest and making him into a clown begins with the stripping away of the holy garments to show the true man, what is hidden beneath the cloth, or the costume so to speak. When the masquerade is stripped away we find the priest a common man that is a sinner.

Father Willow, from Carr’s *By the Bog of Cats*, comes to a wedding he is to officiate dressed with his pajamas sticking out from under his holy garments. The message is clear; the Church does not even look the part anymore. Or, it may be a symbolic image that the Church is asleep and living in some sort of dream world.

In West’s *Freefall*, the characters are shared by the five actors on stage, with some of the actors playing several roles, including actor G playing both the Fungal Man

and Brother Lawrence. Even though most of the costume changes occur in front of the audience, only one is actually mentioned to the audience as the protagonist has actor G change from the Fungal Man to Brother Lawrence. Actor A helps G by putting the soutane on over the fungal costume leaving the audience to wonder little about what is under a priest's holy garments. The reciprocal is that if we strip away his clothes, we are left with a Fungal Man. The image is of a priest that can exterminate fungus but certainly not one to leave in charge of your soul.

The priest often becomes a common man when stripped of his holy robes as seen in the film *The Magdalene Sisters* (2002). Even though the Catholic Church is attacked in a most serious fashion for the evil treatment of innocent young women in the movie *The Magdalene Sisters*, the comic relief scene of the film deals with a priest stripping off his holy garments (as a result of a planned attack of poison ivy). One of the protagonists, Margaret, places poison ivy in the dryer with Father Fitzroy's holy garments as a prank. She does this because Father Fitzroy has raped Crispina, he has sexually assaulted many of the women in the Magdalene Home and because the poison ivy is her way of getting back at him. The stripping of the holy garments along with Crispina's chanting, "You're not a man of God!" over and over again symbolizes that the priest, and by extension the Church, once stripped of its façade, is in truth not representing God. Stripped naked, Father Fitzroy, can no longer hide behind the holy garments of the Church and the truth of the Magdalene asylums can be exposed for what they are.

Clerical costumes are symbolic in Burke Brogan's *Eclipsed* as well. The climax of the play has Brigit shouting and ripping off Sister Virginia's veil once again stripping away the costume to reveal the true person hiding underneath.

Brigit: You don't know anything! Never had a lover! Never had a baby! So you're white and shining, Sister! Not the same as us, are you? Whose side are you on anyways? Why aren't our lover-boys locked up too? One law for them and another for us! Scab! Spy! I'll daub it on the walls of Hell! (Brigit scribbles "Scab" on the wall with lipstick, as she struggles with Sister Virginia. She drags off Sister Virginia's veil and shouts). (Burke Brogan 74)

In this climactic scene, Brigit reveals the true Church hiding in the "wolf's" costume. Although this scene does not involve a priest, the nun is representative of the clergy and the Church, the true villain, in allowing the child abuse crimes to fester.

The sacrament of confession has always been an area of complaint for many both inside and outside the Church and lends itself to a great deal of criticism. One of the difficult elements of being Catholic is the nuisance of venial sins or minor infractions, as opposed to mortal sins (Donovan 1). In the texts considered, the Catholic Church is represented as an entity that demands high moral standards for their Irish membership to live their lives—one that concludes it is a sin to even think about sinning. These "impure thoughts," in the minds of the characters in these plays, could also be interpreted as giving the neighbors and others a reason to think a sin may have been committed, great fodder for gossip and rumors.

In *By the Bog of Cats*, Father Willow tells Hester that when in confession the town folk, "...never listen to me, sure they even lie in the Confession box. Ya know what I do? I wear ear-plugs" (381). This statement underscores how the parish does not

listen to the congregation and how out of touch the Church is with modern society in the play.

A different scenario on confession comes from Ford's *The Quiet Man* when Father Lonergan lies to trick Danaher in letting his sister date Sean Thornton. Michaleen Oge Flynn, the stereotyped Irish drunk of the film, gives Father Lonergan three "Our Fathers" and three "Hail Marys" as penance for sinning. The irony is two-fold, as the audience would laugh at both the silliness of penance and of turning the tables on the priest. To go to confession and make up "impure thoughts" of little white lies to confess so the soul can be cleansed is a bit of nonsense only a hardcore Catholic would condone.

Confession becomes a more serious subject in the James Joyce short-story "Counterparts" (1914). Although not a contemporary drama, it does effectively influence the confession element of this category. In the story, the young son pleads with his father to stop beating him saying, "O, pa! Don't bear me, pa! And I'll ... I'll say a *Hail Mary* for you. ...I'll say a *Hail Mary* for you, pa, if you don't bear me. ...I'll say a *Hail Mary*. ..." (Joyce 82). This moment in the story suggests how confession, penance, punishment, and drunkenness are all perversely related and, as a result, the willing confessor is likely less guilty than the person handing out the punishment.

From John B. Keane's *The Field* (1987), the most dramatic critique on confession occurs when Bull McCabe murders William Dee. As he looks down to his victim, the stage directions read that, "He then suddenly kneels and takes William's head in his lap and whispers an act of contrition" (Keane 60). An act of contrition is the prayer said to the priest at the end of confession. As the Church and police become more frustrated in

finding someone who witnessed the murder the Bishop talks of, "...the silence of the lie..." and that, "through your silence, you share his guilt" (63). So what does the Bishop have to barter with? He threatens to take away Mass by saying, "...there will be a silence more terrible than the first. The Church bell will be silent: the mass bell will not be heard; the voice of the confessional will be stilled and in your last moment will be the most dreadful silence of all, for you will go to face your Maker without the last sacrament on your lips..." (64). The irony here is that no one will come forward underscoring that the Church has become powerless in getting the congregation to tell the truth during confession.

In McDonagh's trilogy of plays the characters refer to "impure thoughts" as a sin. Mary asks Mick in, *The Skull of Connemara*, what he confesses about, impure thoughts instead of, she implies, the murder of his wife (McDonagh 91). In *The Lonesome West*, Father Welsh laments that he has, "Two murderers I have on the books, I can't get either of the beggars to confess it. About horse betting and impure thoughts is all them bastards ever confess" (177). Welsh's comments negatively reflect on both confession and priesthood.

There are also examples of satire with the Sacrament of Marriage. In the play, *By the Bog of Cats*, there are four females dressed as brides for a wedding. In addition, the priest performs the ceremony while fully aware that the groom is already married. Finally, Father Willows speaks of his own chance at marriage where he lost his girl over a goose egg (Carr 379). Carr utilizes the character of Father Willow, although with minute events, to satirize the role of priest and Church with marriage.

*The Field* depicts the marriage of Bull McCabe and his wife as one in which they have not spoken to each other for eighteen years. In addition, Maimie Flanagan obsesses over her looks for the sake of younger men in town and openly complains of her marriage to Mick. Keane lampoons the sacrament of marriage as both of these unions are a farce, whereby love is openly presented as an unnecessary element of marriage.

Shawn Keogh from, *The Playboy of the Western World*, succumbs to the Church's prohibition of spending the night with his fiancé, Pegeen, even though her father has given him permission to stay and protect her while she is alone. Shawn worries about what Father Reilly will say, even though Reilly never physically enters into the play. Reilly is mentioned on fifteen different occasions, certainly a comment by Synge on the Church's dominant presence even when the priest is not. The imagery of Shawn being controlled by Father Reilly, the Holy Father and the Cardinals of the Rome illustrates the power the Church has over the devout Irish; and, maybe more importantly, how many others (i.e., Pegeen, Michael James, Philly Cullen, and Jimmy Farrell) are not taken in by old world ideas that do not make sense. Synge's jabs against the Church are subtle, yet they make their point as the audience is left to consider the irony of a father ultimately leaving his daughter to the protection of a confessed killer rather than her fiancé, a harmless man who may someday have sex with her, if she ever decides to marry him.

The lampooning of the Sacrament of Priesthood continues with a number of examples of situational irony in which the priest is viewed as anything but priest-like. For example, in Martin McDonagh's *The Lonesome West*, Father Welsh and Girleen, a pretty seventeen year-old in love with Welsh, fail to connect because of the Church

prohibition against a priest falling in love with a female. Metaphorically, the much older Welsh represents how the old-ideas of the Church are juxtaposed against the youth of Ireland trying to fall in love, but youth cannot properly communicate with the Church as it is forbidden love. And yet, the audience is rooting for the romance to blossom as Welsh would make a better lover than a priest.

A second comment on priesthood from *The Lonesome West* is that Father Welsh is a drunk (192). He even goes so far as to quote the Bible in order to get a drink, “Thou shall share and share alike the Bible says. Or somewhere it says...” (202). Welsh questions his own qualifications, “I’m a terrible priest. So I am. I can never be defending God when people go saying things agin him, and, sure, isn’t that the main qualification for being a priest?” Coleman answers, “Ah there be a lot worse priests than you” (177). Father Welsh finds himself in many ironic scenarios where he is either not acting like a priest or his congregation is not treating him with the respect one normally would expect to see. Throughout *The Lonesome West* he is trying to mooch a drink off the brothers or trying to break up their fighting and he succeeds at neither.

The stripping of garments becomes much more dramatic in *Christ Deliver Us!* as Father Seamus, the voice of reason, becomes frantic and throws a tirade when the other priests decide to punish a boy over nasty pictures, which, in truth, are works of art. As Seamus throws off his soutane and clerical collar, he yells, “Hypo-hypo-hypo-hypocrites! The lot of us! Whi-whi-whi-whited sepulchers! That’s – what-we-are!” He goes on, “Hi-hi-hi-hiding under the black! Hi-hi-hiding our trans-transgressions, seeeeecret sins! Off with it! Off with it! The Truth! The truth will out!” (Kilroy 39). The audience

receives the message very clearly, and yet not so the other priests, who are uncomfortably embarrassed. But they are still able to look away and agree with Father Jack who says, “What was he talking about?” (40). Kilroy demonstrates how a flock of priests will ignore the voice of reason, and like a flock of sheep, will follow the ways of the Church blindly no matter how strongly someone protests their actions. Kilroy finishes the play by emphasizing the removal of the clerical garb as a de-flocking; an end to priesthood. Father Seamus appears in the final scene as, “...dressed in a decent layman’s suit, collar and tie” and answers Michael’s question about stuttering with, “No. I don’t stutter anymore” (64-5). The symbolism has come full circle and is now complete; the voice of reason can now speak clearly once the masquerade is removed.

In the play, *Christ Deliver Us!*, confession is exposed as being what any Catholic may fear when a priest breaks the sacristy of the confessional so that he can right the wrong in real life. The Canon asks if it is not, “...an abuse of the sacrament of Confession?” Father Joseph answers, “Not at all, Canon. I just told him in the confessional that he’d have to repeat what he said but outside the confession box... [and] ...if he wasn’t willing to do that I wouldn’t give him absolution, you see” (Kilroy 25). This abuse of power leads to the suicide of the young confessor. Earlier in the play, Winnie’s mother tells her to ask the priest to explain the facts of life to her when her monthly menstrual cycle starts as mom does not know how. Later, Winnie cries, “Why don’t you tell me things? Why? Why? When the blood first started ya told me to talk to the priest – He told me to pray for all the women in the world” (32). Mom’s response to the argument is to make her daughter pancakes. Winnie never gets the answers from her

mom or from the priest and ends up getting pregnant. In the end, the priest, like the pancake-making mother, fail at their respective duties. Winnie wants the truth, but the priest falls short because he responds to a very real biological question with a very unreal and ultimately unhelpful religious answer: pray.

The costume motif runs throughout Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa* giving a visual and symbolic message to the audience that Father Jack is slowly showing signs that he has reverted back to just Jack. In the opening tableau, Father Jack is "...wearing the uniform of a British army officer chaplain – a magnificent and immaculate uniform of dazzling white; gold epaulettes and gold buttons, tropical hat, clerical collar, military cane" (v). Once the tableau dissipates, the audience will not see Jack in a clerical collar or clerical garb again. In fact, at the start of Act II, Friel notes that, "His dress looks now even more bizarre" (45). He incorporates a ceremonial hat from Africa in some of his own home-spun rituals that frighten his sisters suggesting to the audience that his religious affiliation has changed from Catholic to Swahili. There is another moment when Chris' tosses Jack's clerical surplice over her head during the major dance scene of Act I. The dance motif plays a big role thematically emphasizing the notion that pagan ritual still plays a role in Irish society and Catholicism does not rule all. The status of the surplice as an article of holy clothing would normally lend itself to being treated with more reverence by the typical Irish Catholic worshipper, but here it signifies an acceptance of dance and pagan rituals.

The sacrament of matrimony is satirized by Friel as Jack questions Chris about her illegitimate son, "So Michael is a love-child?" (40). The Church takes a very strong

stance about out-of-wedlock children; and yet, Friel associates this child with love, in essence saying that illegitimate children may be the result of true love. He goes on to explain that, in Africa, it is prestigious, a sign of good fortune, to have many love-children. This, of course, irritates Kate to exasperation and she endlessly tries to remind Jack that he is no longer in Africa, but in Donegal. The marriage motif continues in Act II when Jack, exclaiming that one man would be husband to all four sisters, explains, “And what’s so efficient about that system is that the husband and his wives and his children make up a small commune where everybody helps everybody else and cares for them. I’m completely in favour of it” (63). Audience members cannot help but understand the message that the priest on stage is attacking the very foundations of Catholic belief. Kate echoes what all, some, or none of the audience is thinking by responding, “...I don’t think it’s what Pope Pius XI considers to be the holy sacrament of matrimony” (63). This understatement underscores the richness of Friel’s text questioning Catholic dominance over the Irish Catholic’s day-to-day normal activities and conversation.

The sacrament of priesthood is challenged by Jack’s very existence. Towards the end of Act I, Jack goes from hero to goat once it becomes common knowledge that he was sent home, not for health reasons, but because of his obsession with pagan ritual over Catholic ceremony. In the end, the African rites prove to be more meaningful to Jack and it costs both him and his sister their jobs within the Catholic Church. Though innocent, the sister became disposable because her brother has stained the entire family.

The parish priest Father Gannon, in *The Lepers of Baile Baiste*, changes out of his confessional garments as he enters the tavern from the Church sacristy in a symbol of the true man emerging from behind the masquerade of his ecclesiastical robes. This undressing in front of the audience is symbolic of defrocking, a term with a double meaning: disrobing and dismissal.

The sacrament of confession is satirized in *The Lepers of Baile Baiste* as Daithi mocks the ritual by antagonizing Father Gannon in hopes of breaking him in order to gain information on Brother Angelus' new home location. In the scene, Gannon asks, "Do I know you?" Daithi replies, "I don't think you're supposed to ask that in confession" (Noone 21). The wisecracks continue from Daithi as he slowly attempts to break Gannon with questions like, "This was God's work [the child abuse]?" and "Who do you see when you lose your virginity [abuse again]?" (22). Gannon finally loses it and demands, "Get out ya blasphemous cur" to which Daithi leaves with one last retort, "...Can you smell the stink of your rottin' flesh?" (23). The "rottin' flesh" phrase is a reference to the play's opening scene wherein Gannon is giving a sermon on sins, lepers, and burning flesh trying to shame the congregation into revealing the person responsible for stealing the Church statues. It is also a reference to the play's opening dedication, "Lilies that rot smell more rank than weeds" (Shakespeare: sonnet XCIV). Noone's analogy is clear: the priest has become more rotten than the sinners.

In *The Lepers of Baile Baiste*, the sacrament of priesthood takes a rather significant lampooning as well. Daithi claims early in Act I that, "If the Pope got married Fadder it wouldn't change my religion. It is your religion that is suspect" (22). It is not

only what is being said to the priest, but the anger and tone and disrespect that underscores the attack on priesthood as well. During the course of the play, Father Gannon is accused of having an affair with his housekeeper, extorts liquor from the local tavern, swears, cannot ease the pain of his congregation, and is hiding the pedophile Brother Angelus. When he enters the local tavern to extract his skim of whiskey, he is the butt of the patrons' jokes and has apparently lost all respect. He receives the ultimate insult when the town drunk loudly asks, "Fadder, how many were in the magnificent seven?" and is laughed out of the tavern (59).

#### The Priest as an Abuser

Black comedy (dark humor) can be used to engage an audience when presenting emotionally-charged accounts of such evil deeds as abuse or murder of innocent victims, especially children. A writer of black comedy is extremely challenged when presenting explicit examples of the Church, or priest, or one of its members doing something so wrong that it borders on the unbelievable, leaving the viewers shaking their heads in disbelief. This category is made up of three components: child abusers, pedophiles, and cover-up conspirators. Comedic genres are: dark, black, gallows, and morbid. Dramatic irony can be displayed and the laugh type is nervous.

Black comedy is in full force in *The Magdalene Sisters* and *The Butcher Boy*, adapted from the novel of the same name by Patrick McCabe. *The Magdalene Sisters* contains a very humorous scene with Father Fitzroy stripping naked; however, the prank goes bad as Crispina also has a reaction to the poison ivy (a sign that shows she was being molested by Father Fitzroy), and is shortly committed to Mount Vernon Mental

Hospital. This comic relief scene is only momentary and once again there are evil repercussions for the innocent.

The darkest humor of the selected texts and films is found in Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy*. Francie Brady, the protagonist, has a fairly dysfunctional life with a suicidal mother and a drunk for a father, but none of that compares to his life at the reform school where he meets Father Sullivan, the pedophile. Francie embraces his new home, thinking if it was good enough for Dad and Uncle Alo, then it is good enough for him. It is not perfectly clear if Dad and his brother, Alo, went through the same treatment as Francie, but it would stand to reason that some sort of abuse may have led to Francie's dad's alcoholism. McCabe pulls no punches as he tells the story of Francie's abuse at the hands of Father Sullivan, who makes the boy dress up as his mother in a bonnet and then tell his darkest sins—in some sort of confessional reenactment—so Father Sullivan can masturbate. As his book was published (1992) a full thirteen years ahead of the first reports of child abuse by the Church in Ireland, one is left to wonder how this book may have helped push the inquiries ahead to fruition. In addition, McCabe ridicules the Virgin Mary, who is revered highly by most Catholics. In the movie version of *The Butcher Boy*, Sinéad O'Connor, who is not considered by many to be particularly Catholic in her demeanor, actions, lyrics, and lifestyle, is cast as the Virgin Mary. The book and movie would have been viewed as a shocking sacrilege to Catholics.

There are other examples of dark humor in the selected texts, but on a much smaller scale, as in the play *The Weir* by Conor McPherson. Jim tells a story of the graveyard and the pervert wherein the priest arranges the digging of a pervert's grave

who wants to be buried next to his victim (McPherson 333-6). An evening of drinking and ghost stories takes a dramatic turn as Jim relates a tale that darkens everyone's mood. The story reveals how truly twisted the pedophile can be when the gruesome request is approved by the priest.

The stage directions in Tom Murphy's *The Wake* describe the character Finbar: "A mess of hang-ups to do with class and sex. He is a product of a culture. Lifted as a boy by 'the authorities' and put into care, brutalized there and sexually abused by the Christian Brothers" (Murphy 9). One could only guess how much of this character description will actually communicate itself to the audience, but it certainly gives the actor plenty of background material when playing Finbar. A second actor opportunity comes later in the play when Finbar tells the story of accidentally catching the priest's robes on fire with the burning incense:

Smoke! – His vestments! The fuckin' coonic caught fire! (Laughter.) -  
Oh but in the sacristy afterwards: 'I'm sorry, Father, I'm sorry!' –  
(Finbar's hands covering his head: The beating he received.) – Fuckin'!  
Did he give me the! (Beating.) 'I'm sorry, Father, I'm sorry!' (Laughter.).  
(57)

Finbar is an obvious alcoholic who must carry the heavy burden of the past as he does not have the fortitude and temperament to forget.

The play *James X* is a continuous monologue that takes the audience through the life of James O'Neil as he prepares himself to give testimony against the perpetrators of child abuse at the industrial schools. Near the end of the speech, James confesses that the story he has told to this point is the make-believe version he tells himself in order to keep his sanity. He continues with the "real story...the honest truth" that describes being

raped orally and anally by the Christian Brothers, along with several beatings that has scarred him for life (Flynn 47). The audience, along with James, is probably wondering how therapeutic the telling of the story is for James; but in the end, it would be safe to assume that everyone sadly agrees that the truth must be told.

Child abuse runs rampant in Kilroy's play *Christ Deliver Us!* The play begins at a Diocesan College with a group of school boys caught smoking cigarettes by Father Joseph. "The boys are lined up and a caning on the hands begins by the priest, six wallops to each hand" (Kilroy 11). Corporal punishment is exposed again, this time at the industrial school where the boys are lined up, shivering with towels wrapped around their waists waiting for their turn in the shower while a Christian Brother looks on with leather strap in hand standing guard (51). The audience can only infer any pedophilia taking place, but Kilroy leaves no doubt that the older boys sexual abuse the younger and weaker boys whereby one boy is grabbed by the testicles in the shower line-up and later Michael is exposed to a group masturbation game egged on by the school's bully.

An example of the conspirator cover-up component in *Christ Deliver Us!* was mentioned above when the Canon chose to let Father Joseph continue with his intimidation and misuse of the sacrament of confession which led to the suicide of one of the young boys. The gang mentality which fosters the cover-up versus doing what is right is demonstrated when all the priests take a position against Father Seamus who argues Michael's pictures are works of art and not pornography. Father Joseph is pure evil, and yet the Canon and the other priests, with the exception of Seamus, continue to allow Father Joseph to abuse the boys.

In Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa* an abusive priest is introduced early in the play when Kate must explain some of Jack's curiosities to a very confused Chris, "Okawa was his house boy. He was very attached to him" (Friel 12). This apparent unholy bond between Father Jack and his servant is further strengthened by Jack as he continues to tell anecdotes and stories that often include Okawa in all sorts of adventures. Patrick Lonergan states, "Father Jack...appears to have had an intimate relationship with his 'house boy', Okawa" (Lonergan 44). Friel chooses not to develop this element of Jack's numerous eccentricities that force his superiors to send him home.

Child Abuse, the Pedophile, and the Cover-up are notably explored in Noone's play *The Lepers of Baile Baiste*. Lead protagonist, Daithi, tells a story of how a nun beat a girl black and blue and broke her finger because she was writing left-handed. The parents sued and the nun was fined fifty pounds and suspended for the week. "After being asked why she hit the child,--the nun was quoted as saying, 'She was hittable'" (54). Towards the end of the play we learn that Seaneen, the town drunk, was a victim of child abuse. He confesses, "I don't like that man [Father Gannon]. Him and his ilk used to give me awful flakin's when I was a young lad. Belted me around the room they did. The feckin' C.B. bastards" (60). The audience learns of this child abuse after witnessing Seaneen wasting his life hopelessly drunk throughout the entire play, but now, it becomes clear that the drunkenness was possibly the result of his treatment as a child by the Christian Brothers and parish priest.

The continuous repetition of phrases by the four classmates finally leads to the audience realization that the idioms and clichés were part of a game played by Brother

Angelus to force his victim to submit to abuse. Adjacent to this motif, there are small hints of being touched by the Brother Angelus. Some of the young men were still in denial, while others readily admitted to the abuse. Daithi explains to the non-classmates on stage, and to the audience, that, “Who ever stopped was put across his lap. Simon was never that quick, the poor child, the slowest child. Then you Clown [Peter]” (74). The ‘lap’ motif runs throughout the play. The schoolmates joke around with each other that “I’ll take you across my lap” as a warning to not to argue or doubt the person saying the line. Peter goes on to explain to the priest, sergeant, and the bartender that, “His face would wrinkle up and we’d nudge each other. His hands going down our pants around the arse on to the penis slow movements of the hands, all hands, and his mouth whispering into the back of your head, lickin’ your ear and goosepimples, goosepimples all over your shakin’ little body” (74). But this is not the worse of the abuse. Peter explains, “...I was in those toylets too. And look at me. Into the dirty cubicle and the piss-stained toylets and ordered to take down my pants. Take down my pants. And he loosened his belt. And he took it out. And you were just put across his lap, is it?” (76). The other boys now know they all played a role in Simon’s death with their continued game playing and jokes; and that, even though they were also victims, they never knew to what extent Brother Angelus abused Simon and Peter.

The one person who did know, besides Simon and Peter, was Father Gannon as he continues to cover-up the ordeal. The Cover-up in *The Lepers of Baile Baiste* is presented so that there is no doubt that the parish priest and the Church are guilty. Early

in the play, Father Gannon justifies his role in defending the Church to the sergeant by telling him,

First it was the Bishop, who was supposed to have had a child with an American woman. Then they legalise condoms. Then every Priest, Nun and Christian Brother was abusing children. Then they tried to legalise abortion. Then they brought in divorce. Do ya see? Do ya see Sergeant? Are you listening to me? It's a conspiracy against the church. (28)

Later, as the sergeant is asking Gannon about Brother Angelus and his son Simon's questions to him, Gannon explains, "They put it in the paper and chastise him in court, and everybody in the country is claiming all their ills go back to their old Christian Brother. You got hit I'm sure? It didn't do you any harm. ... Ah, he was excessive with his hand no doubt. That's why we moved him on" (30-1). The sergeant is slow and it takes awhile to finally sink in that he helps protect the pedophile who was the author of his son's troubles and subsequent suicide. As he learns, so does the audience.

#### The Redemptive Priest

The Redemptive Priest category was added to provide balance and an opposing perspective to the prior three categories of predominately negative tropes. However, there are few positive tropes in comparison to negative ones with the probable reason for the lack of positive priest roles is because optimistic representations would be tedious and uninteresting. The genre of tragedy is rooted in human flaws and hubris or any of the other deadly sins for that matter. Good priests do not normally wrestle with these tragic elements and only appear as a foil for the tragic hero. Nevertheless, further research did provide some examples of the Redemptive Priest. There were not any common comedic genres, irony could be either situational or dramatic, and the laugh type was cerebral.

Hollywood branded the Irish priest as the “good guy,” and from the late 1930s through the early fifties, the priest was portrayed by its biggest stars. Two films from 1938, *Boy’s Town* and *Angels with Dirty Faces*, starred Spencer Tracy as Father Flanagan and Pat O’Brien as Father Jerry Connolly, respectively. Bing Crosby won the Best Actor Academy Award for his portrayal of Father Chuck O’Malley in the 1944 film, *Going My Way*. He was nominated again for the same role in the 1945 sequel *The Bells of St. Mary’s*. Finally, Karl Malden played Father Barry in the Academy Award winning Best Picture of 1954, *On the Waterfront*.

Although most of the tropes from the very popular Irish television series *Father Ted* would fall under either the category of “The Ineffective Priest” or “The Priest Portrayed as a Comic\_Fool,” there are enough redeeming qualities illustrated in the title character to warrant its inclusion in “The Redemptive Priest.” Father Ted Crilly is constantly providing stability to both the parish house and the fictitious Craggy Island residents. He shares the parish house with the passionately tea-pouring Mrs. Doyle and two dysfunctional priests: the dimwit Father Dougal McGuire and the swearing drunkard Father Jack Hackett. The comedy can be summarized in this simple exchange between Ted and Dougal:

Father Ted: It's not as if everyone's going to go off and join some mad religious cult just because we go off for a picnic for a couple of hours.

Father Dougal: God, Ted, I heard about those cults. Everyone dressing in black and saying our Lord's gonna come back and judge us all!

Father Ted: No... No, Dougal, that's us. That's Catholicism. (Father Series1)

Dougal, along with Jack, are both comic priest stereotypes that have gone bad. Dougal is ineffective and a buffoon, while Jack is more malodorous as an abusive priest too old and tired to do much damage at this stage of his life. And while Ted has his share of miscues, he repeatedly does more good than harm and most assuredly must be considered a “good” priest.

In 1954 the Ulster Group Theatre produced playwright Joseph Tomelty’s *Is the Priest at Home?* Father Malan, a good and fair priest, uses a combination of practicality, philosophy, and steadiness to cope with the well intentional but gossipy residents of small town Marifield, Northern Ireland. In each adventure, Malan is able to plot a moral course despite the obstacles and challenges employed by the locals to test his fortitude and fiber.

In Tom Murphy’s *The Wake*, mentioned earlier, Father Billy accepts his new role in society as he, along with the Church, adjust to their loss of the power to persuade and enforce. Father Billy, however, is symbolically accepted back into society at play’s end when he is allowed to drink and sing with the rest of the cast including the alcoholic Finbar, a character who was physically and sexual abused by Christian Brothers and Catholic priests (Murphy 9, 57). The duet of Father Billy and Finbar allows the audience to infer that the priest and Church are gradually being forgiven for their sins. Father Billy is a throwback to the “good” Irish priest of yesteryear: agreeable, a bit tipsy, and doing society no great harm.

Another contemporary play utilizing the “good” priest is Charlie O’Neil’s *Hurl* which has not been published as of this writing. In the play, Father Bernard “Lofty” McMahan is characterized as highly respected for his humanistic love of all races, and his

superior knowledge of hurling. His ability to teach others the intricate points of the sport makes him a highly sought-after manager for a new Dublin team, one diverse with immigrants seeking an Irish connection and accepted as one of its citizens. Lofty, as he is known to the players, is taken with bouts of alcoholism in a misguided attempt to deal with his recent defrocking. The role of manager invigorates Lofty, allowing him to come to terms with his demons as well as enabling him to overcome the loss of key players, a relapse with alcohol, and a new identity of helping immigrants. Like the Church, Lofty has found redemption after a great fall.

Father Seamus, from *Christ Deliver Us!*, is the epitome of the “good” priest. In his own fighting for everything right, the very essence of a priesthood we would want and expect the Church to deliver, he stands up against wrong, even though out-numbered four to one and handicapped with a stutter. His speech impediment not only signifies a Church unable to communicate doctrine but also unable to protect the innocence of its youth. In the end, however, Seamus is in a layman’s suit, no longer stuttering as he must leave the Church, much like Lofty of *Hurl*, in order to pursue his quest for righteousness. He redeems the priesthood by leaving it and taking time away in order to heal.

The motif of “The Redemptive Priest” appears again in Friel’s *Dancing at Lughnasa* as defrocked Father Jack, like Lofty of *Hurl* and Seamus of *Christ Deliver Us!*, must leave the Church to seek justice, decency, and enlightenment. Jack is an extremely sympathetic character as the audience empathizes with his confusion after working twenty-five years in an African leper colony. Catholic customs and ceremonies are explored in juxtaposition to the “paganism” of the Swahili and Lughnasa rituals. Jack,

like Lofty and Seamus, finally comes to terms with whom they are by stepping away from the Church in order to restore their moral conviction. The message from the playwrights can be clearly construed as saying the redemptive priest must step away from the Church in order to regain his purpose in life. It appears that even though the priests have made their share of mistakes, it is the Church itself as the umbrella organization that needs redemption the most, as seen with Father Gannon in *The Lepers of Baile Baiste*.

Gannon represents the Church in its attempt to hide the problem priest or, in this case, the Christian Brother. The play depicts the younger members of society as intolerant toward a church or priest that insists on participating in the cover-up of abusive clergy; while the Sergeant, representing the older generation, still aligns his faith firmly behind the parish priest. By the end of the play, Father Gannon concedes and must reveal Brother Angelus' new location while the Sergeant apprehensively follows Gannon's lead.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The title character from *James X* is nervously pacing while waiting to testify, quickly scanning court documents, frightened as he summons up repressed memories, and reminding himself of his therapist's advice: "Recalling to recover" (Flynn 12). In a sense, Irish drama presenting priests at various stages of criminal activity is all about recovery, not only for the victims but also for the audience and, by extension, Irish society. A nation on a seemingly endless journey in search of that elusive and fundamental human need called freedom is dismally reminded that the price to pay can be excruciatingly troublesome to endure. The image in the mirror does not appear to be anything close to what Irish society wants to see, and yet they know from experience, the road to recovery is awfully painful. Christopher Murray infers that the flip side of the mirror provides a dream of what can be, and that most of the Irish will learn to forget and move forward. He reminds us that the success of Irish drama was due in part to the ability to continue to look ahead: "For art to flourish there had to be a rising above obsession with the past" (Murray 5).

The three primary plays used for this study, Thomas Kilroy's *Christ Deliver Us!*, Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*, and Ronan Noone's *The Lepers of Baile Baiste* present a candid depiction of Irish priests when compared and contrasted to the three child abuse reports. The crimes presented on stage are those found in the reports. Each play presented or referenced the Church as being instrumental in the cover-up of these crimes, arguably the most serious of the crimes committed. Two of the three plays have

priests leaving the Church as a symbolic message to the audience that temporary or permanent separation from the Church could be the answer for healing and possibly salvation. John McGahern, as discussed later in this conclusion, does not agree but knows a return to the past is impossible.

The Ineffective Priest category was inspired by numerous examples of satire in the influential works directed at the Church and priests but is elevated in tone and seriousness within the three analytical plays at the heart of the analysis chapter of this thesis. Harmless puns and jokes in the earlier works become the foundation of evil exploits in the analytical plays. For example, the “Name Game” in *The Lepers of Baile Baiste* informs the audience of the evil of Brother Angelus and his criminal activities against children, nothing to laugh about especially when compared to the simplicity of Father Willow confusing the bride’s name in *By the Bog of Cats*. In the same vein, suicide in Martin McDonagh’s *The Leenane Trilogy* by the adult priest, although tragic, pales in comparison to the innocent deaths in *Christ Deliver Us!* and *The Lepers of Baile Baiste* that are a result of clergy misdeeds.

The symbolism within the “costume” section of The Priest as Comic Fool has portrayed the priest predominately as masquerading to hide from the truth. “Habit” is a potent word with layered meanings, particularly, in regards to the cross-dressed clerical clothes (gowns or “habits”) of a priest, juxtaposed with their often exposed, less-than-sacred, sexual exploits (bad “habits”). This popular motif to ridicule Catholicism, the clergy and their ecclesiastical garments symbolizes the hiding behind garments, and the later stripping away of the garments to see the real person hiding underneath—the wolf in

sheep's clothing, so to speak. With shades of Marjorie Garber and her book, *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety*, the priest is cross-dressed and thus clothing makes an easy target for criticism. Garber expounds about the costume of Catholic clergy,

The pretense of celibacy offered the most titillating opportunity for inversion: the scandal of cross-dressing and the scandal of religious impersonation, when present in the same transvestic figure, intensified the liberation of the masquerade. ...underneath the cowl and flowing robes the body of the celibate is itself an object of suspicion. (Garber 219-20)

The symbolism is clear: strip away the mask, the costume, the masquerade and what is left is a sinner, a man (or woman) less holy than most. Garber states, "Terms like 'defrocking' or 'unfrocking,' to describe the dismissal of priests, seem quaint and slightly precious today, but the word 'frock' began as a term for a monk's garment" (212). This particular motif of stripping off the priest's garments to rid him of the religious masquerade is seen often in contemporary Irish drama and is utilized extensively in the three analytical plays.

An area of special note within the Priest as Abuser category is the film and literature stories which were not presented with the same intensity on the stage, either because it would be too difficult to watch or too illegal to produce. In Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy*, both film and novel are very explicit in telling the story of the abusive Father Sullivan and his encounters with the young Francie Brady. Film editing allows the director to cut away from a scene while the audience can mentally piece together the suggested intimate action. For example, one particular scene has Francie dressed wearing a bonnet while Father Sullivan masturbates; although not entirely impossible for the

stage, it does present all sorts of child actor issues. McCabe's *Frank Pig Says Hello* (1992) is the stage version of *The Butcher Boy* and the choice was made to completely cut the sub-plot of Father Sullivan's abuse, which dramatically changes the theme of the original story of child abuse at the industrial schools bearing some of the blame for Francie's self-destructive life. The different forms of child abuse from the analytical plays covered in this paper are verbally described by actors as opposed to acted physically in front of the audience. The dignity of the victims prevails over stage realism.

The final category, The Redemptive Priest, confirms the changing landscape of the trope transforming it from the ultimate "good guy" of early Hollywood to being branded as corrupt and deviant or, at best, separated from the Church. Patrick Lonergan states, "...identity is not a brand arbitrarily imposed upon us, but a process to which we contribute" (Lonergan 215). The contribution the priest has made on Irish identity is grave, but not irreversible.

Fintan O'Toole and Gerard Mannix Flynn both adamantly accuse Irish society of knowingly ignoring the industrial schools and the obvious signs of abuse. O'Toole states: "Irish people knew very well that the appalling system of Church-run industrial schools existed in order to inflict pain and punishment on children, yet there was genuine shock and disturbance when the systemic abuse was revealed in the 1990s and confirmed in 2009 in the relentless and devastating report of the Ryan inquiry" (O'Toole 180). Flynn agrees with O'Toole when he states in the foreword to *James X*, "...these industrial schools and reform schools were places that sent a shudder of fear through Irish society.

They were situated in the heart of Irish towns and villages and many people must have known what went on there, yet nobody openly talked about it. Nobody talked about it at all” (Flynn 5). It certainly makes one wonder where the acting was being best performed—on stage or in the audience? In chapter two of this paper, it was reported that Annie Ryan called The Ryan Report “shocking” and it may have been for most of the Irish population. However, the “shock” could not include everyone. For some, this feigned unawareness reminds one of Germany’s citizens who claimed ignorance of the concentration camps of World War II even though many were built within the city limits. O’Toole completes this idea with, “Unknown knows—at its most extreme this worked as a kind of collective psychosis, analogous to the idea of dissociation in psychiatry, where, in response to trauma, the mind distances itself from experiences that it does not wish to process” (O’Toole 180-1). Of course, Irish drama in particular and globalized drama in general, will not allow for this distancing of traumatic experiences; the representation of Irish priests must be thorough and complete.

The fluctuation of Irish identity—like all cultural identities—is part of the identity itself. It is always changing and never static. Fintan O’Toole writes in the foreword of Maher’s book that John McGahern states, “Ireland is struggling to define itself in the wake of its long boom and sudden bust. A large part of its identity crisis has to do with that great absence...in our lives, the empty silence where the Church used to be” (Maher 13). McGahern goes on to “...remind us that nostalgia for a Catholic past is utterly misplaced. But he also warns us against simply ditching a whole framework of meaning in which we might be able to imagine what lies beyond ourselves” (13). The

representation of the priest in Irish drama will certainly keep nostalgia and the Church of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century from creeping back to such prominence in the lives of most Irish without considerable consideration.

McGahern best summarizes the critical stance required for Ireland to move forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: “Freedom lay on the path of forgiveness” (12). This forgiveness can only be obtained by fully exposing the misdeeds of Church and priests so that the healing process begins. *Christ Deliver Us!*, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, and *The Lepers of Baile Baiste* are three plays that have ensured that the process has already begun by inherently providing healing power, pedagogy, and dignity to victims and audience.

## WORKS CITED

- Abdulla, Sara. "A Serious Article About Laughter." *Nature News*. 17 Dec. 1998. Web. 26 May 2013.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984. Print.
- Beers, Kylene, et al. *Literature and Language Arts*. Austin, TX: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 2009. Print. Third Course.
- Boal, Augusto. "Theatre of the Oppressed." [www.theatreoftheoppressed.org](http://www.theatreoftheoppressed.org). Rio De Janeiro 2004. Web. 29 May 2013.
- Burke Brogan, Patricia. *Eclipsed*. Galway, Ireland: Wordsonthestreet, 1991. Print.
- The Butcher Boy*. Dir. Neil Jordan. Perf. Stephen Rea, Fiona Shaw, and Eamonn Owens. Geffen Pictures, 1997. DVD.
- Carr, Marina. *By the Bog of Cats. Modern and Contemporary Irish Drama*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Ed. John P. Harrington. New York: W. W. Norton Company, Inc. 2009. 352-397. Print.
- "The Catholic Church: A House Divided?" *cbsnews.com*. CBS News. 4 Dec. 2011. Web. 4 Dec. 2011.
- Deliver Us From Evil*. Documentary. Directed and Written by Amy Berg. Produced by Amy Berg and Frank Donner. Lionsgate. 2006. DVD.
- Dolan, Jill. *Geographies of Learning: Theory and Practice, Activism and Performance*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press. 2001. Print.
- Donovan, Colin B. "Mortal versus Venial Sins." *ewt.com*. Global Catholic Network. 4 Dec. 2011. Web. 4 Dec. 2011.
- Father Ted*. Dir. Declan Lowney. Perf. Dernot Morgan, Ardal O'Hanlon, Frank Kelly, and Pauline McLynn. BBC Video, Hat Trick Production. 1995. DVD.
- The Field*. Dir. Jim Sheridan. Perf. Richard Harris, John Hurt, and Sean Bean. Sovereign Pictures, 1990. DVD.

- “The Fighting Irish.” *UND.com*. University of Notre Dame Official Athletic Site, 18 Sep. 2011. Web. 18 Sep. 2011.
- Folger Shakespeare Library. "Types of Comedy." [www.folger.edu/education](http://www.folger.edu/education). 2007. Web 26 May 2013
- Flynn, Gerald Mannix. *James X*. Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 2012. Sony Reader file.
- Friel, Brian. *Dancing at Lughnasa*. London: Faber and Faber, Limited, 1990. Print.
- Garber, Marjorie. *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety*. New York: Routledge, 1992. Print.
- Gregory, Lady. *Our Irish Theatre 1972. Modern and Contemporary Irish Drama*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Ed. John P. Harrington. New York: W. W. Norton Company, Inc. 2009. 401-409. Print.
- . *Spreading the News. Modern and Contemporary Irish Drama*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Ed. John P. Harrington. New York: W. W. Norton Company, Inc. 2009. 36-49. Print.
- Greene, Nicholas. *The Politics of Irish Drama: Plays in Context from Boucicault to Friel*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Print.
- Inglis, Tom. *Moral Monopoly: The Catholic Church in Modern Irish Society*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd. 1987. Print.
- Jones, Marie. *Stones in His Pockets*. New York: Applause Theatre & Cinema Books, 2000. Print.
- Joyce, James. *Dubliners*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2006. Print.
- Keane, John B. *The Field*. Cork: Mercier Press, 1991. Print.
- Kilroy, Thomas. *Christ Deliver Us!* Loughcrew, Ireland: The Gallery Press, 2010. Print.
- Kronenberger, Louis. "Some Prefatory Words on Comedy." *Comedy: Plays, Theory, and Criticism*. Ed. Marvin Felheim. Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962. 194. Print.
- Littleton, John, and Maher Eamon. *The Dublin/Murphy Report: A Watershed for Irish Catholicism?* Columbia Press, 2010. *Catholic Ireland*. Web. 27 Nov. 2011.
- Lonergan, Patrick. *Theatre and Globalization: Irish Drama in the Celtic Tiger Era*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009. Print

- The Magdalene Sisters*. Dir. Peter Mullan. Perf. Eileen Walsh, Dorothy Duffy, and Nora-Jane Noone. Scottish Screen, 2002. DVD.
- Maher, Eamon. “*The Church and Its Spire*”: *John McGahern and the Catholic Question*. Dublin: The Columba Press, 2011. Print.
- McCabe, Patrick. *The Butcher Boy*. New York: Dell Publishing, 1992. Print.
- . *Frank Pig Says Hello. Far From the Land: Contemporary Irish Plays*. Ed. John Fairleigh. Great Britain: Methuen Drama. 1998. Print.
- McDonagh, Martin. *The Beauty Queen of Leenane and Other Plays*. New York: Vintage Books, 1998. Print.
- McPherson, Conor. *The Weir. Modern and Contemporary Irish Drama*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Ed. John P. Harrington. New York: W. W. Norton Company, Inc. 2009. 309-351. Print.
- Murphy, Judge Yvonne, Ita Mangan, and Hugh O’Neill. *The Murphy Report*. 13 July 2009. *Department of Justice and Equality*. Web.
- Murphy, Justice Francis D. *The Ferns Report*. October 2005. *Bishop-Accountability*. Web.
- Murphy, Tom. *The Wake*. London: Methuen Publishing, Limited, 1999. Print.
- Murray, Christopher. *Twentieth-Century Irish Drama: Mirror up to Nation*. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997. Print.
- Noone, Ronan. *The Lepers of Baile Baiste*. New York: Samuel French, Inc. 2002. Print.
- Nowicki, Sue. “Priest on Trial Flies to Ireland.” *The Modesto Bee* 17 Apr. 2012, A1. Print.
- O’Rowe, Mark. *Terminus*. London: Nick Hern Books Limited, 2007. Print.
- O’Toole, Fintan. *Ship of Fools: How Stupidity and Corruption Sank the Celtic Tiger*. London: Faber and Faber, Limited, 2009. Print.
- The Quiet Man*. Dir. John Ford. Perf. John Wayne, Maureen O’Hara, and Barry Fitzgerald. Republic Pictures, 1952. DVD.
- Ryan, Justice Sean, Helen Buckley, and Laraine Joyce. *The Ryan Report*. 20 May 2009. *The Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse*. Web.

“The Seven Catholic Sacraments.” *AmericanCatholic.org*. The Franciscans. 25 Nov. 2011. Web. 25 Nov. 2011.

Shanley, John Patrick. *Doubt, a parable*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, Inc., 2005. Print.

Spangler, Matthew. “Winds of Change: Bloomsday, Immigration, and ‘Aeolus’ in Street Theater.” *James Joyce Quarterly*, Volume 45, Number 1 (Fall 2007). pp. 46-67. Print.

Synge, J. M. *The Playboy of the Western World. Modern and Contemporary Irish Drama*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Ed. John P. Harrington. New York: W. W. Norton Company, Inc. 2009. 68-112. Print.

“The Ten Commandments.” *AmericanCatholic.org*. The Franciscans. 25 Nov. 2011. Web. 25 Nov. 2011.

West, Michael. *Freefall*. London: Methuen Drama, 2010. Print.