



What Lies Beneath - An exploration of the unseen in John B. Keane's *The Field*.

Candidate Name: Brian Devaney.

Register: PhD.

University: Mary Immaculate College, Limerick.

Supervisor: Dr. John McDonagh.

Author's Declaration:

I hereby declare that the following project is my own work. I have cited all primary and secondary sources used in this project, and all ideas are my own. I agree that the College may make this project available to future students.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Acknowledgements.

There are many people whose support has been essential to this project. To all of you I am both humbled and incredibly grateful.

To my family, whose support has been multi-dimensional and unending, and who managed to tolerate the peaks and troughs I encountered in this process, I am eternally thankful.

To the late Mary Keane, whose time and interest in the project was both generous and inspirational.

To Billy Keane, for your tireless assistance, your being on the end of the phone when I needed you, and for your help in sourcing materials.

To Gabriel Fitzmaurice who took the time to speak to me in an incredibly enlightening interview.

To friends and colleagues, for the coffees, the conversations, the music, the mischief, and the (mis)adventures. You know who you are.

To the English Department at Mary Immaculate College, whose faith in me, both as a student and as a tutor, gave me an experience that has been genuinely inspiring. Your support in this project was infinite, and I am truly indebted to the generosity of spirit I encountered in my time here.

Finally, to my supervisor and guide throughout this project, Dr. John McDonagh. I am truly appreciative of the time you invested in me. Your guidance and your innate intelligence in knowing when to afford me the space I required, and when to turn the screw a little, were essential to the development of this project.

Thank you one and all.

Abstract.

John B. Keane remains a hugely popular dramatist, his plays continue to fill theatres to this day, and many of his characters have transcended from the stage and reside in common cultural consciousness. This dissertation endeavours to explore this popularity through an investigation into the operation of what may be termed unseen resonance, and the resultant unconscious identifications, at play within his work, with a particular focus on *The Field*.

Historically, Keane was a popular success long before any critical acclaim, and thus, the critical literature on his work is relatively sparse. This project attempts to address a gap in the literature in relation to Keane by presenting a thorough and multi-faceted examination of his best-known work, *The Field*. Through the application of various theoretical filters to the work, it is hoped that possible resonant factors and identificatory processes at play within it are identified.

Though resonance itself is an intangible entity, and quite an abstract form, the inquiry into it contained in this project is of merit as it adds greatly to a relatively small field of research on Keane in terms of possible further methods of reading his work. Moreover, the modes of inquiry adopted, such as the application of psychoanalytical, postcolonial, and gender related filters, offer a multi-layered reading of *The Field*.

In essence, this dissertation maintains a narrow textual focus on *The Field* while applying various theoretical filters to it with strong reference to social contexts. By doing so, this project will attempt to expose the possible resonances at play behind Keane's popularity, thereby suggesting what *The Field* may reflect back to audiences of themselves.

Table of Contents.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.	III
ABSTRACT.	IV
INTRODUCTION.	1
CHAPTER ONE: JOHN B. KEANE - A SHORT BIOGRAPHY.	20
1.1 - EARLY YEARS.	20
1.2 - EARLY ADULT LIFE.	23
1.3 – A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF KEANE’S DRAMATIC WORKS PRECEDING <i>THE FIELD</i>	28
1.3.1 – <i>SIVE</i>	28
1.3.2 - <i>SHARON’S GRAVE</i>	31
1.3.3 - <i>THE HIGHEST HOUSE ON THE MOUNTAIN</i>	34
1.3.4 - <i>MANY YOUNG MEN OF TWENTY</i>	37
1.3.5 - <i>HUT 42</i>	42
1.3.6 - <i>THE MAN FROM CLARE</i>	48
1.3.7 - <i>THE YEAR OF THE HIKER</i>	52
1.4 – CONCLUSION.	58
CHAPTER TWO: <i>THE FIELD</i> – PLASTIC STATUES AND BAR-ROOM BATHOS.	61
2.1 – INTRODUCTION.	61
2.2 - THE 1958 MURDER OF MOSS MOORE.	62
2.3 – <i>THE FIELD</i> ’S JOURNEY FROM THE NOTEBOOK TO THE STAGE.	68
2.4 - <i>THE FIELD</i> IN RUSSIA.	73
2.5.1 - <i>THE FIELD</i> ’S SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC CONTEXTS.	79
2.5.2 - <i>THE FIELD</i> ’S REPRESENTATION OF SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC CONTEXTS.	85

2.6 – FROM PROVINCIAL CLAUSTROPHOBIA TO AN ‘INESCAPABLE INHERITANCE’: <i>THE FIELD</i> ’S RURAL AND URBAN RECEPTIONS.....	92
2.7 – CONCLUSION.....	98
CHAPTER THREE: A PSYCHOANALYTICAL READING OF <i>THE FIELD</i>.	102
3.1 - INTRODUCTION.....	102
3.2 - THE PSYCHOLOGY OF <i>THE FIELD</i> : CARRAIGHTHOMOND AS A SITE OF COLLECTIVE NEUROSIS..	104
3.3 - THE BULL McCABE: A FREUDIAN FIGURE FRUSTRATED IN LOVE?.....	108
3.4 - <i>THE FIELD</i> : THE ROLE OF TWO OPPOSING SONS WITHIN THE TEXT.....	126
3.5 – MISRECOGNITION AND IDENTIFICATION IN <i>THE FIELD</i>	134
3.6 – CONCLUSION.....	144
CHAPTER FOUR: <i>THE FIELD</i> – A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE.	146
4.1 – INTRODUCTION.....	146
4.2 – ‘OUTSIDERS. ACCURSED FRIGGERS’: THE CONSTRUCTION AND SUBVERSION OF OPPOSITION.	149
4.3 – ‘NOT A STRANGER... NOT A COMPLETE STRANGER, THAT IS’: THE ROLE OF AMBIVALENCE....	166
4.4 – ‘AN INDEPENDENT LITTLE FIELD THAT WANTS EATIN’’: REPRESENTATIONS OF NATIONALISM.	176
4.5 – CONCLUSION.....	190
CHAPTER FIVE: REPRESENTATIONS OF GENDER, PART ONE – FEMININITY.	194
5.1 – INTRODUCTION.....	194
5.2 - KEANE’S WOMEN: FEMALE ANXIETY AND THE FAILURE OF THE FEMALE STEREOTYPE.....	199
5.3 –FEMALE PERFORMANCE, PRIVATE REALITIES, AND TRADITIONAL ROLES IN <i>THE FIELD</i>	217
5.4 – CONCLUSION.....	232
CHAPTER SIX: REPRESENTATIONS OF GENDER, PART TWO – MASCULINITY.	236
6.1 – INTRODUCTION.....	236

6.2 – KEANE’S MEN: HYPERMASCULINE PERFORMANCE AND ITS SUBVERSION.....	240
6.3 – DIFFERING PERFORMANCES AND INTERPRETATIONS OF MASCULINITY IN <i>THE FIELD</i>	249
6.4 – CONCLUSION.....	266
CONCLUSION.	270
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	281
WORKS BY KEANE.....	281
SECONDARY TEXTS.....	281
ONLINE ARTICLES, JOURNALS, NEWSPAPERS, AND OTHER RESOURCES.....	284
APPENDIX ONE - INTERVIEW WITH MARY KEANE.	289
APPENDIX TWO - INTERVIEW WITH GABRIEL FITZMAURICE.	298
APPENDIX THREE - ‘IN MEMORIAM JOHN B. KEANE’.	306

‘There are heroes in the seaweed’ – Leonard Cohen.

Introduction.

This dissertation undertakes an exploration of the work of John B. Keane, with particular focus on his best-known play, *The Field*. Keane's work remains hugely popular, as may be seen in The Druid Theatre Company's recent production of *Big Maggie* in the Gaiety Theatre, which ran for approximately six weeks, from 29th January to the 12th March 2016. On a local level, Tomás MacAnna, former artistic director of the Abbey Theatre, on hearing of Keane's passing away, stated 'I doubt if there is a parish in the country that hasn't enjoyed his plays over and over, and his gift to the profession was always full houses and, as the poet Paddy Kavanagh would say, "Applause, applause"' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 320). Furthermore, Keane's work is now appearing on the Leaving Certificate syllabus and exposing a new generation to him. Thus, it may be posited that Keane, and his works, remain both relevant and popular in the present-day, and such popularity suggests that his work resonates with audiences to this day. It is precisely this resonance¹ that this project endeavours to interrogate along with the underlying modes of identification made by audiences, and for that matter, readers, with his work. The re-examination of his work put forward by this project is of significant merit, as through it, further methods of addressing Keane's work are both employed and highlighted, and the critical field on Keane is furthered.

Firstly, having made such a claim, current literature on Keane must be accounted for. The research field on Keane is relatively sparse in comparison to other prominent Irish writers, with Keane being a popular success long before any critical acclaim. It is

¹ For further definition of what is meant by resonance, and how the concept is examined in this project, the reader is directed to pp.12-14.

only since critics such as Fintan O'Toole began writing seriously about Keane in the 1980s that scholarship on him has developed. In terms of published material the range of criticism is relatively small, something that is at odds with Keane's popularity as a writer and the cultural longevity of the characters created by him. The reasoning behind this shortfall, perhaps due to his being perceived as rural writer, or in part due to Keane's ability to charm the nation's television sets on 'The Late Late Show', thereby constituting the antithesis of the tortured artist, is not the focus of this dissertation however, and is something that may be debated at a future date. However, an analysis of current literature on Keane in order to establish the originality of this project is necessary, and therefore will now be commenced. To begin with, the works of Marie Hubert Kealy will be addressed as she has written most extensively on Keane. Following this, literature on Keane's work will be examined in a chronological fashion.

One of the few scholars to write comprehensively on Keane is Marie Hubert Kealy, an American academic. In an article titled 'Spirit of Place: A Context for Social Criticism In John B. Keane's "The Field" and "Big Maggie"', published in the *Irish University Review* in 1989, Kealy explores both *The Field* and *Big Maggie* in terms of their location within a specific place, and asserts that 'the cultural landscape in the plays of John B. Keane provides the context for a critical examination of the plight of individuals constrained by their environment' (Kealy, 1989, p. 288). She then continues by analysing the characters of the Bull McCabe and Maggie Polpin as being both characters representative of 'the larger-than-life qualities of the Kerry landscape' (Kealy, 1989, pp. 288–289) and also products of that cultural landscape, drawing on 'communal heritage' while maintaining a primary focus on 'the ordinary person who is coping with traditional values and a changing society' (Kealy, 1989, p. 301). Kealy's

work in this article is of note, and has been drawn from in this dissertation. This article also forms much of the bedrock for Kealy's major publication on Keane, her 1993 publication *Kerry Playwright – Sense of Place in the Plays of John B. Keane*.

This publication, one of the few full-length academic works on Keane encountered by this author, expands considerably upon her previously published article. Again the focus is on the use of place as an interpretative device and Keane's ability to 'draw on the importance of place in Irish culture as a way of ordering [...] perceptions of contemporary society' (Kealy, 1993, p. 13). Kealy divides this work into seven distinct but interrelated chapters. Her first chapter is titled 'Landscape of a Writer' and offers a biographical take on the influence of Keane's surroundings on his work. In her next chapter, 'Sense of Place, National Identity, and Irish Drama', Kealy draws on Ibsen's *Ghosts* and Strindberg's *Miss Julie* to illustrate 'a clear exposition of the theory of place as a vehicle for interpretation' (Kealy, 1993, p. 33). She then expands upon this hypothesis and applies it to an Irish context from Boucicault through the Celtic Literary Revival up to Keane, placing him within that context seeing him as 'a successor to the peasant playwrights of the Celtic Literary Revival who demonstrates the vitality of the sense of place in contemporary literature' with place functioning 'as a formal and thematic element' in his dramas. (Kealy, 1993, p. 47).

Kealy's next chapter, 'Dramatic Devices and the Sense of Place', discusses Keane's use of setting and characterization as leading to 'a definition of place that, in turn, provides a clue to meaning' (Kealy, 1993, p. 66), with particular reference to *Sharon's Grave*, *The Year of the Hiker*, *Sive*, and *The Highest House on the Mountain*. Kealy expands upon the power of Keane's characterization in his work in the following chapter, titled 'Stage-Use of Language, Music, and Folk Customs' (Kealy, 1993, p. 67).

In this chapter, Kealy addresses Keane's use of the North Kerry dialect, his use of song as seen in the tinker characters in *Sive*, and in *The Year of the Hiker* and *Many Young Men of Twenty*, and his representation of folk customs as seen in the wake scene in *Sharon's Grave*. Through the presence of these elements in his works, Kealy argues that Keane is reinforcing a sense of place within them, something that is essential to Keane's drama according to her. Referring to *Sharon's Grave*, Kealy offers a statement that may be equally valid in relation to Keane's other dramas; 'The characters emerge from the landscape; the cultural and spiritual milieu has shaped their attitudes and their experience. To miss the importance of place is to misread the play' (Kealy, 1993, p. 81).

Having discussed the role played by 'local characters and customs' in making up 'the cultural landscape of Ireland', Kealy continues by addressing 'certain values and attitudes [that] also contribute to the spiritual milieu known as spirit of place' in her next chapter, 'Contexts for Social Criticism' (Kealy, 1993, p. 82). In this chapter Kealy explores Keane's work as thematically reflective of the 'values and attitudes' mentioned earlier. The theme of land, and its relation to the 'Irish concern for name and family' which 'leads to a consideration of the problem of authority' (Kealy, 1993, p. 83), is then explored by Kealy, with particular attention to *Sive*, *The Year of the Hiker*, and *The Highest House on the Mountain*. Through this analysis, issues of tradition and gender are also touched upon, albeit briefly, and Keane's ability to document 'the struggle between traditional values and the mores of twentieth-century Ireland' (Kealy, 1993, p. 92) is documented through his creation of a sense of place in his work, and his juxtaposing 'present-day problems against a backdrop of age-old custom' (Kealy, 1993, p. 92).

The focus of the next chapter remains on the concepts of land and authority, and it discusses two of Keane's major plays in a chapter titled 'Lust for Land: *The Field* and *Big Maggie*' (Kealy, 1993, p. 93). In this piece Kealy equates the 'larger-than-life qualities of the Kerry landscape' with Keane's 'larger-than-life figure[s]' of the Bull McCabe and Maggie Polpin (Kealy, 1993, p. 93). What follows is a very astute analysis of the characters of McCabe and Polpin, and this is a chapter that this dissertation has drawn from where appropriate. Both McCabe and Polpin are looked at in terms of the motivations that lie behind their actions, within the framework of land and what is symbolized by it in the case of McCabe, and the questions of authority and security in relation to Polpin. Kealy locates both characters at crossroads of identity that are reflective of 'an appreciation of place in the plays of John B. Keane [which] depends both on a grasp of the influences from the past and an understanding of the ways in which new ideas are received in the rural environment' (Kealy, 1993, p. 110).

Having explored *The Field* and *Big Maggie* in terms of the 'themes of economic security and sexual frustration' creating 'the "place" in which he [Keane] examines contemporary Irish life' (Kealy, 1993, p. 111), Kealy goes on, in her final chapter 'Separation from the Land', to explore the theme of emigration in his work, looking particularly at *Hut 42* and *Many Young Men of Twenty*. Through this analysis Kealy develops the theme of a broader separation from a cultural landscape in Keane's work, as seen in his later plays such as *The Crazy Wall*, *Moll*, and *The Chastitue*, which, Kealy asserts, look at 'personal frustration and isolation from family and community as characteristic of contemporary life [...], while he [Keane] does not advocate a return to the past, he does lament the erosion of traditional values' (Kealy, 1993, p. 118). Kealy concludes her book by reinforcing the role played by a sense of place in Keane's work,

and reiterating her persistent claim throughout the piece that Keane's 'particular gift of recreating the larger-than-life figures of the Kerry countryside permits his love of place to form a foundation for his social criticism' (Keane, 1993, p. 124). Subsequent to this publication, Kealy also published an article titled 'John B. Keane – An Appreciation' in *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* in 1999. This short article is somewhat biographical, and returns to her assertions regarding the role of place in Keane's work outlined earlier, addressing the plays *Sive*, *Big Maggie*, and *The Field*.

Kealy's works remain as extremely insightful pieces of criticism and this dissertation seeks to expand upon them significantly in two ways. Firstly, though Kealy's focus thematically throughout her work remains consistent in her appraisal of the functions of place in Keane's dramas, her application of it is somewhat broad, focusing on multiple texts by Keane. This dissertation will remain focused on *The Field*. Some of Keane's other dramatic works will inevitably be drawn from also, but they will be used to aid in the interpretation of *The Field* that will follow them. Secondly, this dissertation will adopt a multi-faceted approach to *The Field*, applying historical, psychoanalytical, and postcolonial² filters to the piece, while also examining the workings of gender, both masculine and feminine, within it. Such a broad approach applied in a narrow fashion is of merit as, given the sparse research field on Keane, and particularly *The Field*, it will both contribute greatly to the scholarship available on the work, and open up further possible lines of enquiry into it.

Other literature on Keane will now be addressed in a chronological manner. A

² The term is used in its unhyphenated form to refer to the various schools of thought that have developed in the area of postcolonial theory, and also, as defined by Victor Merriman, 'a strategic epistemological stance' as opposed to 'a periodization of consciousness, or characterization of experience' (Merriman, 2011, p. 21). When referring to a specific timeframe, the hyphenated version of the term, i.e. post-colonial, will be used.

collection of writings on Keane was published to mark his fiftieth birthday in 1979, and was titled *Fifty Years Young*, edited by John M. Feehan. Of note in this text is Phyllis Ryan's contribution in a chapter titled 'John B.'s Women' where she explores Keane's representation of women on the stage and the challenges to traditional notions of gender embodied by his female characters. Other contributors are James N. Healy who documents 'The Birth of *Sive*', Thomas A. Duff who explores Keane's treatment of sexuality on stage as representative of the human condition, Brian Cleeve who discusses Keane as a short story teller, Des McHale who discusses Keane's use of humour and the comedic elements to his work, Christy Brown who looks at Keane's poetry, Robert Hogan who looks at the art and craft of Keane, a letter of tribute from Tony Butler, and a poem from the actor who originally played the part of the Bull McCabe, Ray McAnally.

Rosa Gonzales, in an article from 1992, addresses 'The Unappeasable Hunger for Land in John B. Keane's *The Field*' and, similarly to Kealy, focuses on the cultural landscape represented by land in the play. She also channels the themes of survival and legacy in the work, and asserts that McCabe's:

unappeasable hunger for land derives not so much from the memory of the past landlord-peasant struggles but from the Irish peasant's ingrained commitment to the land that sustains him and which will prevent his children from the fate of emigration, as well as from his attitude of distrust toward technology (Gonzales, 1992, p. 83).

Leonard Robert Falkenstein, in a PhD thesis submitted to the University of Alberta in 1997, looks broadly at Keane's work, along with that of Tom Murphy, Hugh Leonard, Brian Friel, and Thomas Kilroy, and examines the representations of change present therein. In terms of other academic articles, Kelly et al (2002), look briefly at *Sive* along with works by other contemporary playwrights such as Vincent Woods, Patricia Burke Brogan, Bernard Farrell, Tom Murphy, and Marina Carr in a review of activity in

the theatres of the country in 2002. The above works are valuable pieces of research in their own rights, and have been drawn from where appropriate, but none represent the narrow focus on *The Field* and the multiple modes of enquiry applied to it by this dissertation.

Another text dealing with Keane, and *The Field*, is that of Cheryl Temple-Herr's 2002 contribution to the 'Ireland Into Film' series, simply titled *The Field*. Though this text deals primarily with Jim Sheridan's 1990 film adaptation of Keane's play, her analysis of Keane, and the play, to be found in the opening chapter is quite astute, and has also been drawn from where appropriate. Following his death in 2002, North Kerry Literary Trust published a book of tributes to Keane entitled *John B. Keane – Playwright of the People*. This publication features articles and tributes from friends, family, and fellow writers such as Brendan Kennelly, Hugh Leonard, Gabriel Fitzmaurice, Fintan O'Toole, Mary Kenny and Con Houlihan. In total there are over forty tributes presented in this work, and through them an appreciation of Keane's popularity, along with his unwavering socially critical eye, becomes apparent.

Another valuable resource, and one that has been drawn from frequently here, is collection of lectures from a summer course organized for National School teachers that was held in Tarbert in the summer of 2003 titled 'Literature in the Locality: the Local Writer and the Curriculum as Exemplified in the Writings of John B. Keane'. This collection was published in 2004, with the assistance of the then Director of Tarbert Education Centre, Gabriel Fitzmaurice, in an editorial role. This work assumed the less cumbersome title of *Come All Good Men and True – Essays from the John B. Keane Symposium*, and this publication will now be addressed in terms of its contribution to the academic field relating to John B. Keane.

This work features a mix of the personal and the academic, and opens with a piece by Keane's lifelong friend, Danny Hannon, that recalls Keane's youth and contributes some biographical detail about Keane. The next essay, by journalist, social commentator, and theatre critic, Fintan O'Toole, is of a far more academic persuasion, and details the operation of tragedy in Keane's work, particularly in *Sive* and *The Field*, through the intersection of two opposing visions within his work, one being an 'acute and sociological' perspective which is 'very much of its time and place' set against a 'dark and mythological and pagan' vision 'which is not simply of a different time but in a sense is of no time at all' (O'Toole in Fitzmaurice, 2004, p. 52). This chapter has been drawn from frequently in the course of this dissertation as it offers a novel perspective on reading Keane's work and the social commentary contained within it.

This chapter is followed by Nora Relihan's recollection of Keane as an emerging playwright, and his early contribution to the amateur Listowel Drama Group, and their production of *Sive*. Paddy McElligott and Pat Moore then offer a comparative analysis of some of the themes common to both Keane and fellow North Kerry man Brendan Kennelly in a chapter that looks not just at Keane's drama, but also at his poetry and prose. The theatre producer and director, Michael Scott, contributes the next essay in the collection, and he pays particular attention to *The Field* in terms of Keane's documenting a society in transition, and his depiction of loneliness that is disguised by laughter within the work. The final chapter of the volume comes from its compiler and editor, the poet, and former schoolmaster, Gabriel Fitzmaurice, who advocates the suitability of Keane's work to be taught in primary school under the headings of; travellers, place, emigration, and fathers and sons. This edited collection forms a useful backdrop for further investigation into Keane, particularly the contributions of O'Toole

and Scott, from whom this dissertation has drawn where appropriate.

In terms of biographical detail, Keane's 1964 *Self Portrait* provided some insight into Keane's youth and his early career. Gus Smith and Des Hickey's 2002 revision of their earlier biography *John B. – The Real Keane*, simply titled *John B.*, has proved to be a mine of information regarding Keane's life, both personally and as a writer. It must be noted that this dissertation references the 2004 paperback edition of the above work. On a personal level, this author was lucky enough to conduct an interview with Keane's late wife Mary in 2012, which added to the historical and biographical context through which Keane may be viewed. Similarly, the poet, and friend of Keane's, Gabriel Fitzmaurice was also interviewed and provided further understanding of Keane and his work. These interviews offer great insight into the social contexts from which Keane, the writer, emerged, and will, it is hoped, prove to be useful resources for future Keane scholars. The transcripts of both interviews may be found in the appendices of this dissertation, and a compact disc, containing the original audio recordings of them, also accompanies it.

Thus, having outlined the current literature available on Keane, and *The Field*, it may be noted that it is a relatively sparsely populated field. This project endeavours to take up the mantle and expand the scholarship on Keane, and on *The Field* in particular, through a narrow, close reading of the text in conjunction with the application of various theoretical lenses.

However, it is essential at this juncture to delimit what this dissertation is not, and what it does not aspire to be. Firstly, this thesis is not a grand exploration of Irish drama; instead it maintains a narrow focus on a singular text in an attempt to extract further possible methods of reading it. This is not to disregard the vast dramatic

heritage present in Irish drama, but is merely an issue of focus and if the large field of Irish dramatic heritage were to be explored it would be at the expense of analysing the text at the heart of this dissertation. Similarly, this dissertation is not looking at Keane in the context of other writers; instead it is focusing solely on Keane in an attempt to thoroughly interrogate his work.

Secondly, this dissertation is focused on the original text of *The Field* and any reference to the Ben Barnes' revision of it will be duly annotated. Equally, the analyses of Keane's other plays within this dissertation utilise the original, unrevised (where applicable) editions as their base, and any citation from other versions will be noted. This is for reasons of consistency, as with a revision of any text it is impossible to be sure what changes came from whom. Having said that, a comparative reading of the original texts alongside their revised versions would prove an interesting exercise, particularly in terms of the changing social contexts that are reflected in the adjustments to the original text. As the Barnes revisions of Keane's texts, for the most part, involved a shortening of the works from three acts down to two, an analysis of their being symptomatic of globalization and the '*phenomenology of compression*' (Lonergan, 2010, p. 37) (italics in original) inherent to it, would also prove quite valuable³. However, such analyses are outside of the remit of this dissertation, but may well form future research projects for this author.

It must also be noted that, as theatre is an ever-expanding, experiential, and

³ Patrick Lonergan, in his 2010 work, *Theatre and Globalization – Irish Drama in the Celtic Tiger Era*, utilises Marshall McLuhan's concept of 'time-space compression' (quoted in Lonergan, 2010, p. 36) in his appraisal of theatre's relationship with globalization. He goes on to document how 'the desire to quicken the pace of entertainment', itself an effect of globalization, has resulted in the current reality that the 'traditional three or five act structure of plays has generally been replaced by loosely structured series of short scenes that tend not to last longer than 15 minutes each' (Lonergan, 2010, p. 182). Thus, though not as drastic, Ben Barnes' revisions of Keane's works from three acts to just two in the late 1980s/early 1990s may perhaps be seen as early indicators of such changing global contexts.

temporal realm, and as the production of any play is subject to many variables in terms of performance and interpretation, this dissertation is focused on the one constant behind such variables, that is, the text itself. This is not to relegate the element of theatrical performance to a position of subordination as any play is only given life when it is performed. However, as this dissertation is rooted in Literary Studies as opposed to Theatre Studies, the locus of meaning is taken to reside in the text itself, privileging dialogue over action, and looking at the script as text, rather than as a pre-text for performance. Occasional reference will be made to elements of the performed text such as theatre reviews, stage adaptations, and the stage directions contained within the text, but this will be done to aid the textual literary analysis that accompanies it. Patrick Lonergan, in his analysis of Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*, makes the valid point that: 'neither textual analysis nor a study of reception offer a complete perspective' on a play (Lonergan, 2010, p. 55). However, in the interests of consistency this dissertation takes the written text as its primary focus as it attempts to explore possible resonant elements within the text.

Finally, this dissertation is not addressing the film adaptation of *The Field*, as though there are similarities between the two works, there are also many inconsistencies. Similarly to Ben Barnes' revision of the play, any reference to the film adaptation of it will be duly annotated.

In essence, this project attempts to examine an intangible and abstract entity in Keane's work, that is, resonance. Firstly, this concept of resonance must be looked at in relation to the application of it in this dissertation. The Oxford English dictionary offers a definition of resonance as 'The power to evoke enduring images, memories, and emotions' (O.E.D., 2016, online) and Keane's popularity, along with the enduring

nature of both his plays, and his characters, within Ireland's cultural landscape, would speak to the presence of some form of resonance within his work for Irish audiences. However, this definition alone remains quite vague in relation to the concept of resonance and its operation. To expand upon this, and to give some insight into how the concept of resonance is understood in this project, it is of use to look at the concept of resonance in a musical context. The concept of resonance is central to musical theory, the physics of music, and the manufacturing of musical instruments. In essence, resonance is seen to operate on the principle of 'sympathetic vibration' (Schmidt-Jones, 2016, online) as the body of the instrument resonates in response to the original vibration, the note played. For example, the body shape and the materials used in the production of an acoustic guitar will greatly influence the sound created by that guitar due to its resonant quality, that is, its ability to vibrate sympathetically to the original vibration (a string being plucked). In terms of the discussion presented in this project, it is this concept of sympathetic vibration that is being explored in its examination of resonance. Inherent to the concept of sympathy is that of identification, thus through the exploration of resonance presented here and through the examination of sources of sympathetic psychological vibration in the work, an analysis of conscious and unconscious identifications made by audiences with Keane's work is entered into.

Though this resonance may be an entity that is impossible to quantify, its exploration is of merit, as through this examination, unconscious identificatory processes at play within the space between *The Field* and the audience receiving it may be posited, thereby illuminating further possible methods of looking at his work. Indeed, as asserted by Victor Merriman, 'In common with other art forms, the *raison d'être* of Drama is to enable critical interpretations of our social world. It exists to turn

statements into questions' [Merriman, 1999(a), p. 15]. It is precisely within the questions raised by *The Field*, and the challenges to stable identifications presented by those questions, that resonance may be located in the work. The project will attempt to explore such resonant factors at play within Keane's work, and will examine the identificatory processes intrinsic to such factors, in the following manner.

The first two chapters of this project provide a contextual backdrop through which the remaining, more theoretical, chapters should be read. Chapter one offers a brief biography of Keane's early life, up until his first major literary breakthrough, *Sive*. Certain influences are identified such as his time as a youth spent in the Stack's Mountains with his cousins the Sheehys, where Keane encountered an older tradition as opposed to the relatively modernizing Listowel in which he was living, his treatment as a student in St. Michael's College, Listowel, which revealed to him the space in between the ideal and the reality that refutes it, a trope common to much of his work, and the influence of both of his parents on him and his future works. A brief analysis of Keane's dramatic work up until the publication of *The Field* is then offered in an attempt to provide a literary context to aid in the reading of it that follows, and to identify common tropes present in his work. The plays *Sive*, *Sharon's Grave*, *The Highest House on the Mountain*, *Many Young Men of Twenty*, *Hut 42*, *The Man from Clare*, and *The Year of the Hiker*, are all explored, and through them, Keane's subversive nature highlighted.

The second chapter begins by addressing the real-life, still unsolved, murder that provided the inspiration for *The Field*, and the play's journey from the notebook to the stage is documented, in an effort to illustrate Keane's ability to transpose the realm of the local and the particular to that of the universal. The staging of *The Field* in Moscow

is also commented upon in terms of illustrating the potential global resonance of Keane's thematic content despite his work being rooted in a particular time and place. This chapter continues by addressing the economic, social, and political landscapes present at the time of writing of the play. At that time, Ireland was a nation in transition from the pastoral idealism enshrined in de Valera's constitution of 1937 to the more expansive, industrial, and outward-looking nation proposed by T.K. Whitaker and Seán Lemass. Keane's representation of a nation and a national identity in transition is then discussed in this context. Finally the reception of *The Field* among both rural and urban audiences is then discussed, and the shared social anxieties, in the context of a changing Ireland, represented by Keane in the work highlighted. This chapter and the preceding one constitute a contextual basis from which the remaining chapters, through the application of varied, but inter-linked, theoretical frameworks, develop.

The third chapter takes a psychoanalytical approach to *The Field*. It begins by discussing Carraigthomond as a possible site of neurosis, suffering from an excess of repressive social structures, reflective perhaps of a parochial form of living common to many. The character of the Bull McCabe is then looked at in terms of his constituting a character frustrated in love. His narcissism, displaced libidinal energy, and ultimate crisis of potency are addressed in an examination of unconscious motivations at play within his character. The role played by two opposing sons in the text, Tadhg and Leamy, is then commented upon, and further unconscious motivations behind McCabe's actions are revealed, particularly in relation to the concept of legacy as Maggie Butler's field becomes a site of condensation, a composite image of repressed anxiety. In terms of resonance, McCabe may be seen to be representative of a nation in transition, and the negotiation of identity, on personal and national levels, is illustrated

to be central to the text through the application of Freudian and Lacanian filters.

The fourth chapter examines the text through a postcolonial lens, and begins by discussing the suitability of *The Field* to be addressed in such a manner. Edward Said's theories of Orientalism are then drawn upon in terms of McCabe's construction of the character of William Dee as an 'Other' in order to further his own position within Carraigthomond. Keane's subversive project in destabilizing such constructions within the text is also illustrated, as a collective colonial history is both channelled, and also challenged by Keane's exploration of simplistic, monolithic narratives in the work. The role of ambivalence within the text is then discussed through the application of Homi K. Bhabha's theories of hybridity, liminality, and mimicry. The juxtaposing of the characters of McCabe and Dee in this context further highlights Keane's subversive nature in highlighting the space between contesting processes of identification on personal and national levels, and may be seen to be another resonant element at play in his work. Finally, the concept of nationalism and its representation in *The Field* is addressed in a Lacanian framework, which once more highlights the challenges presented to essentialist modes of national identification within the work. This may be seen to operate in a resonant fashion, particularly in the context of a perpetually changing and redefining concept of nationhood and national identity.

The focus of both the fifth and sixth chapters is on Keane's representations of gender in his work. The fifth chapter explores, without adopting an overtly feminist stance, the representations of the feminine in Keane's work. To begin with issues of femininity, both in the mid-twentieth century and in the present-day are explored and the relevance of Keane's subversive representation of gender is discussed. Following on from this, the characters of Sive and Mena from *Sive*, Maggie Polpin from *Big*

Maggie, and Mame from *The Change in Mame Fadden*, all female titled plays, are explored in terms of gender performance, gender anxiety, and traditional expectations of gender, and Keane's destabilizing of traditional gender stereotypes is highlighted. Keane's representations of womanhood in *The Field* are then addressed. The characters of Maimie, a rebelling but ultimately submissive force, and Maggie Butler, the titleholder to the field who is denied any social standing within Carraighthomond, are investigated. The role of the wife is then explored by contrasting the positions occupied by the unnamed wife of Dandy McCabe, the unnamed and absent wife of the Bull McCabe, and the named but absent wife of William Dee who is, after all, acting on her behalf. Throughout this analysis Keane's questioning of gender stereotype, and performance according to societal expectations of gender is evident, and suggests further possible resonant elements at play within the work.

The approach taken in the sixth, and final, chapter is comparable to that utilized in the previous one, but instead the focus is on the opposite side of the gender binary, that is, masculinity. Firstly, in a similar fashion to the previous chapter, issues of masculine anxiety, both at the time of writing of *The Field* and in the present-day are explored and commented upon. The characters of Padraic, Daigan, and Morisheen from *The Man from Clare* are explored in terms of hypermasculinity, masculine performance and anxiety, and masculine stereotype. The Hiker Lacey from *The Year of the Hiker* is looked at in a similar fashion, and Keane's representation of varying interpretations of masculinity, and the anxieties therein, in these plays form a backdrop for the analysis of representations of masculinity as seen in *The Field* that follows. In terms of *The Field*, the character of the Bull McCabe, and the hypermasculine mask he applies to his own gender based anxiety is discussed. An opposing interpretation of masculinity is then

discussed through the character of William Dee. Following on from this, the only young child character in the piece, Leamy, is explored as he represents an interpretation of masculinity caught between the two opposing versions of it presented previously. Finally Keane's representation of masculinity in *The Field* is looked at in terms of current literature regarding a crisis of masculinity, and possible masculine resonances within the piece are further explored.

Through the six chapters outlined above, and the close textual analysis contained within them, Keane's *The Field* is thoroughly interrogated by this project and possible resonant factors at play within the text are posited. Such an endeavour facilitates, and anticipates, further exploration of Keane's work in terms of identificatory processes contained within his writing while also presenting a multi-faceted approach to *The Field*. Such an approach will contribute greatly to the scholarship on Keane, an often-overlooked writer in terms of his ability to connect with audiences, represent their anxieties on stage, and his capacity to challenge the dominant social structures that contribute to these anxieties in a subversive manner.

Chapter One: John B. Keane - A Short Biography.

1.1 - Early Years.

This dissertation will begin by giving a short biography of the formative years of John B. Keane up until the first production of *The Field*. This biography will help to illuminate Keane's own background and character, and will also reveal some of the major influences on his writing, thereby suggesting possible motivations lying beneath the surface of Keane's writing. Keane's dramatic works up until the first performance of *The Field* will be detailed and a brief analysis of each work will be entered into.

John B. Keane was born on the 21st July 1928, at 45 Church Street, Listowel, County Kerry. Son to national-school teacher William Keane, and his wife Hannah, Keane was undoubtedly influenced by his father's love of books. Keane's father, William, created a library of sorts in the house, which was a refuge for him, and an escape from the day to day running of the house, 'leaving his hard pressed wife the task of keeping order in the family' (Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 35). Young John Keane's visits to his father's library became more frequent as he got older, as did the amount of time spent there by his father, as bills mounted and sanctuary called. Father and son would sit there, 'where they would talk about characters in literature' (Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 39). Keane's love of books was also aided by Dan Flavin, who, from his bookshop on Church Street, 'lent us young fellows books because we could not afford them' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 40). Keane would later say of his father: 'my father was a schoolmaster, and he never imposed. I see now how very lucky I was to be born under the broad influences of this penniless but far-reaching instructor' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 141). Such 'broad influences' of his 'far-

reaching instructor' would instil in Keane a sense of a wider, more expansive, world in contrast to the narrowing attitudes he encountered in the Ireland of his time.

Keane enrolled as a student at St. Michael's College Listowel in 1938, and while there, along with his studies, he wrote poetry and received five shillings for the publication of one of his poems in *Ireland's Own* (Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 40). However, Keane's schooldays were somewhat unhappy, as corporal punishment was still the disciplining method of choice. Undeterred, Keane continued to write, and in his final year at the school he had more poems published, and won prizes for them. One such poem was about Church St. in Listowel, entitled 'The Street', and he recited it once as part of an elocution class. When asked by his teacher, Father O'Connor, who had written the poem, Keane replied that he had, only to be met by the priest's fist, which knocked him to the floor. Through ignorance, disbelief, or perhaps thinking that Keane was being deliberately disingenuous, the priest lashed out, in an act that was typical of the Irish educational system of the time. Keane later commented that 'A bad beating is no asset to the self respect or dignity of an eighteen-year-old boy' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 42). Keane also added that 'Misusing an eighteen-year-old is like baiting a three-year-old bull. He might not charge there and then, but he will explode later on and people find it hard to analyse the reasons' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 42). Such beatings at the hands of both authority and religion may have fed Keane's questioning nature as the physical manifestation of the conceptual left a lot to be desired, resulting in an examination of the hegemonic order in which Keane found himself situated. Such a questioning attitude towards the forces of authority and in particular towards the hypocrisy of religion would recur throughout his works.

Keane's mother would have an influence on him also, particularly on his

portrayal of female characters in his works. When coupled with his experiences with female customers in his role as a pharmacist's assistant in both Listowel and Doneraile in later life, Hannah Keane would give young Keane an insight into the female psyche of the time. As related in a personal interview by Keane's wife Mary 'his mother was a great woman for mixing with people and they would call in and she would give them the cup of tea. They'd have a chat and he'd be there and he'd be listening. And he got a real insight into rural women' [Devaney, 2012(a), Appendix One]. However, though it was a happy homestead, the burden of running the house fell solely on Hanna, who also 'suffered from depression, despite her sense of humour' (Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 36). This came to a head eventually and she suffered a minor breakdown while Keane was still a schoolboy (Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 36). This may have had a significant influence on the young Keane, and the portrayal of women in his work along with his questioning of the patriarchal status quo through them, would suggest that it did indeed resonate profoundly within him. As asserted by Phyllis Ryan 'Long before the term "Women's Lib" became the catch-cry for female frustrations [...] Keane was writing plays featuring tough women with rebellious tendencies' (Ryan in Feehan, 1979, p. 61).

As a youth Keane spent his summers in the Stack's Mountains with his cousins, the Sheehys. During these summers Keane was brought into contact with a world where the old traditions were alive, as opposed to Keane's native Listowel, which would have been in a state of relative modernization. The Sheehy's homestead also served as a rambling house, where folk stories were exchanged and songs were sang. Keane himself 'would have his spake in as well' according to cousin John Joe Sheehy who maintained that the Stack's 'was the place for him. He could run himself to death here' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 33). In a personal interview, Keane's wife

Mary claimed that ‘It was better than going to college, he learned about human beings and the way people lived, and lived there happy’ [Devaney, 2012(a), Appendix One]. Therefore Keane, from a young age, was influenced not only by a modernizing culture in his native Listowel, but also by the older culture he experienced and loved in the Stack’s. According to Brendan Kennelly, Keane’s time in the Stack’s opened his eyes to an elemental, almost pagan way of life, and instilled in him an appreciation of nature and of the natural: ‘I would say that he was opened up there [the Stack’s] to paganism and Christianity interlocked’ (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 286). Keane’s ability to negotiate between the realms of the catechism inscribed since youth, and the natural, almost pagan world, sets him apart as a writer according to Kennelly: ‘our struggle is to return to the primordial freshness that created us in the first place. Keane has that kind of drive. He has the drive to be utterly natural. It’s in Rousseau, it’s in Patrick Kavanagh, and it’s even in George Orwell within an urban setting. It comes easy to Keane’ (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 286).

1.2 - Early Adult Life.

As a young man, having been refused a job as a junior reporter at *The Kerryman* newspaper, Keane became an apprentice to a local chemist, Keane-Stack. However writing was still at the fore of his mind and, in his early twenties, he started up a local newspaper, the *Listowel Leader*, with friend Stan Kennelly. This newspaper, containing such essential news as a story about a woman on Church Street with bandy legs, and another about Mary O Shea’s missing bloomers, was short-lived (Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 45). A story attacking county councillors over the unfortunate state of the local park sparked outrage at the council meeting, resulting in a massive loss in advertising for the newspaper. The *Listowel Leader* ultimately closed down, but Keane’s sense of

humour and mischief was far from finished. In 1951 Keane and his friends from Curly's public house created the persona of Tom Doodle, a fictional politician who was campaigning in the election of the same year. Posters were hung on telegraph poles around Listowel declaring: 'Vote No.1 Tom Doodle. Use Your Noodle and Give the Whole Caboodle to Doodle' (Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 48). Eventually a rally was organized in The Square in Listowel where Doodle addressed a good-humoured crowd. Later Keane would insist that the whole thing was done to take the 'bad taste' out of local politics (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 48). This episode illustrates Keane's sense of humour and wit, not merely plain wit, but a purposeful wit, one that will resonate throughout his writing career.

In that same year of 1951 Keane met his future wife, Mary O'Connor. Having decided that his prospects in the pharmacy trade were not good, Keane made the difficult decision to go to England in order to provide some sort of a future for himself and Mary. On the 6th January 1952, Keane left Listowel bound for the factory of British Timken in the town of Northampton, where the work, as a furnace operator in a steel factory, was tough but it was well paid. While in Northampton, Keane began writing poems and stories, one of which was published in *The Irish Press*. He then began working on a novel. Keane himself admitted: 'I started writing out of desperation. If I hadn't, I'd have gone mad' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 56).

However, certain liberal aspects of life in England appealed to Keane. Having come from a country where book censorship was rife, and where he was angered by narrow social attitudes and the vice-like grip the church had on the people, England was an escape. Keane stated 'At times I felt imprisoned in my mind, and I think now that it was one of the reasons I took the boat to England' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004,

p. 58). In England Keane had experienced a world free from the claustrophobia induced by the church and social myopia, and this taste of freedom would have a massive influence on his work. It is also of note that in present-day Ireland the spectre of emigration has returned to loom over a post-Celtic Tiger nation, thus giving Keane's work, and his perspective on emigration added import.

In England, Keane encountered the emigrant Irish. He drank and sang amongst them, and was one of them. The emigrant Irish that Keane met in Northampton, many of whom had little education due to the combination of their poor Irish language skills and the fact that classes in Ireland were conducted through Irish, would be another huge influence on Keane, and may have influenced his later involvement in the Language Freedom Movement (LFM). This was a movement against the compulsory teaching of the Irish language in schools, and Keane, due to his high profile, became a figurehead for the movement. At a time of nationalistic fervour this movement went completely against the grain. Such was the outrage caused by the Language Freedom Movement that one meeting in Dublin in 1966 descended into chaos with Keane being escorted out by friend and garda Tony Guerin. According to Martin Reynolds, one of the LFM stewards 'For the revivalists, it was a turning point, for we had questioned the whole concept of nationality. We were denying that an ability to speak Irish was equivalent to being a patriot' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, pp. 185-186). According to Keane's wife Mary, in a personal interview, what had triggered his interest in such a movement was 'all the people he knew that emigrated without any bit of schooling at all' due to the educational system being 'too much through Irish', and Keane felt that 'If they could just learn it [the Irish language] themselves for their own entertainment and joy it would be better than having it rammed down their throat' [Devaney, 2012(a),

Appendix One]. Keane's involvement with the Language Freedom Movement illustrates his ability to challenge and question the status quo when reality refutes the ideal, a common trope in his best work.

Keane was also very aware of the structuring of identity on nationalistic grounds. In the City Theatre, Limerick, in 1963, following a production of *The Man from Clare*, Keane addressed the crowd on the subject of the Irish language and 'the hypocrisy of some of the people behind it' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 140). That same year Keane also wrote an article for *The Sunday Independent* titled 'Confessions of a Second Class Citizen' in which he stated 'I am a second-class citizen because I do not believe in compulsory Irish' (cited in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 141). He would continue in that article to question such constructs of Irish identity as the ban on playing foreign games imposed by the Gaelic Athletic Association and contended that such a ban 'should not be permitted to exist within the frame of Europe's most outstanding democracy' (cited in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 141). Such writings illuminate Keane's awareness of identity, be that national identity, or any other form of identity, i.e. gender, class, political, as being constructed in order to reinforce and perpetuate particular ideologies.

While in Northampton Keane applied for, and was successful in securing, a position as a chemist's assistant in Doneraile, County Cork and he returned for good to Ireland in 1954. However, Keane still longed to be at home in Listowel, and when an opportunity arose with his former employer Keane-Stack, he grabbed it with both hands. Keane then proposed to Mary, who duly accepted. Around this time The Greyhound Bar was advertised for sale in Listowel, and Keane put in a successful bid with the aid of a bank loan [Devaney, 2012(a), Appendix One]. Now a publican, Keane began to

write late at night. He started a play for radio titled *Barbara Shearing*, which was accepted by Radio Eireann in early 1958. The pub and its various characters provided endless inspiration for Keane as he admitted himself ‘I could not help seeing some of them as characters for a play. I encouraged them to sing and recite and tell stories’ (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p.66). This has been put more succinctly in an anecdote related to me in interview by the poet Gabriel Fitzmaurice, a friend of Keane’s. Keane was approached by an old customer of his, sometime in the 1960s, who said to him: ‘John B., you’re the smartest of us all, you takes down what we says and you charges us to read it!’ [Devaney, 2012(b), Appendix Two].

It was in this pub that one winter’s night in 1958 Keane’s wife, Mary, asked him a fateful question. She said to him ‘I’m going up to see [Joseph Tomelty’s] *All Souls Night*, you can come if you want to’ [Devaney, 2012(a), Appendix One]. On his return from the play he turned to Mary and said: ‘You know, I could write a play like that’ (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p.15). According to Mary ‘that very night he pulled out the table, put a few more sods on the fire, filled a pint, got a big copy book, and that was the start of *Sive*’ [Devaney, 2012(a), Appendix One]. The play may have been influenced by an encounter with an older man who was ‘a bit ancient, but he had a big farm of land’ looking for a cheap wedding ring for his bride-to-be who was ‘a young girl, a nice young girl’ [Devaney, 2012(a), Appendix One]. Keane himself was ‘appalled by the difference in ages’ and to him ‘the man was nothing but a sorry old dotard’ (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 17).

The play was completed in a number of weeks and Keane sent it off to the Abbey Theatre, but to no avail, as the play was rejected. However, the play was taken up by the Listowel Drama Group and was staged in Walsh’s Ballroom in February

1959. The play went on to win first prize at the All Ireland Drama Festival in Athlone in 1959. Around the same time, James N. Healy of the Southern Theatre Group bought the performing rights to *Sive*, and Keane received a cheque of fifty pounds. This chapter will now give a brief analysis of Keane's dramatic works, published and performed before *The Field*, beginning with his first major breakthrough, *Sive*.

1.3 – A Brief Analysis of Keane's Dramatic Works Preceding *The Field*.

1.3.1 – *Sive*.

Sive, being Keane's first major success, is important as it contains tropes that run consistently throughout his work. Firstly, the play is set in a rural location, '*in a remote mountainy part of Southern Ireland*', and in a household of the 1950s, being situated in '*the recent past*' (Keane, 1959, p. 9), a setting Keane would utilise frequently throughout his career.

The play is set entirely within the household of Mena and Mike Glavin. The household is made up of the traditional extended family, that is, Mike, Mena, Mike's mother and Sive, the daughter of Mike's dead sister. Mena has aspirations to a modern household and a 'room of her own' (Keane, 1959, p. 70) where she will be 'clear and clane of the pair [Sive and Nanna] of 'em' (Keane, 1959, p. 21), and utilises the old tradition of matchmaking to this end, employing the services of the matchmaker Thomasheen Seán Rua to rid the house of both Sive and Nanna Glavin. Thomasheen matches the young girl Sive to Seán Dóta who is 'as old as the hills' (Keane, 1959, p. 19) and arranges for Nanna to move in with Seán Dóta as part of the deal. Therefore, on the surface, the theme of the play is one of the oldest universal themes known to drama, a lustful old man pursuing a young girl, a mythological prototype harkening back to the

‘senex amator’ of Plautus (Ryder, 1984, p. 181). However, thematically, the play also deals with a changing rural Ireland as Mena Glavin’s vision of a modern nuclear family interacts with the traditional concept of the extended family through the old world medium of the matchmaker, and through the primeval chorus of the tinker characters of Pats Boccock and Carthalawn, who punctuate the play with their songs, blessings and curses and provide, as asserted by Kelly et al, ‘a warning from a ghost of the ancient Irish race to a de-spiritualised modernity’ (Kelly et al, 2003, p. 122). Boccock and Carthalawn see ‘the face of the country is changing’ (Keane, 1959, p. 104) thus they are holding up a mirror reflecting a nation in transition and offering an objective analysis of such changes. In the words of Kelly et al ‘the past is trying to tell its secret and give advice to the present’ (Kelly et al, 2003, p. 123) as tradition and development exchange blows, not only on the rural Irish landscape depicted in *Sive*, but on a national level as the nation sought to redefine its identity.

The character of Sive may be interpreted as symbolic of a new Ireland, ironically the very one that Mena aspires to. She is a bright student that may have a good future ahead of her. She is in love with her sweetheart Liam Scuab and wishes to marry for love, as opposed to the protectionism in which matchmaking has its roots. For example, as described by Kiberd, the matchmaker was often utilized as a method of ensuring farms were not subdivided, and marriage was often done for the purposes of proprietary gain (Kiberd, 1996, p. 477). Thus, two opposing ideologies clash in the play, one rooted in the past, which finds expression through matchmaking, and one of progress and education. Ultimately Sive’s death, which may be interpreted as suicide, after all Liam Scuab in his description of Sive’s last moments states ‘She took her own life [...] The poor tormented child’ (Keane, 1959, p. 109), may represent a society in stasis,

unwilling to inhabit the future and unable to move on from the past.

Mena becomes a tragic figure in the play as she is torn between two worlds. On the one hand she aspires to a modern Ireland of nuclear families and on the other she is mired in the past, using matchmaking in her attempt at modern living. Though she desires a modern way of life she cannot escape her ideological heritage. This may be seen where she states that, instead of getting an education, young girls should be ‘Out working with a farmer [...] instead of getting your head filled with high notions’ (Keane, 1959, pp. 12-13). Therefore Mena, instead of being portrayed as a cold, heartless woman, in Keane’s hands is a tragic character, caught between two worlds and belonging to neither. In the words of Fintan O’Toole, ‘She’s tragic because she has a foot in both camps, she exists simultaneously in both worlds, and therefore in a sense nothing that she can do will be right’ (O’Toole in Fitzmaurice, 2004, p. 39).

Mena’s character is also that of a strong matriarch within, what was then, a predominantly patriarchal order, and illustrates Keane’s ability to deconstruct and invert social binary oppositions of the time, thereby encouraging analysis of the power forces at play within Irish society. The play also showcased Keane’s use of North Kerry dialect, which gave his characters the ‘thickness of reality [...] and only George Fitzmaurice, another Kerryman, has come as close to capturing the rhythms and idioms of country people in their fullness’ (Fallis, 1978, p. 271). The broadcaster H.L. (Harry) Morrow, after seeing an early production of *Sive* in the tiny Playhouse Theatre in Limerick, saw that the strength of the play lay in its dialogue, ‘dialogue that is rich, as gutsy and full-blooded as Synge’s’ (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004 p. 70). Keane’s use of local dialect, while also addressing universal themes and societal inconsistencies, would distinguish him as a writer throughout his career.

However, having seen the success of *Sive* on the amateur dramatic circuit, (the play won first prize at the All Ireland Drama Festival of 1959) the Abbey's rejection of it jarred with Keane. According to his wife Mary, related to this author in a personal interview, 'that hit him. He'd an awful thing about the Abbey. It was the national theatre and maybe he felt he belonged there you know, and it being the national theatre subsidized by us, the people of Ireland. He got no recognition at all, and then some few said, "this fella Keane can only write one play"' [Devaney, 2012(a), Appendix One]. Keane continued writing and his next work, *Sharon's Grave*, would be further rooted in rural life while also channeling a mythical, pagan past to a far greater extent than he had with the characters of Carthalawn and Pats Boccock in *Sive*

1.3.2 - *Sharon's Grave*.

Undeterred, Keane submitted a second play to the Abbey for consideration, *Sharon's Grave*, published in 1960, which Keane described as 'a struggle between a sex-crazed delinquent and an upright man whose heart is pure' (quoted in Fitzmaurice, 2004, p.46). Just as Keane channeled the mythic pagan past in *Sive* through the chorus of the tinker characters, Fintan O'Toole claims that in *Sharon's Grave* 'the time-frame of the play is entirely and explicitly mythical' (O'Toole in Fitzmaurice, 2004, p. 46).

The play is set 'in a bedroom in a small farmhouse on an isolated headland on the southwestern seaboard of Ireland' (Keane, 1967, p.1) and deals primarily with the Conlee family, who live in a desolated, de-populated environment. A travelling thatcher, Peadar Minogue, comes upon the Conlee household, where he finds the man of the house, Donal Conlee, on his deathbed. He then meets Donal's caring daughter, Trassie, and her brother Neelus, who is considered to be 'a small bit strange' (Keane, 1967, p. 4), and is obsessed with the local legend of princess Sharon and her resting

place in ‘a great deep hole over there on the cliffs’ that ‘sinks down into the middle of the earth’ (Keane, 1967, pp. 7-8). Through Neelus’ infatuation with the legend of Sharon, and through the very title of the play, Keane is foregrounding the legendary and the ancient struggle between good and evil.

Keane, in this play, hits upon a pagan grotesquerie in the character of Dinzie Conlee, a cousin to Trassie and Neelus, whose physical deformity mirrors his psychological distortion. Dinzie wants to take possession of the Conlee house, through violence if necessary, in order to get himself a woman, ‘I know my value but if I have this place I will have plenty single women thinking of settling with me’ (Keane, 1967, p. 69). Dinzie’s physical disfigurement and mental potency, albeit a malevolent mentality, is counterpointed with his brother Jack who carries him around on his back, providing Dinzie with the physicality he lacks, while Dinzie provides Jack with the brain he does not appear to have. The composite character of both Dinzie and Jack is further juxtaposed against that of the upright character of Peadar Minogue, who stands up to the two brothers, and ultimately claims the house for himself and Trassie.

According to O’Toole the action of the play is ‘extremely vivid violent and disturbing. It’s sexually driven in a most explicit way’ (O’Toole in Fitzmaurice, 2004, p. 49). Dinzie, in many ways is an expression of untethered sexuality and this may be seen in his constant expression of his desire for a woman. An example of this may be seen at the wake of Donal Conlee, where Dinzie, on his brother’s back, pursues Miss Dee the schoolteacher, with a whip in his hand, eventually striking her across the ankles. Ironically, the expression of sexual physicality in the play falls to the crippled Dinzie. At the time of writing Ireland would have been a conservative, Catholic country and to write a play where a primordial grotesquerie is presented in conjunction with a

‘rampant, uncontrolled, and dangerous’ sexuality (O’Toole in Fitzmaurice, 2004, p. 50) again illustrates Keane’s subversive and challenging nature. The play holds true to its legendary framework and in the end the demonic character of Dinzie is brought to his fate by Neelus, who jumps into Sharon’s grave with Dinzie on his back leaving Peadar and Trassie to settle down together in relative peace. Interestingly the final words are left to Pats Bo Bwee, who had earlier conspired with Dinzie in his attempt to take over the Conlee house. Pats, being a man who ‘has cures, but he’s not a doctor’ (Keane, 1967, p. 41) reinforces the mythological aspect of the text as he assumes a revered status, one that is observed and perpetuated by Trassie and rejected by Peadar. The final words of the play are Pats’ as he prescribes, in poetic language, what may be seen as snake oil, or at the very best, an oldwives tale, on how to conceive a child. When one considers that ‘folk drama originated in primitive rites of song and dance [...] which centered on vegetational deities and goddesses of fertility’ (Abrams, 1993, p. 70) and views the play in this context, Keane’s ability to tap into legend, the grotesque, and the ritualistic within the folk drama, becomes apparent. In accordance with Abram’s definition above the final words of *Sharon’s Grave* reference fertility, there is constant reference to primitive myth in the work through Neelus’ obsession with the legend of Sharon’s grave, and there is a primitive base fiend present in the play in the deformed shape of Dinzie. Thus, it may be concluded that *Sharon’s Grave* conforms to the conventions of the folk drama, as outlined by Abrams, through its representation of the primitive. Despite the play’s somewhat simplistic denouement it would prove to be unsuccessful for Keane due to its depiction of such primitivism.

Ultimately, Keane was to be disappointed again as the play was rejected by the Abbey with Ernest Blythe, the Abbey’s managing director, reportedly finding some of

the play's characters 'too grotesque for words' (Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 95). Keane suspected that the Abbey didn't read the play at all as he deliberately stuck two pages of the script together, and when he got it back those incriminating pages remained glued together (Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 95).

1.3.3 - *The Highest House on the Mountain.*

Similarly to *Sive* and *Sharon's Grave*, rural Ireland forms the backdrop for Keane's next work, *The Highest House on the Mountain*, with the play being set in 'the kitchen on a farmhouse in south-western Ireland' (Keane, 2001, p. 179). First performed at the Gas Company Theatre, Dun Laoghaire, as part of the 1960 Dublin Theatre Festival, the action of the play is centered on a pressurized rural family, the Bannons. In the opening scene we are introduced to the man of the house Mikey Bannon, who has displaced his grief for his dead wife onto a longing for food, and his brother Sonny, who despite having a house of his own at the top of the mountain, has moved in with his brother to remedy their mutual loneliness. The representation of these characters in the opening scene, while providing characters that are very easily identified with, particularly in rural areas, may also be interpreted as Keane's critique of a failing rural Ireland. Rural Ireland has failed both Mikey and Sonny, and both are left to keep each other company, echoing the plight of numerous bachelor farmers in the Irish countryside.

The plot thickens with the arrival of Mikey's two sons, Patrick and Connie. Patrick and his new wife, Julie's, arrival was expected by Mikey whereas the previously banished Connie's was not. However, all is not as it seems with either party and the play begins to interrogate the notions of secrecy and claustrophobia of such close-quartered rural living. The dramatic tension of the play works on the interaction of secrecy and villainy, with Connie exploiting the secrets of others in an attempt to

reclaim his expected inheritance. He utilizes Sonny's embarrassing secret against him to exercise power over him, he exploits Patrick's secret alcoholism to turn his father against him, and reveals Julie's secret past life in an attempt to influence his father to banish her from the house, leaving just himself to inherit it. As seen in the form of Dinzee Conlee in *Sharon's Grave*, and will be seen later in *The Field*, much of the action of the play derives from man's baser instincts, in this case the greed of Connie.

There is a redemption of sorts for Connie at the end of the play when there is a lynch mob, led by Sheila Moloney's family, waiting outside the house to punish him for his association with her. Both Mikey and Sonny go outside with Connie, to assist him but Connie, according to Sonny, 'threw me to one side, and ran at them before Mikey could stop him. I think maybe he had it planned so that me and Mikey would come to no hurt' (Keane, 2001, p. 268). Connie is overpowered by the mob and meets his death at their hands. The final words of the play are left to a remorseful Mikey, who in meditative poetic contemplation considers the loss of his two sons, Connie at the hands of the mob, and Patrick who had died earlier in the play due to a drunken fall. His final words are on the subject of the villain of the play, Connie, and his ultimate redemption: 'Connie took his last chance to show that my seed may fail but will not rot and it's little enough chance any of us had to show that God's created men are greater than the beasts that tramp the fields' (Keane, 2001, p. 269), an agricultural epitaph for a man whose avarice for the farm ultimately resulted in his death and the death of his brother. Interestingly, just as with the character of Thomasheen Seán Rua in *Sive* and the character of the Bull McCabe in *The Field* there are no absolutes in the play. Connie, though the villain of the piece is also offered redemption by Keane, thereby enhancing the play's tragic constitution. If Connie did not have that redemptive moment there

would be no tragedy in his death, however what such a moment offers is an insight into Connie's mindset, one that is ultimately torn between two forms of living, and demonstrates the possibility of the existence of love within the play's avaricious villain.

Sonny, the character of integrity throughout the play, comes to a much happier end, returning to his house on the mountain with Patrick's widow, Julie and her unborn child. However, what is left for Mikey? Is he now to be further isolated, seeking refuge in the 'fryin' pan full o' chops' (Keane, 2001, p. 183) that has become the focus of his displaced desires? Though the ending of the play may appear a happy one, Mikey's situation is much worse than it was at the beginning of the play. Both of his sons are now dead, and his brother, the socially awkward Sonny, has found love and moved back to his own house, leaving Mikey alone and isolated. In a time of emigration, urban migration, and rural depopulation, perhaps Keane was offering a subtle criticism of the fate of the rural farmer, sentencing him to a life of loneliness and isolation.

There is also a clever undercurrent of the urban/rural divide running throughout the play. Sonny's inability to deal with urban life leads to his embarrassing encounter with a woman at a bus stop, and results in his social awkwardness and somewhat hermitic life back on the mountain. Patrick, the apple of Mikey's eye, finds alcoholism and the unrequited love of a lady known only as Eleanor on the streets of the urban environment. He is rescued by Julie, another urban casualty, who is living a life of prostitution in the city, one that she tries to escape from in the countryside. However, rural life is not portrayed in an idyllic fashion either, as is evidenced by the isolation experienced by Mikey and Sonny, and the sense of claustrophobia encountered when a sense of secrecy is sought. None of the characters are permitted to escape their past, with the exception of Sonny, who admits his secret willingly to Julie. Through this

subtext Keane is challenging common perceptions held on both sides of the urban/rural divide, encouraging an honest reappraisal of such attitudes, and suggesting that partisan idealism is incongruent with lived reality. The play also highlights the imperfections of the human condition, which may be seen in the potentially controversial scene where Mikey, after hearing of Julie's past, in a moment that is completely out of character for him, approaches her in a sexually aggressive manner. It must also be noted that Keane's delicate treatment of a subject such as prostitution in 1960 illustrates his ability to challenge the status quo and reveal the humanity that is often denied through prejudice.

John Finegan of *The Evening Herald*, writing of the play's opening night at Dún Laoghaire's Gas Company Theatre stated that it was 'a tragedy steeped in the phrases and accents of Kerry' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 111), and Seán Page of *The Evening Press* enthused that 'Mr. Keane has hammered out a brave dramatic language of his own and has escaped from the long shadow of J.M. Synge' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 111). The play enjoyed a long run and elevated Keane's position in the Irish dramatic canon, with Séamus Kelly of *The Irish Times* writing: 'The more we see of John B. Keane's plays of north Kerry, the more do they take on the aura for Irishmen that Tennessee Williams' plays of the Deep South must have for Americans' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 111).

1.3.4 - *Many Young Men of Twenty*.

1961's *Many Young Men of Twenty* differs slightly from Keane's previous work, in that it would be a Keane play with music. Another break from tradition would be the play's setting, set in 'the back-room of a village public house, somewhere in south-western Ireland' (Keane, 1999, p. 125), a departure from the kitchen setting of the familial

dramas that preceded it. Thematically the play deals with emigration, alcoholism, national politics, and the plight of the single mother through the characters that pass through Hannigan's Bar and the songs they sing. The bar in question is located nearby the local train station, and is often the last port of call for the numbers emigrating before they take the train that whisks them away to their fate. It is also often their first stopping point on their return home to visit from afar.

The issue of emigration is foregrounded in the text with no fewer than seven characters emigrating in the course of the play. Though the exodus from rural Ireland is devastating, as seen in Peg's mournful song from which the play gets its title, it is Keane's interrogation of the reasons behind such emigration, and his resulting critique of certain aspects of Irish society, that gives this work depth. The first emigrating characters we meet in the play are that of Kevin and Dinny, two young men accompanied by their father, Dawheen Timineen Dan (DTD), and their mother Maynan. However the motivations behind their emigration are not altogether noble, and we are informed by Danger Mulally that DTD has already sent 'approximately seven with daughters included' off to England, in what is termed by Danger as 'A wise investment' (Keane, 1999, p. 132). It is asserted in the play that DTD's motivation for sending his children away is purely financial, and this may be seen in Maynan's last words to her two emigrating sons: 'Tell your brother Padna that Juleen is for Confirmation next month, an' 'tis time he sent home a few pounds – that his father said it' (Keane, 1999, p. 134). One may also see DTD's motivation in the song he sings on entering the bar 'When you go to London town, work like Maggie May/ Like Mikey Joe, send home the dough/ Let no week pass without your father's fiver/ Rise at first light, stay home at night,/ And never ate black pudding of a Friday.' (Keane, 1999, p. 131).

Interestingly, in both extracts materialism is juxtaposed with religion, with the sacrament of Confirmation in Maynan's words, and with the practice of abstaining from meat on Fridays in DTD's, illustrating Keane's critique of the hypocrisy of many unchristian Catholics who take refuge in the sanctimony and idealism of the Church, but reject any Christian principle through their actions. This is a common trope in his work and will be discussed later with reference to *Sive* and *The Field*. Later in the play DTD and Maynan return to the pub, this time accompanied by a son and a daughter, Mikey and Mary, who they are also sending away to England. Religion and materialism are further counterpointed in DTD's last words to his departing children. As he leaves, and they are being sprinkled with the 'Lourdes water', DTD reminds them 'Don't forget the few pounds, an' God bless ye all' (Keane, 1999, p. 170). Thus Keane posits a somewhat sinister and selfish motive for the exodus of young people through the character of DTD and his cold and exploitative interaction with his own emigrating children. DTD's actions are contrasted with Danger Mulally's outrage at such behavior, and Danger may be seen to mirror the audience's reaction to DTD. Thus, it may be argued that the audience's reflection on such themes is actively encouraged by the text through the interplay of DTD's actions and religious rhetoric, and Danger Mullaly's disgust in the piece.

The political system in Ireland also comes in for criticism by Keane in the play. The hypocrisy of political nepotism is laid bare in an exchange between J.J. Houlihan T.D, his son Johnny, and Maurice, the schoolteacher. J.J. proudly announces that his son Johnny 'is starting off on his new job today' as a rate collector 'in the north of the county' (Keane, 1999, p. 162). However, under cross-examination from Maurice it is revealed that Johnny is not qualified for such a position but he 'can paint gorgeous

pictures o' race-horses' (Keane, 1999, p. 163) thus illustrating Johnny's success in getting the job is due to his father's influence. The corruption of the political class is exposed by Maurice, and J.J. attempts to use his influence and threatens Maurice, warning him 'You won't have any job here when you get back. I guarantee you that!' (Keane, 1999, p. 163), thereby further incriminating the political system in Ireland. Maurice suggests that an inability to move on from one's past as a nation prevails amongst the political class, when instead one should be looking towards the future, and thus highlights political stasis, in a time when political action is required. In a political tirade addressed to J.J. he declares:

You have the same politics as your father before you, and your sons after you will have the same politics. That's this damn country all over. You're all blinded by the past. You're still fighting the civil war. Well, we don't give a tinker's curse about the civil war or your damn politics, or the past. The future we have to think about. If there was any honest politician, he'd be damned. If Our Lord walked down the main street of Keelty tomorrow morning, ye'd crucify him again. We're sick to death of hypocrisy and the glories of the past. Keep the Irish language and find jobs for the lads that have to go to England. Forget about the six counties and straighten out the twenty-six first (Keane, 1999, p. 164).

This is an overtly political statement by Keane, challenging a political system reliant upon the rhetoric of nationalism in a time of national crisis, a time when, according to Danger Mulally's emigrant poem on the Irish Buck Navvies Association, the country needs to be saved from 'politics, chancers and crooks' (Keane, 1999, p. 166), a line that appears to have a timeless resonance, and may still be applicable in the present-day.

In the final action of the play Maurice and Peg embrace in what is a glimmer of hope for the future. Maurice, though highly critical of the state, will 'stick it out here in Keelty, come Hell or high water, T.D. or no T.D.' (Keane, 1999, p. 169) if Peg agrees to marry him. Peg, the main singer in the play, is very much a victim of a disappearing populace and social convention. She is abandoned by Jimmy, the schoolmaster's son, and is left to raise their child in Keelty. She falls victim to narrow social attitudes in

Keelty and due to her status as an unmarried mother she is presumed to be promiscuous. She tells Kevin 'I know what's in your head, the same as every other fella that comes in here [...] They know I made a mistake [...] an' they all want me to go to a dance or a picture, thinkin' to have a night's sport outside' (Keane, 1999, p. 137), thus revealing the plight of the single mother in an insular environment. The union of Peg and Maurice at the end sends a message of hope. Both have been hurt by society (we hear earlier of Maurice's dismissal, for reasons unknown, from a previous teaching post), but both find hope in each other, and thus, Keane may be illustrating that there is hope for an improved Ireland through challenging both one's own societal perceptions, and those of society at large.

The treatment of alcohol in the play is also of interest, as the proprietor of the bar, Tom, to all intents and purposes appears to be an alcoholic. One may consider the characters of Danger and Maurice in a similar fashion, Danger never having enough money for his drink, and Maurice drinking whiskey at the bar in the morning. When these observations are paired with the current of song that runs throughout the play, it may be suggested that Keane is channeling an over-romanticized, idyllic vision of pub life and the singsong that goes with it, in order to reflect the theme of the overly quixotic attitude towards emigration prevalent at the time. By doing this Keane may be trying to highlight that change of some form is needed, and instead of passive lament at the numbers leaving Ireland, active participation by all citizens in bringing about some change is required.

Although the play was billed as a comedy, it is subtitled *A Bar-Room Sketch*, and Keane's use of song in the play attests to light-heartedness; the thematic content of the play is darkly critical. Keane's use of song masks that criticism while also ensuring

that the play achieved a level of popularity amongst theatregoers. This illustrates Keane's use of humour to both conceal on the one hand, and highlight on the other, a subtle critique of social ills in Ireland at the time. It confirms both Cheryl Temple Herr's assertion that Keane applies 'a comic salve to the hurts he has probed' (Temple Herr, 2002, p. 8), and Keane's wife Mary's remark that 'in the middle of all the sadness there's a laugh' [Devaney, 2012(a), Appendix One], a technique used frequently by Keane to provide a social commentary beneath the laughs.

Keane wrote another play titled *No More in Dust*, which was produced by Phyllis Ryan's Orion Productions, and staged as part of the Dublin Theatre Festival in 1961. Set in a Dublin bedsitter the play received mixed reviews. *The Irish Times* celebrated the work, stating that 'Keane has caught the atmosphere well, and his people, for the most part, are real' (cited in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 124). Alternatively Keane's brother Eamonn was reported to have walked out of rehearsals of the play stating 'I cannot see this as a play [...] The play has nothing to say [...] He says the right things in *Many Young Men of Twenty* and you can believe in all the people, but it is not so in *No More in Dust* (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p 124). However, as this play has never been published it is therefore impossible to perform an analysis of it in this dissertation. In its place Keane's next play, and his first Abbey success, *Hut 42* will be analyzed.

1.3.5 - *Hut 42*.

In the spring of 1962 Keane's dream of becoming an Abbey playwright was realized with the Abbey Theatre's acceptance of *Hut 42*, which was originally titled *Warriors of the Skylight*. Ironically, this play was not set in the familiar rural setting often used by Keane, instead it followed the progress of Irish emigrants in England, and was set in

‘the small recreation-room of a six-bed hostel in a large construction job in the north of England’ (Keane, 1968, p. 4). The play may be seen as a continuation from *Many Young Men of Twenty* tracing the life of the emigrating Irish in England. The play follows the travails of four Irishmen, a Welshman, and an Englishman on a building site in England, and through these characters an analysis of the emigrant lifestyle is entered into. The four Irish characters; Skylight Maginty, Bill Root, Clement O Shaughnessy, and Darby Hogan, represent Irish emigrant life at varying stages, and embody differing responses to that existence.

The main protagonist of the play is Skylight Maginty, from whom the play got its original title. He is an Irishman in his forties who, as evidenced by his recollection of Bill Root’s vitality some fifteen years ago (Keane, 1968, p. 9), has been in England for quite some time, and therefore, may be located in the position of a long-term emigrant. Skylight’s travelling companion is the Welshman Idris, who Skylight rescued from a barroom brawl with the brothers, ‘three of ‘em, second row forwards on the Carmarthen team’, of a girl made ‘a teeny-weeny bit pregnant’ (Keane, 1968, p. 12) by Idris. Skylight feels exiled by his homeland and is damningly critical of Ireland, while still longing to return there. In conversation with Root he compares Ireland to a father figure that has failed to provide for his sons: ‘that’s the way I judge Ireland, because a country is like a father, too. It should be judged by the provision it makes for its sons. If Ireland is to be judged like a parent, it must be convicted on every count’ (Keane, 1968, p. 19). However, such a statement also suggests a sense of entitlement, and is perhaps a mask worn by Skylight to conceal his own guilt at abandoning his native land. Later in the play, such guilt finds expression in Skylight’s despairing attempt to attribute blame and find a reason for Root’s death; ‘somebody is to blame, only I don’t

know where to point the finger. Maybe we're all to blame. Maybe those back home are to blame...I don't know' (Keane, 1968, p. 37). Ironically, Skylight asserts a wounded sense of being abandoned by his father Ireland in order to conceal his own guilt at leaving Ireland, while Idris, his travelling companion, occupies the position of being real-life father who has abandoned his child and his responsibilities.

Both men attempt to appease their respective guilt by donating their savings to Root's widow. Originally they plan to donate all of their savings to Root's family, Skylight doing so perhaps out of guilt at his leaving Ireland, and Idris doing so out of his own sense of guilt at abandoning a child, thereby 'paying my debts so to speak' (Keane, 1968, p. 39). Their idealism quickly degenerates as the amount of money they agree to donate quickly decreases from everything to 'fifty quid' to 'thirty-six quid' (Keane, 1968, p. 39) reflecting a hardening in their attitudes brought about by their occasionally miscreant lives in England. Finally Idris suggests 'skipping with the whole collection?' (Keane, 1968, p. 39) but Skylight remains morally upright, answering that 'This is one time we don't skip. She gets her hundred' (Keane, 1968, p. 39). Such a quick transition from generosity and empathy to the suggestion of selfish moral bankruptcy and back again, may be illustrative of the moral conflict encountered by many emigrants as they attempt to adapt to life abroad, while trying to make a living not only for themselves, but also for their families at home.

The English character, Deacon, voices English perceptions of the immigrant Irish and their immoral behavior, documenting that moral decline mentioned previously:

You want to see the Paddies on a Satiddy night in London, kickin' each other's heads in an' assaulting policemen [...] When a chap can't get work back in Ireland we fetch 'im 'ere an' give 'im a job but 'e don't say thanks. Come 'is first pay-night, 'e smashes a pub up, or bashes a constable who never said a bleedin' word to 'im (Keane, 1968, p. 31).

The influence, and irrelevance of, nationalist rhetoric is also hinted at in the text.

Deacon describes the actions of the Irish in the cinema when the Queen appears on the screen for the National Anthem; ‘Paddy shouts “Up the Republic” and dashes ‘is seat down’ (Keane, 1968, p. 31). Thus, some of the bad behavior of the Irish as outlined by Deacon may be ascribed to blind patriotism and hostility towards an enemy of the past that is ironically providing a future. Bill Root, a long time emigrant, and the eldest of the group, refutes such rhetoric. The reality of the situation according to him is that ‘Isn’t it great to have England, though. Sure, only for that we’d have nothing’ (Keane, 1968, p. 18). Root describes the anti-English nationalism encountered in Ireland as ‘dangerous. You have priests an’ parsons an’ politicians every hour o’ the day blackguardin’ the English, an’ suppose the English gets wind of it all, what’ll we do? Starve on the dole’ (Keane, 1968, p. 18). Skylight, when questioned by Idris as to ‘what the hell are those – Fine Gale and Fine Fawl’ (Keane, 1968, p. 19) cuts through the rhetoric espoused by both and replies ‘Ah, it’s a game they have in Ireland. They cut each other to pieces in public, and they’re all backslapping and intermarried on the q.t.’ (Keane, 1968, p. 19). Therefore, Keane is not only highlighting the plight of the emigrant Irish, but also criticizing the structuring of identity on nationalistic rhetorical grounds. Such nationalism is exposed as an absurdity given the dependence of Ireland and its emigrants on its nearest neighbor, England, and its use in rhetoric revealed to be a strategy of the political class in perpetuating a populist ideology, thereby ensuring the survival of said political class, while ignoring social ills, such as emigration.

Two visions of Ireland are presented in the play in the forms of Bill Root and the youngest member of the group Clement O’ Shaughnessy. Root, the longest serving emigrant in the play, is in ill health and suffers from a kidney disorder. However, he must continue to work and ‘send home the registered envelope every week’ (Keane,

1968, p. 7) when the 'Poor oul' blighter! Should be at home with his grandchildren' (Keane, 1968, p. 9). Root represents the fate of Irish emigrants should nothing change, and ultimately he meets his demise at the hands of 'a motorcyclist', having 'crossed the road and walked straight in the path of the bike. Driver didn't hang around' (Keane, 1968, pp. 32-33). Thus, Root meets his end in the tragic intersection of rural innocence and nostalgia set against the urban anonymity of a busy road. One may argue that Root's death may have been suicide, as it is never stated in the text whether he died by accident or on purpose. According to Clement, who was the last to see him, 'he was depressed' (Keane, 1968, p. 29) and 'he was heartbroken...he even cried when he started to talk about his family' (Keane, 1968, p. 30), thus it may be posited that out of pure grief and misery at being away from home, Root took his own life. Through the character of Root, and his demise, Keane is offering a critique of a static Ireland and reveals the tragic fate of future generations should things remain unchanged.

A newer, more dynamic Ireland is presented through the character of Clement O' Shaughnessy. Clement represents a changing Ireland, one of education. He is studying to be a doctor and has come to England to help fund his studies 'make enough to last out the term [...] You know ... cigarette money and a few drinks now and then' (Keane, 1958, p. 11). Ultimately Clement despises being in England, telling Skylight 'I hate it! It's not a country, it's a machine! There's no time for friendship' (Keane, 1968, p. 25). Clement rejects the emigrant lifestyle and returns to Ireland. However, Skylight identifies him as an agent of change, and pleads with him to report back to Ireland of his, and his fellow emigrants, plight. He tells him 'You're the educated type. We're depending on you to tell them back there that we want to come home [...] an' tell 'em they'd better do something about it quick, because we're getting' sick of it' (Keane,

1968, p. 25). The final lines of the play are an address by Skylight to Clement, again reiterating Clement's responsibility to act as a force of change:

Tell them instead, we're the hopeless ones, the God-forsaken ones. Tell them we're lonely here [...] Tell them we want a place at home and they needn't think they're doing us a favour, because it's us, the Irish buck-navvies that's been keeping your poor in bread and butter over the bad years [...] Every time, boy, you see a sad faced woman at home handing an English pound to an Irish shopkeeper, bow your head. Let you pray then for the soul of old Root and men like him who fell for the love of a small home in Ireland. (Keane, 1968, p. 40).

In this address Skylight is channeling a vision of a new Ireland that will be able to provide for her sons, and will not compel them to the fate afforded to Bill Root, while also challenging perceptions held by the Irish at home of the Irish abroad, and those held by the emigrant Irish of the Irish at home. Thus, Keane is offering a critique of both the Irish political and economic situation, but also of the emigrant Irish, and is suggesting that change is necessary politically, economically, and most importantly, mentally, in order to remedy the scourge of emigration as represented in the play.

Another area worthy of exploration in the text is the hypocrisy of religion as seen in Deacon's religious impersonations for profit, and Skylight's assertion that 'We've got churches in every village that cost a hundred thousand quid, but there's no money for factories' (Keane, 1968, p. 7) in Ireland. The true insignificance of the Irish in England is another aspect of the text that may be explored further as evidenced in the site manager, Atkinson's, matter of fact reaction to Root's death. The nature of identity, and how it is constructed when living abroad, is also explored in the text through the character's somewhat nostalgic memories of their home life, and through the interactions of the Irish, Welsh, and English characters. Ultimately the villain of the piece is an Irishman, Darby Hogan, a thief and a suspected murderer, thus suggesting that identity may not be constructed on national grounds alone.

The play did well at the Abbey and its box office success ‘had opened a door for Keane [...], pleased Ernest Blythe, and with the Abbey actors fighting for more pay, it was essential to promote a playwright who could fill the theatre’ (Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 132). Such a sentiment was borne out by the Abbey’s acceptance of another Keane play *The Man from Clare*.

1.3.6 - *The Man from Clare*.

The Man from Clare opened at the Abbey on 5th August 1963, having originally been produced by the Southern Theatre Group in 1962 at the Father Matthew Hall in Cork. It is a play that centers on the meeting of two football teams, Cuas, a side from Clare and Bealabawn, a North Kerry side, with both sides being situated on opposite sides of the river Shannon, and each team taking turns to visit the other for their annual contest. The Clare footballers, accompanied by their manager, Daigan, visit Kerry for the game, but are forced to spend the night there, as the boat is not travelling back to Clare due to the river flooding. The opening scene is the only one set outside of the kitchen of Morisheen Brick’s house in Bealabawn, and features the Cuas team preparing to cross the river to Kerry to play against Bealabawn. The play presented for the first time a football character on the Abbey stage and ‘Keane was doing what the Abbey had been founded to do – bring the reality of life in Ireland onto the stage’ (Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 135).

The dramatic action of the play is found in the ageing footballer Padraic’s coming to terms with his physical decline, and through this, an exploration of potency and temporally limited physical prowess is entered into. The play begins with the election of Padraic O’ Dea as captain as ‘there’s no one as good as Padraic an’ we want a good captain’ (Keane, 1962, p. 13). Padraic assumes, and is positioned in, the role of

the alpha male, as illustrated by a young player, Jim Flynn, coming to him for advice before the game. In this exchange Jim addresses Padraic as ‘the best man in Clare’, who is ‘afraid of nothin’’, and who ‘everyone knows’ and ‘no one will challenge’ (Keane, 1962, p. 15). Thus, football is intrinsically linked to the very notion of masculinity itself, and Padraic’s advice to Jim bears this out; ‘Football is a sport with blood in it, a sport of strength and hard hittin’ and fair play’ (Keane, 1962, p. 15).

However, following the game Padraic no longer occupies the position of a dominant male having played badly due to his body getting older. Padraic relates his poor performance and failing physicality to Daigan and Morisheen:

One bad game, an’ all the good games are forgotten [...] I have football to burn, and I got the chances today, but when I went about changin’ gears there was no power in my knees. ‘Tis a sad thing, man, to have the heart and the temper an’ to find the limbs failin’ you at the crucial moment (Keane, 1962, p. 24).

Ironically, Padraic’s position is challenged by Jim, the same character who came to him for advice in the first scene. Jim is a younger, fitter man and he assumes the captaincy of the team from Padraic with the support of his teammates. Jim’s challenge ultimately becomes a physical challenge and the two eventually fight it out, with Padraic getting ‘a frightful hammerin’ (Keane, 1962, p. 70). The physical confrontation between the two men is brought about mainly through the actions of the female character Elsie, ‘a thunderin’ hussy’ (Keane, 1962, p. 55) and her desire for Jim to defend her, thus foregrounding the issue of gender and sexuality within the conflict between the two men. Initially, Padraic refuses to fight Jim, applying objective logic to the situation ‘I don’t want to fight you. Man dear, what good would that do either of us’ (Keane, 1962, p. 52). However, Padraic decides that he must fight Jim and not appear cowarded, in order to maintain his position in the social microcosm of Cuas and avoid becoming an ostracized subject, stating he will fight ‘Because I want room for my boat when I pull

into the pier at Cuas [...] otherwise I'd be pushed out an' that'd be the end o' me' (Keane, 1962, p. 58). Thus, Keane is highlighting the existence of a form of social Darwinism in rural Ireland, and through the horrific beating that Padraic takes, is offering a criticism of such an attitude. Interestingly, though Padraic is classed as the alpha male at the beginning of the play, he is also 'thirty-three years' old and still does not 'know the taste of a girls lips' (Keane, 1962, p. 26), therefore one may suggest that Keane is exploring the notion of masculinity and its perception, and challenging traditional ideas regarding the nature of sexual potency and dominance.

Keane also examines traditional female roles in the play, through the characters of Bríd and Nellie, Morisheen's daughters. Bríd is the younger of the two and is described in the stage directions as '*a pretty girl*' in contrast to her sister who is described as '*a plain looking girl of 30*' (Keane, 1962, p. 19). Bríd is staying at her father's house after having a fight with her husband over 'a silly thing', which according to Padraic is 'A sure sign that you're stone mad about each other' (Keane, 1962, p. 33). Bríd challenges patriarchal dominance, particularly that of her father, telling him 'You're not givin' me any orders' (Keane, 1962, p. 20), to which her father replies 'tis no wonder your husband is addled from you' (Keane, 1962, p. 20). Nonetheless she occupies the role of wife, and though she may challenge the patriarchal order, she still fulfills the traditional female gender role in rural Ireland, returning to her husband in the end.

Contrastingly, Bríd's sister Nellie exhibits a form of gender anxiety, which reflects Padraic's masculine anxiety, as she is unable to fulfill the traditional role of the female in society. Having joined the convent at her father's insistence, and subsequently left it, she ends up living at home with her father. At the climax of

Daigan's verbal attack on her, Nellie reflects on the traditional role of women in society, and her own inadequacy as a woman, but she also stands up for herself against commonly held perceptions;

There's no place for girls like me is there? The like of me were born to mind other people's children or to grow old in bitterness [...] Is it because we don't present a fair picture on the outside that there's nothin' inside of us? What do you want us to do? Pine away in some quiet corner an' drown ourselves. There's a place for people like me too (Keane, 1962, pp. 63-64).

Nellie refuses to be classified by gender despite being perceived as sexually impotent, and she alters the terms of reference of her argument from 'girls like me [...] born to mind other people's children' to a humanist and more general assertion of her belonging to the wider context of 'people like me'. Thus, through her position as '*a plain looking girl of 30*' (Keane, 1962, p. 19), who is unmarried, living with her father and 'born to mind other people's children' (Keane, 1962, p. 63) Nellie, in terms of traditional societal perception, is in a state of sexual decline. Similarly, a younger alpha male has usurped Padraic's position of dominant masculinity; thereby, in terms of traditional gender roles, he occupies a position of sexual decay also. However, the play ends with the union of these characters who are shown to be waning in terms of traditional gender roles, and in terms of basic sexuality, thus illustrating Keane's critique and subversion of said gender roles on stage and his encouragement of the analysis of such roles by the audience.

Sexual potency and the centrality of the male in a patriarchal society are also critiqued in the character of Morisheen, Nellie and Bríd's father. Despite his age, he has 'left sixty some time ago' and is now 'a next door neighbor of seventy' (Keane, 1962, p. 38), he desires to father a child with a lady from Cockatoo Lane in Listowel. Much of this plot thread is for comic effect in the play, but there is a darker undercurrent running

through it. Not only does Morisheen want to father a child, but:

I've a strong notion, too, that I'd like to have a son ... I never had a son...Two daughters [...] but 'tis a son I'd like to have. I've great stories inside in me [...] but what's the good when I've no young fella to be tellin' em to (Keane, 1962, p. 38).

Thus, Morisheen is seeking a male heir and a reaffirmation of male sexual potency, symptomatic of a traditional patriarchal culture. However, it is this desire that drove Morisheen to rush Bríd 'into marriage the same way' that he 'rushed Nellie into a convent so as you'd have the house here to yourself an' so's you could get married again' (Keane, 1962, p. 42). Ultimately Morisheen, blinded by his own selfish masculine desires, forces his own flesh and blood, his own female legacy, out of the house, and is illustrative of Keane's subtle critique of traditional patriarchy, a critique that operates in an understated manner, being masked by humour and wit.

In conclusion, *The Man from Clare* presents a debate on the nature of potency, masculinity, and patriarchy, within traditional rural Ireland, utilizing the medium of Gaelic football to explore such themes. The play was a success at the Abbey and, according to Tomás MacAnna the play 'cemented the relationship between Keane and the Abbey, and inspired a mutual trust' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 135). Keane continued to work relentlessly, and while still writing, he became a familiar face on television screens across the nation, appearing regularly on *The Late Late Show*, and he was also a panelist on *Pick of the Post*. However, though such appearances did not impede his writing it is questionable whether or not they had a detrimental effect on his critical reception, and this is something that may be debated at another time. Keane pressed on with his next work, *The Year of The Hiker*.

1.3.7 - *The Year of the Hiker*.

Keane's next play, *The Year of the Hiker*, first performed at Fr. Matthew Hall, Cork in

1963, proved to be another success, dealing with issues such as abandonment, adventure, the call of the wild, and the nature of masculinity itself. Set in the kitchen of the Lacey farmhouse, Keane returns to familiar ground in terms of setting, and brings the audience/reader into the bosom of a family in crisis. The man of the house, the Hiker, has deserted his family for the last twenty years, leaving his wife, Kate, her sister, Freda, and his children, Joe, Simey, and Mary, to fend for themselves in his unexplained and mysterious absence.

The Hiker's absence and subsequent return is central to the dramatic action of the play, enabling an examination of hatred and forgiveness in the various characters' reaction to the returned Hiker, and of the nature of family itself. At the beginning of the play the Lacey household has all the appearances of success, Mary is preparing for her wedding to the doctor Willie, Simey is studying to be a vet and Joe, according to aunt Freda, is responsible for 'The way we are today. The land in good order and the best of stock. Mary marrying a doctor and Simey nearly qualified. We'd be paupers only for you' (Keane, 1963, p. 23). Freda and Kate take care of the household duties, fulfilling the traditional feminine role in rural Ireland. Despite Joe being 'the exact opposite' (Keane, 1963, p. 16) of his father, the Hiker, he fulfills the traditional patriarchal role in the household, and assumes the place of his absent father, providing a living for the household through physical labour. Contrastingly, it is said of Simey, the veterinary student who has a fondness for drink, that 'There's a lot of his father in that fellow' (Keane, 1963, p. 12), and later in the closing of the play Joe remarks to the Hiker 'You shouldn't take much notice of Simey. He's selfish. He only thinks about Simey. He wants to blot you out of his mind altogether... a hard thing to do' (Keane, 1963, p. 87), perhaps reflecting in Simey the perceived selfish motives behind the Hiker's absence.

Both Simey and Joe undergo transition in the course of the play in relation to their attitudes towards their father. Initially, on the Hiker's return, Simey had been the most receiving of him, inviting him in to sit down and converse out of a form of selfish curiosity, as revealed in Simey's questioning of his father; 'Did you ever think about me ... not the whole family now, mind you, but me, personally – your little boy, Simey?' (Keane, 1963, p. 49). Joe, in contrast, is the least receiving of his father, giving him 'quite a mauling [...] that first night' (Keane, 1963, p. 39). The Hiker is excluded from the household and sleeps outside the domestic space, in the stable. As the play progresses these attitudes are reversed and it is Joe who is most sympathetic to his father, who 'came home to die' (Keane, 1963, p. 69), informing his mother Kate and Freda that 'He'll be stayin' in the house from now on. I'll get a doctor and a priest in the morning ... I'll go up and throw the bed together in Mary's room' (Keane, 1963, p. 77). Simey however wants to put his father out of the family and into a hospital as he doesn't 'want people pointing me out as the son of a freak' and vows that he 'won't be back till he's growing daisies and no one talks about him anymore' (Keane, 1963, pp. 75-76). Such changing attitudes towards the Hiker represent a meditation on the nature of hatred in the form of Simey, and of compassion and forgiveness in the character of Joe. Simey's rejection of his father for what appear to be selfish reasons is an inquisition into the nature of hatred. The fact that Simey has 'a lot of his father' in him (Keane, 1963, p. 12) adds further to this examination, as Keane may be suggesting that the root of hatred be merely a reflection of the hatred of the self, or certain aspects of the self. Joe's journey is from violent opposition to his father that has its roots in childhood abandonment; 'Why in the name of all that's pitiful didn't you take me with you? [...] I'd have followed you to hell because you were my father. [...] Oh! The

torture and the emptiness when it dawned on me that you weren't coming back; the hatred built up inside of me at the injustice of it' (Keane, 1963, pp. 85-86), to an attempted understanding and benevolence, resulting in his sitting with and embracing his father at the end of the play (Keane, 1963, p. 86). Through Joe's character arc Keane is offering a meditation on the nature of masculinity and the ability to forgive, ultimately equating the two concepts in the character of Joe.

The nature of masculinity is under scrutiny in this work. The Hiker's reasons and justifications for his absence are tied up in his perceptions of masculinity itself. The Hiker ascribes his wandering to his gender, stating: 'Men will be doing what I did always... the best of men. They'll quit the comfort of a bed and the joys of a woman [...] There's men like me that gets the urge for wandering' (Keane, 1963, p. 43). This is reinforced by Keane's attributing the Hiker Lacey's desertion of his wife and children for twenty years to a form of wanderlust. Keane stated 'Everyone contemplates it. Every man worth his salt contemplates this excursion off into the wilderness' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 152). While such a statement may appear on the surface to be a little trite, Keane again is masking his true motivation, an analysis of masculinity and what it is that makes a man a man. Keane is also drawing from his own experiences in North Kerry as 'he had heard of at least two score men in North Kerry who had left home [...] due to wanderlust' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 152). The examination of masculinity represented in the play contrasts the Hiker's perception of masculinity; 'A man makes his own hell, or his own heaven. He must learn for himself' (Keane, 1963, p. 50), with that of his son Joe, and to a lesser extent that of Mary's husband, Willie. It is noteworthy that the Hiker is referenced in a somewhat animalistic fashion, sleeping in the stable and walking 'around the farm all day looking at the grass

as if he never saw grass before, feeling the hay with his hands and stroking it like ‘twas a woman’s hair’ (Keane, 1963, pp. 38-39). For further analysis of Keane’s representations of masculinity in his work the reader is referred to chapter six of this dissertation, which examines the subject in more detail.

The reasons for the Hiker’s departure are also of merit in terms of gender politics. Having married Kate, the Hiker found himself in a feminized space, living with not only his wife, but also with her sister Freda. The Hiker, on his return, informs Freda that ‘I couldn’t make her [Kate] into a woman with you around [...] There was no peace or fulfillment in our lovemaking with you in the house. Even in our privacy there was your shadow hanging over us’ (Keane, 1963, pp. 31-32), and decries her religious nature, stating ‘Holy people like you should be kept a million miles away from love’ (Keane, 1963, p. 33). Thus, the Hiker has been denied the essence of his masculinity due to his existence in an overly feminized space, and seeks the road to escape sexual claustrophobia and to reaffirm his masculinity.

The character of Joe offers an alternative view of masculinity. In the absence of his father, or of any dominant masculine presence in the house, Joe ‘became a sober man at seven years of age. I never knew what humour was. I grew up overnight’ (Keane, 1963, p. 85). However, rather than shirking his responsibilities in the name of masculine agency, Joe assumes the patriarchal role in the household, working the farm and paying for Simeys’ education. Ultimately Joe exhibits compassion in relation to his father, and though their representations of masculinity differ, they both agree that ‘any man should be left pick the place where he wants to die – even a renegade father’ (Keane, 1963, p. 66) illustrating both Joe’s altruistic nature and masculine commonality on a very basic level.

Thus, two differing interpretations of masculinity are presented on stage, thereby encouraging an analysis of both. The existence of the Hiker as a legendary figure, and as a marker of time, illustrates Keane's social critique in the play. The Hiker is afforded a somewhat legendary status in the text. Simey tells the story of his admission to a fellow student that the Hiker was his father; 'The poor fellow nearly dropped dead with fright when I told him. Treated me with tremendous respect after that. They have a kind of sneaking regard for him in a lot of places' (Keane, 1963, p. 19). This legendary status is reinforced by the references to the Hiker being used to mark time. Simey relates a story about two old men conversing at 'the Creamery' trying to date the purchase of a pony that ends in one saying to the other "'Tis a long bit ago. [...] 'Twas about ten years after the Hiker left' (Keane, 1963, p. 19). The final lines of the play emphasize the Hiker's perpetual legacy. On hearing Joe's assertion that Simey just wants to forget about his father, the Hiker replies that 'He'll never succeed' because 'he'll be examining a cow someday and he'll ask the owner how old she is and the owner will say "I'm not too sure but she was born in the Year of the Hiker!"' (Keane, 1963, p. 87). Despite abandoning his children the Hiker is left with a legacy of legend. One may suggest that by affording the Hiker such status, Keane is voicing traditional patriarchal gender perceptions and, through this, he is encouraging an examination of gender roles in rural Ireland. Again, as there are no absolutes in Keane's work, his social critique operates on a very subtle level, but by holding up a mirror to rural Irish life an examination of it is encouraged. As stated earlier, Keane drew on his local experience of 'at least two score men in North Kerry who had left home [...] due to wanderlust' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 152) and presented such experiences on stage, simultaneously presenting commonplace occurrences while deconstructing the

motivations that lay behind them.

Such local inspiration would form the bedrock of Keane's next play, originally titled *The Field by the River*, and later retitled *The Field*. As this dissertation is focusing on *The Field*, the play's genesis, production, reception, context, and significance merit a chapter of its own, and will be discussed in the following chapter.

1.4 – Conclusion.

Keane passed away surrounded by his family on the 30th May 2002 following a lengthy battle with prostate cancer, ironically at the beginning of Writer's Week, the Listowel festival of literature that he was central in establishing. Once news of Keane's passing spread, tributes poured in for the columnist, the panelist, the singer, the publican, the character, and above all, the writer, that was John Brendan Keane. Keane left a legacy of work that documented both the parochial and the universal, that questioned society on both micro and macro levels, and interrogated the human condition in all of its grotesquerie and splendor. According to Jim Norton 'he wrote about subjects that people up to then had only talked about in private' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 197). However, as argued by Gabriel Fitzmaurice, Keane 'bequeathed the nation more than his plays. He highlighted the importance of place' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 340). Keane, though knowledgeable of the classical tradition, saw universality in the local and transcribed that essence to the theatre, illuminating man's darkest corners through the luminosity of his writing. Through his words, his humour, his characterization, and his representations of change, Keane challenged, in a very subtle manner, the national unconscious and continually questioned the status quo. This dissertation will qualify such an assertion through the analysis of *The Field* that will follow.

In summary, this short biography, which deals with Keane's life up until the publication of *The Field*, has identified various influences that may have coloured Keane's writing. Keane's relationship with his father and the literary encouragement he received from him has been commented on. Keane's tempestuous time as a schoolboy, in a time of corporal punishment, has been mentioned, revealing to a young Keane the gulf that can lie between the ideal and the reality that refutes it. Keane's mother's minor breakdown and his relationship with her has also been discussed and perhaps, when coupled with his experience of women while working as a chemist's assistant, had an influence on Keane's portrayal of women, and on his rejection of the patriarchal status quo. Keane's time in the Stack's Mountains was then discussed, and his exposure to an older, more traditional, almost pagan way of elemental living has been noted. Keane's use of humour to mask a critique of social ills has been demonstrated through the Tom Doodle episode mentioned earlier. Keane's emigration and his experience of the emigrant Irish abroad was then discussed, leading him to question the whole concept of nationalism and patriotism on ideologically constructed grounds. Keane's purchase of The Greyhound Bar and the influence of the ordinary local folk and their idioms upon him were discussed. This was then followed by a bibliography of sorts dealing with his published dramatic works from his first major success *Sive*, to *The Field*.

Such a biography is relevant as it gives an insight into the formation of Keane, the writer. It identifies early influences on Keane that may have found expression through his writing on a conscious or an unconscious level. Through the analysis of his dramatic works preceding *The Field* presented in it, some common tropes that recur throughout his work have been identified, such as his use of dialect and humour, a subtle social critique, and above all, subversiveness. This dissertation will examine

such tropes in Keane's *The Field* in terms of gender and psychoanalytical and postcolonial readings of the text, and will reveal Keane's masked social commentary and the subversive nature of the text. However, this dissertation will now deal with the origins of *The Field*, examining the real-life events that inspired it, and the contexts within which it was written, while also looking at the play's international production, and its reception by audiences both at home and abroad.

Chapter Two: *The Field* – Plastic Statues and Bar-room

Bathos.

2.1 – Introduction.

Thus far, this dissertation has dealt with Keane's writing up to the point of *The Field's* first production. As the main focus of this dissertation is *The Field*, the play's genesis, production, reception and relative contexts shall be dealt with in this chapter. The real-life events that inspired Keane to write the play will be discussed, that is, the 1958 murder of Moss Moore in the hinterland of Reamore, not far from Keane's native Listowel. The reaction of the local community to the murder, and the alleged murderer, will be noted, as will the exertion of force by the Church in the case, which remains unsolved to this day. Such discussion will illustrate the influence of the local on Keane, and his ability to transpose every-day events into the realm of the universally relevant will be explored.

The Field's journey from the notebook to the stage on national and international levels will then be documented. The play's development from Keane's original *The Field by the River*, to its opening night success in the Olympia in Dublin, followed by its revival by Ben Barnes at the Abbey in 1987 will be traced, thus illustrating the timeless nature of the work, which paradoxically is rooted in Ireland of a particular time and place. Such an oxymoronic co-existence in both a timeless and a temporally and spatially specific realm will be debated and will illustrate how, as asserted by Fintan O'Toole, in Keane's best work such co-existence in both realms is not only possible but essential (O'Toole in Fitzmaurice, 2004, p. 52). The international thematic relevance of *The Field* will be debated with reference to its reception in Russia in the late 1980's.

Such debate will expose a resonance in the play that transcends international boundaries and limited cultural contexts, further illustrating Keane's ability to penetrate the skin of local events to expose the essential similarities of the human condition that lay beneath the familiar.

The social, political, and economic contexts within which the play was written and first produced shall then be examined. Ireland of the 1950s and 1960s was a nation in adolescence, a relatively newly declared republic undergoing massive change economically and politically, developing from a state of economic stagnation to one of economic expansion. Such change had massive implications socially, particularly on rural Ireland, and through an examination of Ireland's changing fortunes economically, and the resulting changes in Irish society, Keane's subtle social critique of a transforming nation, as delivered in *The Field*, will be revealed.

Finally, the play's reception will be analysed which in turn will give an insight into, on one level, the audience's mind-set, and on another larger level, the national unconscious at the time. This is worthy of examination as *The Field*, despite being set in the rural landscape of Carraighthomond, proved successful with both rural and urban audiences alike. This would suggest that Keane, behind the wit and comedy, hit upon a nerve that was not limited by the traditional urban/rural divide, but instead hit upon a communal space that voiced social anxieties shared by all beneath the laughter.

2.2 - The 1958 Murder of Moss Moore.

Firstly, Keane has admitted that *The Field*, originally titled *The Field by the River*, was inspired by events that happened on 15th November 1958, in the townland of Reamore, not far from where Keane spent his summers in the Stack's Mountains (TG4, 2007). A body was discovered 'tucked well in under an over-hanging ditch in a fast flowing

stream' (Keane, 2012, p. 6). The body was that of a local farmer, Maurice (Moss) Moore, who had been missing for several days, and his body showed evidence of death by strangulation.

Murder in 1958 was quite rare, in fact, as stated in an article published in the *Irish Independent* as part of a supplement dealing with the murder of Moore, 'there were just two such cases before the courts in 1958' (Abayawickrema, 2012, p. 7), and thus the story became the focus of national attention. The prime suspect in the case was Moore's neighbour, Dan Foley, and it was reported that the two had fallen out over a boundary fence installed by Foley between their two farms. The two were due in Tralee Circuit Court the month after the murder, to plead their respective cases over the disputed land. The Garda investigation failed to identify the murderer, and the file was returned from the Attorney General with two words inscribed on it, 'insufficient evidence' (Keane, 2012, p. 6). This may, in part, have been due to the fact that a wake was held in Moore's house before it could be forensically examined, thus contaminating the scene and rendering any collection of evidence impossible.

Before his murder Moore, had taken to carrying a lamp and a long stick with him on his travels at night due to the fact that he was 'afraid of some person that was shadowing him as he returned from card games in neighbours houses' [*The Kerryman*, 1958(a), p. 1]. It is impossible to know if it was Dan Foley that was shadowing Moore, but the community were quick to identify Foley as the killer, and they subsequently boycotted him, sentencing Foley to death by isolation. Several days before Moore's body was even discovered a 'clear and unambiguous' message was scrawled on the gable of the local creamery declaring 'Boycott Dan Foley the Murderer' (McConville, 1990, p. 7).

That was merely the beginning of Foley's ostracism, *The Kerryman* of the 7th November 1958 reported on Foley's house being fired upon, writing that the 'Kitchen window in the home of Dan Foley of Reamore was shattered by gunshots on Wednesday night', with neighbour Michael Reidy hearing 'about fifteen or more' gunshots on the night in question [*The Kerryman*, 1958(b), p. 1]. The article goes on to describe how 'On April 9 last a home-made bomb was detonated in the ditch opposite Mr Foley's house' [*The Kerryman*, 1958(b), p. 9]. Foley is quoted in the article as saying 'I suppose this is part of the boycott that has been in place against me. But I don't know what it is all about' [*The Kerryman*, 1958(b), p. 1]. According to Foley's nephew, John, his uncle's untimely passing, as a result of a heart attack, just five years after the murder illustrated the power of trial by community:

The pressure that was placed on him with the boycott and all the effort he had to go through in his daily life put him under continuous strain. He was doing things all on his own, whereas he might have had the help of his neighbours before, and the whole thing climaxed on him and brought about his death (quoted in O'Connor, 2007, p.4).

Some in the community still maintain Foley's innocence, such as Pádraig Kennelly, who was working as a press photographer at the time, and spent a lot of time at the Foley household:

I became convinced of his innocence and was satisfied that his reaction – "Let them go into court and swear their perjury" – was what many independent-minded Kerry men would have said in the circumstances. In my belief the Gardaí were too quick in accepting the boundary dispute as the cause of the murder (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 160).

Foley's nephew John, in an interview with *The Kerryman* newspaper, maintains that:

There is no question that Dan Foley was framed. There were those who used the situation for their own gain, and two innocent people suffered as a consequence (quoted in O'Connor, 2007, p. 4).

This is a sentiment also explored by Seamus McConville, a journalist for *The Kerryman* at the time, who covered the murder case. Writing in the aforementioned newspaper in

2008, he posited that ‘It has been theorized down the years that Foley was scapegoated and maligned to cover the murderous actions of others’ (McConville, 2008, p. 13).

Some in the community still see him as a murderer, such as local man Paul Reidy who stated ‘We all knew Foley did it’ (quoted in Keane, 2012, p. 6). John B. Keane also felt that Foley was guilty. Referring to Pádraig Kennelly’s earlier assertion of Foley’s innocence mentioned above, he stated that Kennelly ‘is entitled to his view but nobody else shares it’ (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 161). To this day the case remains unsolved and people are still divided over what actually happened that dark winter’s night as Moss Moore made his way home.

Not long after the discovery of Moore’s body, Keane travelled to the area with Michael Wale, a journalist for *The Daily Express*, and the seed that would blossom into *The Field* was planted in Keane’s mind. Keane maintained that the investigation failed, not due to incompetent police work but due to the fact that ‘the Gardaí in question were outsiders, and little information was forthcoming from the people’ (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 160). A silent community in the face of an outsider is an aspect of the case that can be seen to resonate profoundly in *The Field*. Another factor in the community’s silence would be a form of loyalty to the community and fear of becoming an outsider by speaking out against the community. As Foley was assumed by many to be the killer, speaking out against the consensus may have resulted in being alienated by the community. Such local authority is reflected in the erection of notices to do with the murder at Reamore Cross and at Kilduff Creamery, which carried the message ‘The person who takes down this notice will be shot’ [*The Kerryman*, 1958(d), p. 1].

In a personal interview, Keane’s wife Mary related an exchange that highlights such fear of ostracism: ‘I said to one of them “Why didn’t one of ye just tell what ye

knew?” “God blast it”, he said, “We have to live there” [Devaney, 2012(a), Appendix One]. Such a statement illustrates the power of community authority over any external form of law, or as it is described in *The Field*, ‘The same dirty English law’ (Keane, 1966, p. 24), as identity is created and perpetuated through societal belonging, and through negative differentiation with such outsiders as the Gardaí investigating the case.

Another striking similarity to the Moore murder seen in the play is the role of the Church. In 1959, an appeal for information was issued by the then Bishop of Kerry, Dr. Moynihan, who proceeded ‘to make certain crimes connected with disputes about land reserved sins’ and ‘only the bishop or his vicar-general could give absolution for these crimes’ (Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 161). Locally, *The Kerryman* of 29th November 1958 reported that the

Very Rev. Michael O’ Donoghue P.P. and Rev. D. Murphy, C.C., Ballymacelligott, appealed to their parishioners last week-end to co-operate with the Gardaí in trying to solve the Reamore riddle [*The Kerryman*, 1958(c), p. 12].

This is echoed in the play by the bishop’s sermon and his appeal for information about the murderer of William Dee from a silent community, a community that is partaking in ‘the silence of the lie’ (Keane, 1966, p. 59). The bishop continues by threatening to place the entire parish ‘under interdict’ (Keane, 1966, p. 60) and enforcing an ecclesiastical silence on the community should they remain tight lipped on the issue of the murderer. He remonstrates:

But if you, by your silence deny Christ before men [...] 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 moments will be the most dreadful silence of all, for you will go to face your Maker without the Last Sacraments on your lips... and all because of your silence now (Keane, 1966, p. 60).

Such a fire and brimstone speech from Keane’s bishop gives voice to the Church’s perceived position of authority in rural Ireland, however the community’s

non-compliance and silence refutes such a perception. Structurally this scene is only one of two set outside of the public house, the other being the murder scene, thereby foregrounding a disconnect between Church and community. Similarly the real-life reaction by Bishop Moynihan to the Moore murder illustrates the Church's flexing of muscle in the case. Bishop Moynihan was trying to get information regarding the case and was also using religion in a manner similar to Keane's bishop, that is, in an aggressive threatening manner, thus refuting any Christian ideal through his actions. Thus, through the sermon scene in *The Field*, Keane is not only questioning the self-proclaimed authoritarian role of the Church in rural Ireland, but is also suggesting a major fracture in the relationship between the Church and rural Ireland, a brave and quite prophetic assertion that time has proven to be the case.

In relation to the murder case, Keane admitted that 'the drama was there for a stage play and I wanted to avail of it' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 161). In the TG4 documentary *'The Field' - Fuil agus Dúch*, footage from an interview with Keane from 1994 is shown where he states: 'you could say that the Bull McCabe has elements of Dan Foley in him' and, speaking about the murder of Moss Moore, that '*The Field* would be of that place and of that time, there's no question but the play was inspired by the events that took place there, by that crime' (TG4, 2007). The events that occurred in Reamore in 1958 had a profound effect on Keane, and stayed with him long after the murder. The power of land, and the committing of a murder on account of it, in a tight-knit rural community, as illustrated by the Moss Moore case, would form the central theme of Keane's *The Field*. Another striking resemblance between *The Field* and the events that inspired it is an exploration of power within a somewhat self-governing community, a form of common law that surpasses any external authority, a

form of communal justice. However, as within any community, there are powers at play beneath the surface and this dissertation will argue that Keane, in *The Field*, explores and deconstructs such internal invisible structures, thereby exposing ideological motive within rural community, thus allowing a transposing of the local to the global. It will be argued that though the roots of the play lie in the local and in the specific, the play itself addresses much broader themes, and examines change and identity on internal and external levels.

Having outlined the real-life events that inspired *The Field* this dissertation will now track the journey of Keane's play from its origins in a notebook tucked away in his drawer, to its production and subsequent revival at the Abbey Theatre, and Keane's transition from being considered a 'literary gombeen' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 257) to a serious Abbey playwright.

2.3 – *The Field's* Journey From the Notebook to the Stage.

When exactly Keane began writing *The Field* is unclear. Smith and Hickey suggest he started it three years after the Moss Moore murder, thus dating his commencement of the play to late 1961 (Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 159). They continue by stating that 'from time to time, he left aside the writing of the play so as to complete his other work; however by 1962 the play was completed' (Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 161). The murder of Moore had 'become one of the biggest talking points in North Kerry' (Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 159), and the fact that the case remained unsolved added further to the debate. As shown in the previous section some pointed the finger of blame at Moore's neighbor, Dan Foley, while others maintained his innocence. Keane kept the play secure in his drawer until after the passing of Dan Foley, some five years after the murder as, due to the high profile of the case, many would have identified the Bull

McCabe with Foley.

Originally Keane submitted the play to James N. Healy of the Southern Theatre Group, with whom Keane had staged plays for six consecutive years. Healy rejected the play, and when asked by *The Cork Examiner* for his reasons, he stated that the play needed ‘a lot of rewriting’ (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p.162). Keane returned the play to its place in his desk and carried on with his other work until one evening the poet, and friend of Keane’s, Brendan Kennelly stopped into Keane’s public house, on his way home from Dublin, where he was a professor of English in Trinity College. In conversation, Keane mentioned *The Field by the River*, and Kennelly asked to read it. When finished, Kennelly is said to have remarked to Keane that ‘You have a great play there, John’ (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 163) and decided that he would try to find a theatre company in Dublin that would be interested in staging it.

Kennelly met Phyllis Ryan, founding member of Dublin’s Gemini Productions, and urged her to take *The Field by the River* on. Ryan was a lady held in high regard by Keane, not only for her achievements in theatre, but also because, according to Keane: ‘Phyllis and I were kindred spirits [...] we were prepared to take a gamble on anything’ (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 106). On Kennelly’s advice Ryan made the trip to Listowel with her friend and journalist Liam Mac Gabhann. On meeting Keane and his wife Mary in The Greyhound Bar, Ryan announced ‘We’ve come to look at the Bull’, to which Keane retorted ‘He’s in the field, but he’s not for sale’ (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 163). Following several drinks Keane agreed to send her a copy of the manuscript, having discussed the play and its murderous origins with her.

Basing a play, however loosely, on a real life murder was a risky move and *The Field* ‘depicted a murder where the killer was known to almost everyone but was

seemingly safe from the law, because if murder was a crime in Kerry, informing was a worse one' (Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 164). Keane's wife, Mary urged him not to stage the play, relating in a personal interview that she told him 'John you'll be excommunicated over it, don't give that play to anyone' [Devaney, 2012(a), Appendix One]. Keane would later admit that he had apprehensions about staging the play, having received a bomb threat, and a threat to his family over the phone (Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 167) before the first staging of the play. However Keane was determined that the play should go ahead and Ryan shared his enthusiasm (Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 167).

The Field premiered on 1st November 1965, in the Olympia Theatre, Dublin, directed by Barry Cassin and featuring Ray McNally as The Bull McCabe. McNally's performance is now considered by many to be the seminal portrayal of that character. Keane remarked following the performance that 'McNally brought the cow-dung to the part of the Bull' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 168). Colm Cronin's review of *The Field*'s premiere in *The Irish Press* praised McNally's performance. He wrote:

Honours to Ray McNally for a fine performance in a role which is one of the most virile male leads for ages. As he went on he developed its traits from the cunning, the scheming, the aggressive, the fatherly and the dictatorial to a man of vanity and power, a warrior in wild earth (Cronin, 1965, p. 11).

According to Smith and Hickey 'From the moment of McNally's entrance, accompanied by his son Tadhg, the performance caught fire' (Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 167). The play's director Barry Cassin commented 'There was a sense of excitement you don't always get in the theatre' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 167). The play was a huge success on opening night with cries of 'Author! Author!' resounding throughout the theatre following the final curtain. Such a reception had not been seen in

a Dublin theatre since the production of Brian Friel's *Philadelphia Here I Come* in the Gaiety Theatre some years earlier (Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 167). Gus Smith, writing a review of *The Field* in *The Sunday Independent*, on 7th November 1965, commented:

Keane can generate theatrical excitement out of the ordinary things of the earth. In his latest work, *THE FIELD* (Olympia) there is a sparkle that has the audience in his firm grasp. More importantly he has given to Irish drama a new anti-hero who is going to be talked about as long as football is played in Kerry [...] The first act, in which the development of the plot is deliberately slow, shows the playwright in a new dimension. The stamp of the crafts-man is apparent here (Smith, 1965, p. 21).

According to Keane's wife Mary, related in a personal interview, 'that was the first breakthrough John really got in the bigger theatres in the city [Dublin]. I'd say they thought he was a bit of a country boy until then' [Devaney, 2012(a), Appendix One]. Keane himself admitted that he had found 'a pot-shot element' in Dublin 'who liked to take the mickey out of rustics' and that he had 'always found a resistance to my work from the pseudo-literati' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 258). Perhaps an example of such resistance against Keane's perceived provincialism may be found in another part of Colm Cronin's review of *The Field* referenced earlier. Cronin wrote:

At last Mr. Keane is broadening and developing, tackling the local attitude to a universal problem with a convincing flourish indicative of maturity. It's a pity that he has not less of a liking for local characters. However he has written a play which, with less exposition, could be his best to date (Cronin, 1965, p. 11).

While praising Keane's work, Cronin also criticizes it for having an overlong exposition, something that Smith's review above deemed deliberate on behalf of the author, and a reliance on what he terms 'local characters', therefore one may suggest that such criticisms may indeed reflect the urban literati's unease with the success of the rustic on a city stage. Keane admitted that he had been considered 'a bit of a literary gombeen' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 257) by certain sections of the Dublin

literati, only recognizable, as one columnist put it, ‘because of his pinstripe wellingtons’ (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 257). Keane maintained that some of these critics were ‘only barely removed from the cow-shit themselves – and there’s nothing wrong with that’ (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004 p. 258), and perhaps therein lay the conflict and subsequent projection of uneasiness with ones roots onto a rural figure such as Keane. Aodhán Madden, writing a review of the Ben Barnes revision of the play in *The Irish Press*, makes the point:

He [Keane] was raw, unsubtle, sentimental, his plays furrowed muddy tracks into neurotic Irish consciousness [...] If we came from backwoods, we wanted to forget it pronto. Our self-delusion could be better served by imitations of Syngian romanticism or the mean city angst of Beckett. Keane was plastic statues and bar-room bathos [...] How could the Bull McCabe fit comfortably into the tarmacadam of EC-subsidised farming? (Madden, 1987, p. 17).

Madden’s statement is a valid one, backed up by Fintan O’Toole’s assertion in his review of the same production of *The Field* in the *Sunday Tribune*, and quoted in Smith and Hickey, that Keane’s plays ‘tell us a lot about how we got to be where we are now’ and that *The Field* was ‘a play about a whole society in transition’ and a ‘meticulously intelligent and well-acted production of a fascinating play’ (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 257). The Abbey had decided to revive *The Field* in February 1987, with Ben Barnes directing and Niall Toibín cast as the Bull McCabe. Some changes were made to the original text in this production, the main one being the removal of the bishop from the sermon scene, being replaced by a booming voice-over and images of the cross projected on the wall. The ending of the play was also changed, and the curtain fell on the image of Leamy in a moment of contemplation before resuming his bar-room chores, as opposed to the original version ending on McCabe’s speech where he declares that William Dee will be ‘forgot by all except me’ (Keane, 1966, p. 76). The play’s revival was a great success and it would be revived again the

following summer. Michael Sheridan of *The Irish Press* commented on the revival of *The Field*:

For the second time in two years, Listowel playwright, John B. Keane, has come to the financial rescue of the Abbey Theatre with another sure-fire hit, *The Field*, that has filled the emptying coffers of the national theatre (Sheridan, 1987, p. 9)

This illustrates not only the success of, and the appetite in Dublin for, the work of Keane, but also the Abbey's use of Keane's popularity to bolster their income. How ironic that Keane, a long-time Abbey reject, was now flavor of the month with the Abbey, whose plays conveniently filled houses and paid bills.

The Field's revival at the Abbey would lead to the staging of the play in Russia, which is something that will be discussed in the next section. The reception of the play in Russia and differences in audience reaction will also be discussed in order to illustrate the presence of a resonance in Keane's work that transcends both physical and temporal realms, and engages directly with human experience and its common anxieties. The oxymoronic assertion that Keane's work is both rooted in time and place, and also timeless and universal will be debated, and it will be revealed that, in Keane's best work, such a contradictory co-existence is not only present, but is essential.

2.4 - *The Field* in Russia.

By chance, Dublin received a visit from the USSR Ministry of Culture and Government while *The Field* was running at the Abbey in the late 1980s. The Soviets asked that the plays currently running at the national theatre (Barnes' production of *The Field* at the Abbey, and Tom McIntyre's Kavanagh-inspired *The Great Hunger* at the Peacock) be brought to Leningrad and Moscow. Despite some logistical hardship and poor accommodation for the actors in comparison to the lavish arrangements made for visiting journalists, the play was a success. According to Des Nealon, who played the

part of the priest, Father Murphy in the production, when he uttered the line to Maggie Butler 'Place yourself in God's hands and you need have no fear' (Keane, 1966, p. 66) he always got a laugh from the audiences in Dublin regardless of his delivery of it. However, in Moscow and Leningrad 'there was a hush in the audience' when he delivered the same lines. He states that 'They totally related to *The Field* in Moscow; they understood it straightaway' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 260). The hushed reverential reception received by these lines in Moscow counterpointed with the laughter they received in Dublin is all the more interesting when one considers the religious contexts within which they were received. In socialist Russia, the space afforded to religion in society was vastly different to its social standing in Ireland, a point illustrated by Andrew Greeley:

Although the Constitution of the Soviet Union guaranteed freedom of worship, there is little question that religion was repressed if not completely suppressed during the years of Socialist rule. The forms of repression changed from outright persecution during the Stalin years to grudging toleration with considerable civil disability during the more recent years although there was an increase in antireligious pressure during the time of Nikita Khrushchev. If one wanted to get ahead in Russian society, one either professed atheism and stayed away from churches or kept one's religious propensities a secret (Greeley, 1994, p. 253).

Thus, the Soviet audience viewed the Church and its position of authority, as represented in *The Field*, in a completely different way to the Irish audience who 'chuckled and laughed' (Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 260) regardless of the line's delivery. It may be argued that this was due to years of religious oppression and state-encouraged atheism, which resulted in a hunger for, and an unfamiliarity with, symbols of religious authority being presented on a stage. In contrast, the Irish audiences' reaction may be ascribed to an over-familiarity with a self-anointed authoritarian Church representative, and may testify to a breakdown in relations between the Church and the public. Such a breakdown was noted in a study by the sociologist Liam Ryan in

1983, when he remarked:

A picture emerges of a people largely believing in God and in the Church, but in possession of a belief which has little impact, not just on the wider world of business and politics, but also in many areas of private morality (Brown, 2004, p. 340).

This disintegration of the relevance of the Church to the public and their lived experiences may also be seen in the fact that Peadar Kirby published a book in 1984 titled *Is Irish Catholicism Dying* (Brown, 2004, p. 340), without causing any major moral panic.

Interestingly, the disintegration of the relationship between the Church and the public in the 1980's, as illustrated above, was anticipated by Keane some twenty years earlier in *The Field*. The time of writing of *The Field* saw the role of the Church develop from the 1950's, when:

The highly politicized nature of Church authority, in an almost uniformly Catholic state, acted as a powerful cementing factor in the Republic; the rhetoric of nationalism from 1916 had made it clear that the ethos of nationalist Ireland would be unashamedly Catholic, and it was (Foster, 1988, p. 571).

According to Foster, this led to clerics inheriting 'the position of local leaders in many secular matters, as well as that of spiritual mentors' (Foster, 1988, p. 573). Foster continues by illustrating that even as late as 1962 there was 'an extraordinarily wide cross-class consensus about the right of the Church to exert social, economic and political authority' (Foster, 1988, p. 573). Thus, Keane's treatment of the Church in *The Field* and his perception of a discord between Church and community, as will be illustrated later in this chapter, proved somewhat prophetic.

The difference in audience reception of the priest's lines in Moscow and Dublin is reflective of the varying contexts through which each audience was viewing

the play. One audience watched the play through the lens of state enforced atheism while the other watched through what may be loosely termed state enforced Catholicism. Both reactions, though opposing ones, are born of a rejection of such impositions, the Muscovite's hushed silence reflecting a genuine interest and respect for the forbidden fruit of the Church being represented on stage, and the Dublin crowd's laughter coming from an unconscious rebuke of Church authority. Such an incident also illustrates the power of Keane's work to communicate globally and engage the human spirit within the spatially and temporally restrictive confines of the theatre. The reception of the play at home and abroad may be seen to be reflective of what Lonergan terms 'theatrical reflexivity', that is, 'a mode of reception, whereby an audience's enjoyment of a theatrical production is determined by that audience's capacity to relate the action to their own preoccupations and interests, as those preoccupations and interests are determined locally' (Lonergan, 2010, p. 87). The play's run in Russia proved to be a success which illustrates that though *The Field* was inspired by a local event, themes such as religion, land, death, greed, family, and survival, are globally relevant ones and therefore *The Field* occupies the somewhat oxymoronic space of being both timeless and of a certain time. The play is rooted in time, and also it may be argued, place, but the play also exists on an almost metaphysical plane, engaging the human spirit directly and exploring the darker recesses of the human psyche through its examination of such primal desires as survival, greed, lust and power. By doing so it may be illustrative of drama's ability to 'mean different things, to different audiences, in different parts of the world' (Lonergan, 2010, p. 223).

This can be seen anecdotally in a conversation related to this author by the poet and North Kerry man Gabriel Fitzmaurice in a personal interview. He had been

discussing *Big Maggie*'s tour in America with Des Kenny of Kenny's bookshop in Galway, when Kenny said to him 'They should have taken over *The Field*, isn't the image we have from all Westerns is a fella putting his hand in the earth and saying "I'd kill for this"' [Devaney, 2012(b), Appendix Two]. Such a statement illustrates the ability of Keane's work to exist in two worlds, one being the local and the particular, rooted in time and place, and the other being a unspecific space, rooted in the ancient narratives of the human condition. Keane's use of North Kerry dialect, and his basing of *The Field* on a real life local murder, roots the play in a specific time and a place. However, such specificity acts as a vehicle to a primal and globally relevant world that is addressed by Keane's thematic content. The primeval human instincts are survival and legacy, and these two primordial motivations of the human condition are central to the play, as McCabe is not only fighting for his own survival and that of his son Tadhg, but also for the survival of his own personal ideology; that is, agricultural and elemental living. The conflict of the piece lies between McCabe's primordial positioning set against a changing landscape, and finds expression on stage through the character of William Dee, who represents both a challenge to McCabe's vision of the world, and also a vision specific to an Ireland in a state of economic and social transformation. This is a sentiment echoed by Fintan O'Toole, who claims that in Keane's best work there is:

a sense of balance between two very, very different visions: a vision which is acute and sociological and very much of its time and place on the one side, and a vision which is dark and mythological and pagan on the other side, which is not simply of a different time but in a sense is of no time at all. (O'Toole in Fitzmaurice, 2004, p. 52).

Through Keane's negotiation of such 'different visions' his work touches on both on the particular and the timeless. In relation to this, Aodhán Madden's description of Keane being 'plastic statues and bar-room bathos' referred to in the previous section, is particularly apt. Bathos is defined by the Oxford English dictionary

as ‘an effect of anticlimax created by an unintentional lapse in mood from the sublime to the trivial or ridiculous’ (O.E.D., 2016, online). Thus, by addressing the triviality of barroom banter and debate, Keane is also reflecting on the universal similarities of the human condition, exploring the world at large through its existence within a microcosm. Similarly through Madden’s ‘plastic statues’ which are rooted in a definite time and place, for example, the proliferation of images of the sacred heart found within the typical Irish home of the past, Keane is again reflecting global themes, as though the statues may be plastic, they reflect, and form part of, a worldwide ideology.

The present day popularity of Keane’s plays, and their reception in both urban and rural theatres, are testament to Keane’s dramatic technique in utilizing a specific time and place to explore widespread human anxieties, while examining the human condition in its failures and its glories. Although the settings may be anchored in time and place, the timelessness of his themes engage the human spirit. This, when coupled with dialogue written in a ‘language that people understand intimately and intuitively’ as asserted by theatre director Michael Scott (Scott in Fitzmaurice, 2004, p.90), opens up a universal relevance for his plays. By setting such primal issues as sexuality, power, tradition, survival, land and avarice within the confines of a time and place, and also within the social confines of Church, community, convention, and external law, through his use of humour and purposeful wit, and through his characters having the ‘thickness of reality’ (Fallis, 1978, p. 271), Keane’s work transcends the physical confines of the theatre and connects directly with the human spirit. To borrow a line from Gabriel Fitzmaurice, Keane’s drama resides in ‘the primal heart where all true drama’s played’ (Fitzmaurice, 2004, p.28).

Having demonstrated the presence of a global resonance in *The Field* through its

tour in Russia, and debated the co-existence of his best work in both timeless and temporally limited realms, this dissertation will now address the social, political, and economic contexts within which *The Field* was created. This analysis is of importance as Keane's Ireland was undergoing massive change in terms of ideology and national identity, and such vacillations are expressed, explored and critiqued in *The Field*. Part one of the following section will deal with the contexts within which Keane was writing, and part two will explore these very contexts as represented in his work.

2.5.1 - *The Field's* Social, Political, and Economic Contexts.

Socially, politically, and economically the time of *The Field's* creation was one of great change. With reference to Gabriel Fitzmaurice's sonnet 'In Memoriam – John B. Keane' (Fitzmaurice, 2004, p. 28) (published in Appendix Three of this dissertation) the Ireland of Keane's writing was indeed 'changing' as he wrote. Ireland, having been formally declared a Republic in 1949, remained a mainly agricultural society throughout the 1940s and 1950s, and rural Ireland:

remained a deeply conservative patriarchal society, protective in its embrace of children but harshly impatient with those who stepped out of line, especially if embroiled in a sexual misadventure. (Kiberd, 1996, pp. 476–477).

Matchmaking, as seen in Keane's *Sive*, was still a common practice and was done for reasons that echoed the revivalist obsession with land ownership, that is, protection from the subdivision of farmland. However, around this time many women made the move to 'pagan England' (Kiberd, 1996, p. 477) and trained as nurses and teachers in order to escape being married off to some elderly farmer. Due to mass emigration and such arranged marriages, Ireland was at odds with the ideology of idyllic pastoralism and family life enshrined in de Valera's constitution of 1937. According to Roy Foster, de Valera's:

vision of Ireland, repeated in numerous formulations, was of small agricultural units, each self-sufficiently supporting a frugal family; industrious, Gaelicist and anti-materialist. His ideal, like the popular literary versions, was built on the basis of a fundamentally dignified and ancient peasant way of life (Foster, 1988, p. 538).

However, such a vision was failing a rural Irish population, and for the most part, ignoring an urban population in the process of attempting to decolonize the nation.

According to Declan Kiberd life on the land was ‘Spartan. Few farms had been truly mechanised and the exploitation of the soil for cash crops remained lethargic’ (Kiberd, 1996, p. 476). Kiberd continues:

Younger sons had no option but to pursue an emigrant career elsewhere. They were regularly joined in their exile by small farmers whose units were no longer economical. [...] Rural Ireland was filled with broken families, whose fate seemed quite at variance with the official ideology enshrined in de Valera’s 1937 constitution, of a society which constructed itself on the sacredness of family life (Kiberd, 1996, p. 477).

Such was the failure of de Valera’s vision and the subsequent rejection of, and mass exodus from, rural living, through emigration and internal migration to the urban centres, that the Commission on Emigration reported in 1956 that: ‘the province of Leinster was almost as populous as Munster and Connaught combined’ (Brown, 2004, p. 199). The report continued by illustrating that just nine western counties accounted for three-quarters of the ‘aggregate decline in the twenty counties in the state in which population reduction had occurred between 1946 and 1951’ (Brown, 2004, p. 199).

Such rural depopulation, when coupled with a stagnating economy, as reflected in the crises of the 1951 and 1955 balance of payments (Brown, 2004, p.201), led to a mind-set of mediocrity. This mediocrity was described by Patrick Kavanagh in 1952, in his periodical *Kavanagh’s Weekly*, where he stated ‘From [...] Independence Day there has been a decline in vitality’ and that ‘There is no central passion’ (cited in Brown, 2004, p.201) in society of the time, a sentiment echoed and expressed in the ‘indifferent and deadening rain’ of John Montague’s 1953 poem ‘The Sheltered Edge’ (cited in

Brown, 2004, p.201). Montague also commented in 1951 that ‘Ireland is at present in the awkward semi-stage between provincialism and urbanization, and the writing that will best serve should deal with the problems of the individual against this uneasy semi-urban setting’ (quoted in Brown, 2004, p. 216). It is precisely within this space that one may locate Keane’s writing of the time. *Sive*, as will be illustrated later, deals exactly with the individual’s struggle, on interior and exterior levels, to come to terms with a changed Ireland, and a new societal order, one of nuclear families, education and female emancipation. It may be argued that *The Field* is similarly located within such a context, and deals with such conflict in a far more explicit and physical manner. The fact remains that 1950s post-revolutionary, post-war Ireland was located at a time of crisis, suffering from fatigue on both economic and societal levels, and the time for change was imminent. On de Valera’s retirement to become president in 1959 the door for that change was left ajar, allowing a new ideology to take root in the years that followed.

In response to mass unemployment and emigration, the economic expansion of the 1960’s, engineered by T.K. Whitaker and Seán Lemass, was changing the landscape of a traditional agricultural society, as ‘both men committed themselves to long term economic planning for an industrialized Ireland’ (Kiberd, 1996, p. 479). In the words of Whitaker, the then secretary of the Department of Finance:

it was recognised that reliance on a shrinking home market offered no prospect of satisfying Ireland’s employment aspirations, and that protectionism, both in agriculture and industry, would have to give way to active competitive participation in a free trading world (quoted in Keogh, 2005, p. 252).

The ideological implications inherent in Whitaker’s programme were vast, and would challenge the entire notion of Irish identity in their implementation. As Terence Brown

notes:

An Ireland that had espoused nationalism for a quarter of a century and employed manifold tariffs in the interests of native industry was to open its economy to as much foreign investment as could be attracted by government inducement. Furthermore, an Ireland that had sought to define its identity since independence principally in terms of social patterns rooted in the country's past was to seek to adapt itself to the prevailing capitalist values of the developed world (Brown, 2004, p. 202).

Thus, in terms of Irish identity, the somewhat insular idyllic pastoralism of de Valera's 1943 radio address titled '*On Language and the Irish Nation*', in which he spoke of the 'laughter of happy maidens' and a 'countryside bright with cosy homesteads' (Epinoux, 2007, p. 114) was being challenged and replaced by a vision of Irish identity that looked outside of itself, towards foreign investment and towards Europe, and sought to define itself, not by its past, but by its future. This is a point put more succinctly by Victor Merriman who notes that: 'In place of an All-Ireland national unity [...] would come a new compact with capitalism itself. The nation would be fulfilled not in the achievement of a complete independence, but in alignment with global capital' (Merriman in Richards, 2004, p. 244). It is also noteworthy that 'the late 1950s saw the emergence into positions of power and influence of men who had been born since independence' (Brown, 2004, pp. 232-233), suggesting that the new regime in Ireland did not have as much post-revolution baggage as their predecessors. Thus, perhaps Ireland was no longer mired, in terms of identity, in the Gaelicism, protectionism and reverence of the past that was enthused by de Valera, but instead, as mentioned above, could look outward towards external influence and towards the future itself.

The adventurous policies of economic renewal espoused by Whitaker and the Taoiseach Seán Lemass would prove successful. In the 1960s, through attractive government incentives, Ireland would experience relative prosperity due to foreign investment in industry, as the land of saints and scholars increasingly became 'an island

of silos and silicone' (Kiberd, 1996, p. 480). Such was the level of change in the 1960's that:

The pace of modernization in the 1960's astonished many and no area of Irish life was left untouched. Between 1960 and 1969 over 350 manufacturing enterprises came from overseas to take advantage of the attractive terms offered by the government (Kiberd, 1996, p. 565).

The success of such modernization and government-led industrialization may be seen in the words of David Thornley, an historian, and subsequently a Labour Party T.D., who published a pamphlet in 1965 titled 'Ireland: The End of an Era'. In this he proclaimed that 'We are for the first time at the threshold of a delayed peaceful social revolution' (cited in Brown, 2004, p. 230). However, Ireland, and rural Ireland in particular, became a battleground where traditional forms of living and their inherent value systems, protectionism, and an identity bound up in 'social patterns rooted in the country's past' (Brown, 2004, p. 202) were being challenged by the concept of a new Ireland, an Ireland of nuclear families, an increased appetite for industrialization, and the rejection of the notion of an idyllic pastoral existence, a sentiment also noted by Thornley in the same pamphlet:

It does seem certain that the depopulation of the countryside will continue and perhaps accelerate, and that our social habits will take on a flavour that is ever more urban, and, as a consequence, ever more cosmopolitan. And this in turn will sound the death knell of the attempt to preserve any kind of indigenous Gaelic folk culture in these islands (cited in Brown, 2004, p. 231).

This assertion seems to have been ratified by history as the Irish urban population increased, leading to one-third of the states population residing in Dublin by 1979 (Brown, 2004, p. 245). Such was the far-reaching change and rejection of traditional rural life that an *Irish Times* report on the 1979 census remarked:

Another Irish myth has been debunked [...] for the Ireland of the 1970s contrasts sharply with the internationally popular image of a sleepy backwater on the fringe of Europe. No longer is this the rural island of the emigrants, but a fast-growing industrializing frontier on the edge of industrial Europe (cited in Brown, 2004, p. 246).

Due to emigration and internal migration to the urban centres from rural Ireland in the 1950s and 1960s, modern industrial Ireland met with little resistance from proponents of her predecessor. Thornley remarked ‘What is remarkable, almost to the point of incredibility, is the passiveness with which this change has been accepted inside a single generation’ (quoted in Brown, 2004, p. 232). However, such an assertion must also be questioned when the lack of agency afforded to the rural Irish voice, in a time of economic and urban centred development and growth, is taken into consideration.

One voice that arose from an almost forgotten rural Ireland was that of Keane, who, for the most part, set his plays in rural Ireland, in the Ireland that he was experiencing on a day-to-day basis as a publican in North Kerry. The Ireland of Moss Moore and Dan Foley, the Ireland of *The Field*'s murderous origins, had not simply vanished. Traditional rural Ireland may have lost import as a ‘new’ Ireland transitioned into an urban centred, progressive nation, but the day-to-day realities for people living in rural Ireland refuted such an idealized, industrialized and modernized notion of state. An example of this can be seen in the Farm Modernization Scheme employed by the Department of Lands in 1974 in order to bring Irish agriculture into line with EEC practice which, in effect, forced the small farmer, whose farm was deemed to be ‘transitional’, that is, non-commercial, into early retirement (Brown, 2004, p. 251). By imposing such regulations on rural Ireland the leaders of the modern state created a sense of uncertainty about the future in rural Ireland as ‘a way of life that had once been extolled as the authentic base upon which the nation securely rested was no longer considered viable in Ireland in her new age’ (Brown, 2004, p. 252). Rural life in Ireland remained difficult despite the relative national prosperity encountered in the 1960s and Keane, in his best work, voices concerns regarding the future, not only of provincial

life, but of the state as a whole, as clashing ideologies jostle for position in an changing nation, and rural Ireland, once the centre, became marginalized to the fringes of a new Irish identity.

Having discussed the social, political, and economic contexts within which the play was written, and the changes in Ireland brought about by such a time of re-invention, this dissertation will now look at how these changing times were reflected in Keane's work, particularly *Sive* and *The Field*, beginning with reference to Gabriel Fitzmaurice's sonnet 'In Memoriam John B. Keane'. Keane's dramatization of a changing Ireland, one that 'was changing as' he 'wrote' (Fitzmaurice, 2004, p. 28) (Appendix Three, attached), and the conflicts that lie therein, will be illustrated, as will Keane's subtle critique and exploration of the unseen power forces at play in Irish society at that time. The conflict between community and institution present in his work will be commented on, and it will be shown that through Keane's representation of such conflicts, powerful ideological apparatuses are deconstructed by Keane, and the injustices and hypocrisies that lie within such hegemonic devices are exposed.

2.5.2 - *The Field's* Representation of Social, Political, and Economic Contexts.

As mentioned in relation to Fitzmaurice's sonnet previously, this 'New Ireland' did indeed hold that Keane's writing was of 'Ireland past' (Fitzmaurice, 2004, p. 28). For many Keane was merely considered a country-boy, achieving popular success at the time but not becoming a critical success until recent years, which in itself may be symptomatic of modern Ireland's dismissal of its heritage, while drunk on the perfume of a new industrial, economically prosperous Irish identity. While superficially his work may appear to be mired in the past, on closer study the universality of his themes, 'the timeless things' from 'the primal heart' of Fitzmaurice's tribute (Fitzmaurice, 2004,

p. 28), would repudiate such an errant reading of his work. It may be argued that Keane belonged to both worlds of Ireland ‘Past’ and ‘New’, and it is through his negotiation of both worlds in his work that a very subtle critique of both realms is offered.

The conflict between old Ireland and its modernization finds its expression in *The Field* most obviously in the character of the Bull McCabe. McCabe is a tragic figure, as described by Fintan O’Toole, who defines tragedy as occurring when:

There are two worlds morally, ethically, socially, culturally; there are two ways of understanding the world, two human frameworks, two sets of terms of reference for how we should live, which have equal weight and which therefore trap people within the no man’s land or no woman’s land between the two of them. (O’Toole in Fitzmaurice, 2004, p. 35).

McCabe is trapped within ‘two human frameworks, two sets of reference for how we should live’. On the one hand McCabe lives elementally and instinctually, he has a primal, almost pagan, relationship with the land, and due to his working the land in question, feels entitled to it through an unwritten law of the land which forms part of old Ireland’s unconscious constitution. He tells the barman and auctioneer Mick that ‘’twas our sweat that fenced it and our dung that manured it’ (Keane, 1966, p. 36), thus ‘’twould give me as much claim to the field as the woman who has it up for sale’ (Keane, 1966, p. 18). However McCabe is met with the irresistible force of a changing Ireland in the character of William Dee, who is referred to by McCabe as ‘some hangblasted shagger of a stranger’ (Keane, 1966, p. 21), ‘an imported landgrabber’ (Keane, 1966, p. 44), and ‘a foreign cock with hair oil and tie-pin’ who will ‘do me out o’ my rights’ (Keane, 1966, p. 34). The fact that Dee is continually referred to as an outsider is of note, as he constitutes part of the emigrant Irish, having made a success of himself in England, and this will be explored further in chapter four of this dissertation which offers a postcolonial reading of the play. Thus, McCabe is caught in no man’s

land as his primal mode of existence is threatened by a changing rural landscape, and he commits the ultimate revenge by killing, albeit accidentally, the representation of a new industrial Ireland, one that contains a death sentence for the praxis of McCabe's world.

Thus, *The Field* may be seen to represent a battleground where tradition and heritage clash with a vision of Ireland that refutes traditional, rural life. Social, political, and economic changes in rural Ireland find expression through the conflict in the play. An example of this is Keane's treatment of the Church. It is the two main institutions of power that conduct the investigation in to the murder of Dee, that is, the law (Sergeant Leahy) and the Church (Father Murphy). The law is cast as an exteriority to McCabe's community early in the play when it is described as 'the same law the whole time. The same dirty English law' (Keane, 1966, p. 24). However, it is the exclusion of the Church to the role of outsider that signifies a shift in rural Ireland. According to Marie Hubert Kealy:

Historically, the clergy has exercised considerable influence in the daily life of Irish Catholics. The tales in William Carleton's *Traits and Stories* and George Moore's *The Untilled Field* present views of the Church which both illustrate the leadership of the parish priest in moral and political matters and attack the repressive aspects of such control (Kealy, 1989, p. 294).

No such controlling influence is afforded to the Church in *The Field* as neither the priest nor the sergeant can pick the lock of silence in the community regarding Dee's murder. The conflict between community and institution is apparent in McCabe's tirade against the sergeant and the priest 'The two of you there have the power behind you. Why isn't it some other man you picked, Sergeant, to go searching with you? [...] You have the law well sewn up, all of you ... all nice and tidy to yourselves' (Keane, 1966, p. 74). The fact that the law is referred to as 'the same law the whole time. The same dirty English law' (Keane, 1966, p. 24) hints at Ireland's colonial past and the resultant

detachment from, and opposition to, the colonizer's authority by the native community. The conflict between community and institution in Keane's work often resides in the space between the noble ideal and reality that refutes it, and through his examination of that space, Keane may be seen to offer a critique of the hypocrisy of the ideologically potent forces of Irish society at the time.

An example of this may be seen in one of Keane's earlier works and his first major success, *Sive*. *Sive* is set in rural Ireland 'in the recent past' (Keane, 1959, p. 9), and deals primarily with the collision of two opposing interpretations of rural Irish life, one a traditionalist view, and the other a far more modernizing view. The old way of living is represented by the extended family that the protagonist, Mena, finds herself living in. She and her husband are sharing a house with Nanna, her husband's mother, and the child Sive. It must be noted that Sive is not Mena's child, but that of her husband's dead sister, and she is referred to by Mena as 'a bye-child, a common bye-child' (Keane, 1959, p. 69). Thus, Mena arranges, along with the matchmaker Tomasheen Seán Rua, for the schoolgirl Sive to be married off to a lusty farmer who is 'as old as the hills' (Keane, 1959, p. 19). It is through Mena's desire for a house of her own where she will be 'clear and clane of the pair [Sive and Nanna] of 'em' (Keane, 1959, p. 21), that a modernizing Ireland finds its voice, one that is attempting to break free from the shackles of tradition. Sive herself is representative of this modern Ireland as she is a clever, educated girl who rebukes the tradition of the matchmaking and wants to marry her sweetheart, Liam Scuab, for love instead. Ultimately she is caught in the crossfire where tradition trades blows with development, and the modernizing ideal is refuted by the reality of day-to-day living in rural Ireland, resulting in Sive's ambiguous demise. It is unclear in the text whether Sive had a hand in her own death, or if it was

an unfortunate accident, however Liam Scuab's description of Sive's demise would suggest the former 'She took her own life [...] The poor tormented child' (Keane, 1959, p. 109). The taking of her own life by Sive would add weight to Keane's critique of rural Ireland's crisis of identity in a time of change, as Sive, who inhabits the space between two opposing ideologies, and is torn between them, commits the ultimate rejection of both worlds. She is a character reflective of a modernizing Ireland in relation to education and the role of women in society. However, it is this modernizing society, and its conflict with traditional rural Ireland, which finds its expression through Mena's matchmaking, that isolates Sive and renders her impotent against forces of change. If one is to interpret the ending of the play as Sive's suicide then one may suggest that she is exercising her only form of agency, that is, her bodily existence, and rebuking the incongruences that lie between reality and the ideal. Such a reading further illuminates Keane's critique of a society willing to ignore its heritage in the face of development, and exposes Keane's insight into the imperfections of the human condition when placed under external ideological pressures of conformance to change.

Another example of communal reality refuting the institutional ideal can be seen when Liam Scuab arrives at the Glavin house to plead with Mike and Mena for Sive's freedom, having heard of the arranged marriage from the tinker characters Pats Boccock and Carthalawn. Liam goes on to channel the image of 'Him who died on Calvary' and the 'terrible sadness of His Bloody Face as He looks at ye now' (Keane, 1959, p. 75), utilizing the ideals of Christianity to plead his case. However, harsh reality refutes the noble ideal and he is hunted out of the house as Mena says to Mike 'Well, put a stir on yourself. You have a priest to see' (Keane, 1959, p. 76). Thus, the Church is complicit in the arranged marriage of Sive despite the match being in complete

opposition to any Christian principle. Through this clever use of juxtaposition Keane explores the world of the ideal and the conflicting reality that refutes it, illustrating a fracture between the ideals of institution and its treatment of the community in reality, thereby de-centring a powerful force in rural Ireland, and proffering a reason for such conflict between institution and community.

In *The Field* the character of Mamie is a victim of the Church and its views on contraception and tells both the sergeant and the priest that she is pregnant and will be ‘off on my annual holidays soon’ adding that she would send her husband to the gallows ‘if I thought I could spend a year without having a baby’ (Keane, 1966, p. 68). The incongruence of institutional ideal and harsh realities within the community is again highlighted by Keane here as, due to her gender Maimie is enslaved both by patriarchal tradition and by religion. A more detailed analysis of her character and a discussion on Keane’s portrayal of women may be found in chapter five of this dissertation.

The division between Church and community becomes more apparent if one looks at the structure of the play. Just two scenes occur outside of the bar, the murder and the bishop’s sermon, thus, as asserted by Kealy ‘Both the murder and the sermon occur outside the villagers daily life’ thereby the ‘spheres of religious belief and moral practice’ (Kealy, 1989, p. 295) are divided and moral practice is no longer under the guidance of religion. To separate Church and community in rural Ireland in the 1960’s was a brave move by Keane, one that reflected a changing Ireland at the time of writing, but also foresaw the decline of the power of the Church that has occurred in recent years, and illustrates Keane’s ability to channel changes in the social context within which he was writing, and examine such changes on both personal and collective levels.

In *The Field* the conflict between institution and community is also voiced

through the juxtaposing of McCabe's common law of the land against the official laws of state. McCabe's assertion that both the priest and the guard having 'the law well sewn up, all of you ... all nice and tidy to yourselves' (Keane, 1966, p. 74) does not reflect the true image of the law in Carraighthomond. McCabe casually omits his own interpretation of the law, an interpretation that the entire community submits to, and partakes in, in the face of examination by 'official' law. His sense of entitlement to the field being put up for auction by the widow Butler, his sense of historical inheritance through his working of the land, and his will to survive, all inform the self-inscribed constitution of what may be called 'law' by McCabe. Ultimately the community in Carraighthomond subscribe to McCabe's version of law and provide him with an alibi for the night of the murder, and through their silence when under investigation by the guard and the priest, reject the so-called law of state. Through this, Keane further dramatizes a discord between institution and community, and ultimately there is only tragedy to be found in the gulf between the two, as, to repeat O'Toole, tragedy occurs when there are two competing, equally weighted world views presented and one finds oneself trapped 'within the no man's land or no woman's land between the two of them' (O'Toole in Fitzmaurice, 2004, p. 35). Thus, by dramatizing the conflict between institution and community Keane deconstructs traditional Irish ideological powerhouses and exposes the injustices and hypocrisies therein.

In conclusion, this section has examined the changing social, political, and economic contexts of an Ireland in transition at the time of writing of *The Field*. The reflection of such changes in Keane's work has been illustrated through his representation of changing physical, social, and moral landscapes, and through his dramatization of the conflict between institution and community, as seen in both *Sive*

and *The Field*. The next section will examine the play's reception and resonance with both urban and rural audiences, and will examine what such reactions may reveal on a nationally unconscious level.

2.6 – From Provincial Claustrophobia to an ‘Inescapable Inheritance’: *The Field*'s Rural and Urban Receptions.

The success and longevity of the play, which is still performed regularly in both urban and rural theatres suggests, on one level, an appreciation of the humour and wit present in *The Field*, of which there is plenty. However, on another level, such success indicates an identification being made by the audience with the play on the levels of theme and character. The drama critic Michael Sheridan makes the point that ‘The universal truths about people can oftentimes be more clearly expressed in the claustrophobia of the provincial setting’ (Sheridan, 1987, p. 9). Firstly, Sheridan's use of the term ‘universal truths’ requires some attention, as it is an overly simplistic, generalising term. In relation to Keane's work perhaps the ‘timeless things’ that reside in ‘the primal heart where all true drama's played’ of Gabriel Fitzmaurice's sonnet ‘In Memoriam John B. Keane’ (Fitzmaurice, 2004, p. 28) (Appendix Three, attached) may be a more useful transcription of the term, as it speaks to Keane's ability to interrogate humanity and its interaction with the surrounding social world on a basic, though not necessarily simple, level. Keane's work, for the most part, interrogates the human condition within an insular parochial environment, and, in the form of Keane's traditional rural Irish settings, he presents a society pared back to its essentials in order to examine the human condition stripped of its possessions. Sheridan's use of the term ‘claustrophobia of the provincial setting’ carries a pejorative charge and implies that the

rural, local setting of Keane's play is somewhat claustrophobic, that is, enclosed, confining, oppressive, and stifling. It is this use of the term 'claustrophobia' that this dissertation will examine in the analysis that follows, and it will be argued that the 'claustrophobia' referred to by Sheridan enables an exposition of humanity within the microcosm of the limited human interaction encountered in the provincial setting, thereby illustrating 'the universal truths about people' on an elemental level.

This 'claustrophobia of the provincial setting' may be seen in Keane's *The Field*, and Carraighthomond's adherence to such a setting will now be debated. The majority of the action takes place in the communal space of Flanagan's bar, with the exceptions being the murder scene and the bishop's sermon, and there is a familiarity expressed between all of the characters in the play, bar William Dee. Dee is cast as an outsider to the familiar and insular world of the residents of Carraighthomond, and in the end he pays the ultimate price for not being a part of that insular realm. Both Carraighthomond and Flanagan's bar, which is the communal space in the village, are sites of enclosure, and by locating his characters in such a confined setting Keane is presenting a society under examination. The character of Leamy, often the voice of conscience in the play, falls victim to this sense of enclosure. His questioning of the dominant social order within the confined space of Carraighthomond, and his desire to 'be different from *them*' (Keane, 1966, p. 56) results in his removal from that space, which is attributed on the surface to his being sent away to stay with Maimie's 'sister in the Midlands' having being diagnosed by the doctor as suffering from his 'nerves' (Keane, 1966, p. 64). However, such a challenge to the dominant social order, as represented by Leamy cannot exist in an enclosed, oppressive space, much as William Dee's challenge to it was, quite literally, slain. Alternatively, one may take the

viewpoint that Leamy was removed from this environment for his own benefit, and Maimie was acting from a position of love and hope. Perhaps having seen the inertia bred of enclosure within Carraigthomond, and realizing Leamy's incongruence with it, Maimie decides to remove him from such a stifling environment.

Leamy's fate is foreshadowed in his discussion of a previous altercation in the bar, one that involved Mr Broderick, the three Blezzop brothers, and the Civic Guards. Though this altercation only takes up a few lines of the play, it is something that should not be overlooked, particularly in the context of Sheridan's 'claustrophobia of the provincial setting'. One may interpret that the Blezzops form part of the dominant class of Carraigthomond, referred to by Leamy's father as 'great men' despite nearly beating a man to death 'the day after the big hurling match' (Keane, 1966, p. 55). Mr Broderick, 'a small man', challenges their authority by declaring 'Get out of my way. I won't drink in the same house as the likes of you' (Keane, 1966, p. 55). This results in Mr Broderick being beaten up by the Blezzops, as the Civic Guards turn a blind eye and slip 'out the back door the minute the small man was hit' (Keane, 1966, p. 55). Later the community's insularity is all the more apparent as the Civic Guards drink in Leamy's father's bar with the Blezzops and Broderick is referred to by one of the Civic Guards as being 'an awkward man' (Keane, 1966, p. 56). This example illustrates that, through claustrophobia and violence, a form of ideological hegemony is perpetuated in Carraigthomond. Leamy admires Broderick, claiming that 'He was no pity. He was a brave man' (Keane, 1966, p. 56). Ultimately Broderick's challenge to the powers of Carraigthomond failed and he removed himself from this insular world, having 'gone to England' (Keane, 1966, 56). Likewise, Leamy cannot continue in this world, and be it through fear or through love, Maimie admits defeat in the face of a society unwilling to

change, and removes him from it.

It may be argued that the audience, though they may identify with the characters on stage, and can relate to the play's thematic content, are also excluded from this provincial enclosed space, and therefore may observe, in quiet objectivity, the workings of blinkered humanity, thereby enabling an examination of the human condition as presented before them. Thus, I would hold Sheridan's assertion, though somewhat generalising, to be an astute one nonetheless, as through Keane's utilization of 'the claustrophobia of the provincial setting' the savagery within it may be exposed, thereby revealing 'universal truths' of human nature in a very clear and essential manner. Keane's use of this technique also facilitates an interrogation of society at large through its mirroring in a world in miniature. Dark power-forces are at play in Carraigthomond as much as they are in any other part of the world, be it Dublin, Dubai or Ballydehob. The 'universal truths about people' that Keane interrogates through the 'claustrophobia of the provincial setting' are not always pretty ones, but they are interrogations that Keane foregrounds in his work. By presenting the workings of flawed humanity, laid bare in the provincial setting, it may be argued that Keane is encouraging an interrogation of the human condition and its relationship with society on both collective and personal levels for the audience/ reader.

Naturally, rural audiences were a lot closer to the world portrayed by Keane on stage, and therefore their identification with the characters and themes represented by Keane may have resulted from their first-hand experience of rural life in a changing Ireland. However, what of the urban audience? What can be said of Keane's success with them? In *The Irish Press* dated 7th July 1987, Aodhan Madden, writing of the revised version of the play that was performed at the Abbey Theatre some twenty odd

years after its original production, contended that:

Dubliners discovered in Keane a writer who spoke to them of their deepest fears, their inescapable inheritance. They saw an Ireland of brutes and saints, moving statues and sexual savagery, hidden murder, shame. The Abbey did its best business in years (Madden, 1987, p. 17).

As a result of the massive internal migration from the rural to urban centres seen in the 1950s and 1960s (Brown, 2004, p. 245) a lot of the urban populace was not that far removed from rural Ireland, thus they had a shared history with rural Ireland, or as Madden puts it in the quote above, 'an inescapable inheritance'. The Bull McCabe can be seen to represent rural Ireland, a sphere under threat from a new vision of Ireland, and many in rural Ireland, despite McCabe's aggressive nature, would have identified with him and his assertion that 'God almighty. 'Tis a sin to cover grass and clover with concrete' (Keane, 1966, p. 38). Audiences in urban Ireland, through their roots in the countryside, and perhaps through their own experience of forced migration from a lifestyle that was no longer tenable, would also have registered McCabe's concerns. Land, its possession, and above all, its use in providing a somewhat idealistic, self sufficient way of agricultural living, in a relatively newly independent post-colonial Ireland was an extremely important thing, both on practical and symbolic levels. In rural Ireland the notion of land, as both a means of living and as a repository of Irish identity, was something that was under threat from increased industrialization and a departure from a primarily agricultural economy. Therefore, McCabe's relationship with land is an aspect of his character that audiences would have identified with, resonating with rural audiences and their everyday lives, and with urban audiences through a shared history of colonization, rural heritage, and post-independence nationalistic rhetoric. The elevated status of land is reflected through McCabe's use of religious terminology in describing nature, which suggests a deification of the land,

implying an almost pagan sense of elemental living. On hearing of Dee's plans for the field, McCabe asserts that 'to bury my sweat and blood in concrete. It's ag'in God an' man' (Keane, 1966, p. 44), thus suggesting a spiritual connection between McCabe and his form of rural living. This notion is reinforced when McCabe and Tadhg wait in the dark for the arrival of Dee to give him 'A good fright' (Keane, 1966, p. 44). In a highly poetic line McCabe engraves his own origin myth on the land around him as he exclaims to Tadhg 'Listen and you can hear the first growth of the grass. The first music that was ever heard' (Keane, 1966, p. 47). Land is both king and God to McCabe.

This is also evidenced by McCabe's explanation of his disintegrated relationship with his wife, with whom it has been 'eighteen years since I slept with [...] or spoke to' (Keane, 1966, p. 48). The reason for such discord being that he 'walloped her more than I meant, maybe' (Keane, 1966, p. 49) after discovering that she had given permission 'to a tinker's widow to let the pony loose in one of the fields [...] an' grass scarce. [...] Cripes, Tadhg, a tinker's pony would eat the hair off a child's head' (Keane, 1966, pp. 48-49), thus revealing both McCabe's obsessive relationship with land and his aggressive nature. Furthermore, McCabe expresses remorse at the shooting of the pony 'it often played on my conscience. If 'twas an ass now, 'twouldn't matter, but a pony is a pony' (Keane, 1966, p. 49), but does not reference any attack of conscience at the hitting of his wife which he mentions in the very same section of dialogue, thus illustrating the primacy of nature and elemental living within his character and reinforcing the assertion made by Gabriel Fitzmaurice in a personal interview that "nature is very big in these people. Sometimes they are Christians but they are also pagans" [Devaney, 2012(b), Appendix Two]. This close, almost spiritual

relationship with the land is challenged by William Dee, who plans to ‘cover an acre or so with concrete, move in my machinery and I’m in business’ (Keane, 1966, p. 32), and it is precisely this challenge that facilitates the expression of both physical and mental conflict in the play.

Thus, Keane is giving voice to social, cultural and economic anxieties present in the Ireland of his time, and the success over time of the play in both rural and urban environments testifies to his skill in documenting change in rural Ireland, and also tapping into what could be termed the national unconscious, as both rural and urban audiences identified with his characters and their prejudices and concerns, despite their grotesque nature. The popularity of *The Field* illustrates that there is a certain resonance to be found in it, on both conscious and unconscious levels. The subconscious, on personal, national, and societal levels, and how it is probed and explored in *The Field*, is something that will be looked at in the following chapter of this dissertation, one that will explore unseen resonances that lie beneath *The Field* within the framework of a psychoanalytical reading of the text.

2.7 – Conclusion.

In conclusion, this chapter has discussed the origins of Keane’s *The Field* and has illustrated how real-life events inspired the work. The details of the unsolved murder case of Moss Moore have been documented, and the effect of social ostracism and trial by community on the main suspect, Dan Foley, has been debated. The influence of this case on Keane has been shown and some commonalities between *The Field* and the events that inspired it have been identified.

Keane’s dramatization of such real-life events in *The Field*, and his ability to transcribe the local and the microcosmic into globally relevant pieces of theatre has

been shown with reference to the play's international appeal, and through the application of Aodhán Madden's apt metaphor 'plastic statues and bar-room bathos' to the text. It has also been illustrated how Keane, through basing *The Field* on local events, and through his use North Kerry dialect, roots the play within a specific time and place. It has then been shown how Keane utilises such a rooting as a vehicle to explore broader, globally relevant concerns, thereby revealing the similarities of the human condition through their existence within a microcosm.

The social, political, and economic contexts within which the play was written were then discussed, and these are hugely significant as the Ireland of Keane's writing of *The Field* was undergoing massive change. Ireland was in a state of transition from an insular, agricultural society to an outward-looking modernizing state. Emigration and internal migration had resulted in rural depopulation, and the pastoralism and protectionism enshrined in de Valera's constitution was replaced by the expansive policies of Whitaker and Lemass. Socially, much of the rural populace found themselves adrift on this new sea of change, unsure of what lay ahead for the rural Ireland that had formed part of their heritage. The reflection of these contexts, and their effect on rural Ireland, in Keane's work has been illustrated through his representation of changing physical, social, and moral landscapes. Keane's subtle social critique of both the harsh reality of the past and the progressive idealism of the future finds its expression through his tragic representation of the collision of two competing ideologies, and in the portrayal of the fracture between community and institution in his work. Ultimately, through acquiescence or domination, the inhabitants of Carraigthomond remain tied into the Bull McCabe's vision of it, despite being surrounded by a world that is changing. Therefore it could be argued that Keane is

asserting that the past is not perfect, nor is the future, a statement that may also resonate outside of rural Ireland as a nation struggles to identify itself.

The reception, and popularity, of *The Field* in both rural and urban theatres has been discussed and it has been posited that one may ascribe the play's popularity with rural audiences to a relevance to their daily lives coupled with the presence of wit, written in a dialect they could relate to. *The Field's* popularity with urban audiences is more complex, but it has been suggested that the audience's shared heritage of rural living, colonization, and nationalism enabled them to locate a resonance in his work. *The Field's* rural and urban popularity may also be ascribed to his exposition of the human condition, and this has been discussed in terms of the claustrophobia inherent to his provincial settings which make such an exposition all the more apparent.

Keane's popularity nationally, in both urban and rural theatres, and internationally, would suggest that Keane's work taps into the unconscious world of his audience and something in his work resounds profoundly within. To return to Gabriel Fitzmaurice's sonnet, it could be argued that though Ireland was indeed 'fast changing from the times we took the boat', Keane, much to the chagrin of 'those who follow fashion' and accused him not moving with 'New Ireland', remained focused on the social order around him, discovering within it the 'timeless things' that resided in 'the primal heart where all true drama's played', thereby communicating with both urban and rural audiences on psychologically resonant level (Fitzmaurice, 2004, p. 28) (Appendix Three, attached). An analysis of this is something that will form a further portion of this dissertation, as one delves into what may lie beneath *The Field* on psychoanalytical and postcolonial levels and also in terms of gender. This enquiry will begin in the next chapter, which looks at *The Field* through a psychoanalytical lens, and

will attempt to identify unconscious motivations behind its characters' actions, and unconscious identifications made by audiences, both rural and urban, with the play.

Chapter Three: A Psychoanalytical Reading of *The Field*.

3.1 - Introduction.

Thus far, this dissertation has addressed a number of relevant issues in relation to *The Field*. The first and second chapters form a contextual backdrop for the body of this work and provide some insight into the personal and societal factors that the play both acknowledges and critiques. A brief biography of Keane was offered and Keane's early encounters with hypocrisy have been documented. A brief analysis of Keane's dramatic works preceding *The Field* has been offered and some common tropes within his work have been identified, thus providing a stylistic and thematic context within which one may situate *The Field*. The real-life murderous origins of *The Field* and the play's genesis, production, and reception on both national and international stages were then explored. This subject matter bears relevance as it illustrates Keane's ability to transcribe local events to the realm of the universal, while striking a resonant note within the human psyche through his work, and it is precisely this resonance that this dissertation seeks to explore. With this in mind, the social, political, and economic contexts of the time of writing of *The Field* were documented and provide another lens through which one may view the play and its representations of such contexts.

In this chapter, and the ones that follow, this dissertation seeks to further analyse unconscious resonances at work within *The Field*. To begin with, this dissertation will now look at *The Field* from a psychoanalytical perspective and will reveal possible unconscious motivations, desires, and identifications that lie within the text. Though psychoanalytical theory will be applied to the text, this chapter will favour close textual analysis to illustrate the theory behind it as opposed to the inverse.

Firstly, the fictional village of Carraigthomond will be explored in terms of its being a site of collective neurosis resulting from the presence of an excess of repressive structures within it. Following this, a further Freudian reading of the text will be entered into, focusing on the character of the Bull McCabe. As McCabe is the protagonist in the work, and may be seen as representative of rural Ireland faced with a changing, threatening world, a considerable amount of space will be given to a Freudian reading of the character which will highlight some unconscious motivations behind McCabe's actions, thereby illustrating communal societal anxieties as expressed through McCabe. Through this reading, some insights into implicit motifs running throughout the play will be identified, and Keane's representation of the human psyche in transition as a means of social commentary will be commented on. McCabe's son Tadhg, and Mick and Maimie Flanagan's son Leamy, the only children present in the text, will also be analysed in a similar fashion. This will enable an exploration of two opposing sons appearing in the work, revealing Keane's social commentary in offering a prognosis for Carraigthomond through the characters that will inherit it.

Psychoanalytical theories of identification will then be applied to the text in an exploration of both character and resonance within the work, and the text will be looked at in terms of Lacan's 'mirror stage' (Lacan, 2006) to reveal what misrecognitions of fragmented identity may be found within it, thereby illuminating potential resonant elements at play within the text. This chapter will then probe the national unconscious as revealed by the enduring popularity of the play, a play that remains an important work in the Irish theatrical canon. The popularity of the work throughout the years will be examined in terms of identity and resonance, and what such resonance in pre and post-Celtic Tiger Ireland reveals about the Irish psyche will be explored.

3.2 - The Psychology of *The Field*: Carraigthomond as a Site of Collective Neurosis.

In Sigmund Freud's 1924 paper titled 'The Loss of Reality in Neurosis and Psychosis' which explores mental illness, he offers a description of neurosis, one that will be applied to the collective space of Carraigthomond and its inhabitants. Freud states that:

Every neurosis disturbs the patient's relation to reality in some way [...] it serves him as a means of withdrawal from reality and [...] in its severest forms, it [...] signifies a flight from real life (quoted in Sharpe and Faulkner, 2008, p. 26).

Thus, the actions of the inhabitants of Carraigthomond may be examined in terms of their disturbed relationship with reality, as McCabe imposes his own version of reality upon them, and to what extent their actions, or inaction as the case may be, mark 'a withdrawal from reality' and a 'flight from real life'?

Furthermore, when this description of neurosis is examined in terms of Pamela Thurschwell's assertion that, in *Totem and Taboo* 'Freud suggests that a modern social structure, such as organized religion, may also resemble a mass, shared, social neurosis' (Thurschwell, 2000, p. 99), Carraigthomond may indeed be identified as a site of collective neurosis. The village, as presented in the play, is a hierarchical social structure subject to a shared unwritten law and the villagers that inhabit it, through their silence, all play some part in the neurotic act that constitutes the murder of William Dee.

Put simply, the acceptance of a structured social order involves an 'antagonism between the demands of the instincts and the repressive structures of society' leading to the appearance of neurosis due to 'the amount of frustration society imposes on the individual' (Thurschwell, 2000, p. 106). Thus, it is of merit to examine such 'repressive structures of society' as presented in the fictional Carraigthomond, 'a small village in

the southwest of Ireland' (Keane, 1966, p. 7), one that is reflective of rural Irish living of a specific time, but also representative of timeless mentalities that persist to this day.

Firstly, as seen in the previous chapter, there is an unwritten hierarchy of power, an informal hegemonic order, in operation in Carraighthomond, as illustrated by Leamy's recounting of the incident involving the Blezzop brothers (Keane, 1966, pp. 55–56). As detailed in the previous chapter, the Blezzops almost beat a challenger to their assumed authority to death while the Guards turned a blind eye. The brothers are referred to as 'great men' by Leamy's father Mick (Keane, 1966, p. 55), and the Guards, who had chosen to ignore the beating, subsequently drink with the brothers 'all night' (Keane, 1966, p. 56). This incident illustrates two aspects of the social structure present in Carraighthomond. Firstly, in order to survive there, one must conform to, and accept, such hegemonic structures as evidenced by the Blezzops, and any challenge to such operations of power must ultimately be repressed. If the village of Carraighthomond is taken to be a living entity, it may be argued that Leamy represents an uncomfortable verity through his questioning of the dominant order, and is subsequently removed from the environment in an act reminiscent of Freud's concept of repression. A further analysis of the character of Leamy and his removal from the community, and the symbolic repressing of his voice within the text, will form a later part of this chapter.

Secondly, external authority, or the formal hegemonic order, appears subordinate to the internal structures of the village, as the Guards obey the law of the Blezzops. However, in *The Field* this relationship is fractured by the murder of William Dee, as external authorities such as the Guards and the Church attempt to dominate the internal repressive social structures of the village. Following the murder, both law and church are set as exterior forces, attempting in vain to penetrate the community and its

self-prescribed authoritarian structures. The exteriority of both church and state law to the community is summed up by the Bull McCabe's remark to both the priest and the Sergeant that 'You have the law well sewn up, all of you... all nice and tidy to yourselves' (Keane, 1966, p. 74). This comment highlights the irrelevance and impotence of external forces of agency in McCabe's Carraigthomond, which ironically subscribes to its own law, one inscribed through the internal dichotomy of dominance, be it by the Blezzops or by McCabe.

Through their silence and adherence to the dominant social order of Carraigthomond, one could argue that the villagers are also accessories to the murder of Dee, and are as guilty of it as McCabe is. The bishop highlights this in his sermon addressed to the villagers:

Did he [Dee] give his life's blood for a field? If so, that field will be a field of blood and it will be paid for in thirty pieces of silver – the price of Christ's betrayal – and you, by your silence, will share in that betrayal (Keane, 1966, p. 59).

Thus, the argument may be made that Carraigthomond is a site of neurosis, and its inhabitants display the 'flight from real life', as asserted in Freud's definition of neurosis mentioned earlier, that is reflected by their acceptance of the murder of William Dee, and their silent complicity in it through their providing McCabe with an alibi for the night in question. Individual responsibility, conscience, and agency are all ignored and repressed by the villagers in order to serve to repressive structures of power in operation in Carraigthomond.

Interestingly, the Bishop's sermon references the concept of guilt:

Through your silence you share his guilt, your innocent children will grow up under the shadow of this terrible crime, and you will carry this guilt with you until you face your Maker at the moment of Judgment (Keane, 1966, p. 59).

However, there is very little reference to the feeling of guilt over the murder by any of

the villagers. The concept of guilt is intrinsic to civilization according to Freud, who stated in *Civilization and its Discontents*, that the aim of the essay was to ‘represent the sense of guilt as the most important problem in the development of civilization’ (quoted in Thurschwell, 2000, p. 106). It is not until the final lines of the play, spoken by McCabe, that any sense of what may be perceived as guilt intrudes into the psyche of Carraigthomond, when he delivers the lines ‘The grass won’t be green over his grave when he’ll be forgot by all... forgot by all except me!...’ (Keane, 1966, p. 76). Thus, the inability to express guilt to be found in the village’s inhabitants hints further at the perception of the village as a site of neurosis, a location of a flight from real life, a neurosis born of oppressive dominance perpetrated by McCabe, and the repressive submission of the villagers.

However, that which constitutes this ‘real life’ from which the inhabitants of Carraigthomond flee must also be explored. For the villagers, reality in Carraigthomond is an agricultural form of living with the Bull McCabe, either through domination or consent, as a figurehead for the community. McCabe’s dominating force may be seen in Maimie’s pleading with Leamy to keep quiet about Dee’s murder (Keane, 1966, p. 56), and his ultimate removal from Carraigthomond in an act of love and protection by his mother. Such words and actions may be seen to be iterations of the real in Carraigthomond, and the repressive actions required in order to survive there. McCabe’s vision of Carraigthomond and its future is one where ‘Tadhg’s children will be milkin’ cows and keepin’ donkeys away from our ditches’ (Keane, 1966, p. 106), thereby representing a form of living rooted in rurality. Opposingly, William Dee presents a more modernistic industrialized future, one that challenges McCabe’s perceptions of, and position within, the village. Thus, to return to Freud’s definition of

neurosis as ‘a flight from real life’, it may be argued that he is referring to civilized modernity as the real. When Thurschwells’ assertion, cited earlier, that ‘a modern social structure [...] may also resemble a mass, shared, social neurosis’, it may be argued that Carraighthomond’s real signifies a flight from the real referred to by Freud, that is, modernity itself. Modernity is undoubtedly encroaching upon Carraighthomond, but the villagers, through their repressive acceptance of McCabe’s vision, reject it, and thus, a further flight from (Freud’s) real life may be seen.

The village of Carraighthomond, while representing a neurotic environment also presents a generic blueprint of the rural Irish psyche, one that must attempt to resolve issues of community and hegemonic authority, and must negotiate the repressive structures of society it finds itself located in. Thus, rural audiences may find an unconscious resonance in the work in terms of locating themselves in the neurotic realm of a claustrophobic, insular community, particularly a rural one. On a broader level, the setting of *The Field* may be seen to represent an unjust society where one must subscribe to the will of the powerful in order to survive, and one where tradition and modernity trade blows, thereby enabling identification with the work on a larger scale. Having identified Carraighthomond as a site of neurosis this chapter will now analyze, through a Freudian lens, the dominant male within that community, the Bull McCabe.

3.3 - The Bull McCabe: A Freudian Figure Frustrated in Love?

Keane has stated in an interview, cited by Rosa Gonzalez, regarding the real life origins of *The Field*, that:

A play is something which mirrors an incident in life. If when they ask you ‘What is it about?’ you go on and on and on, it's about nothing. But if you can say in a sentence ‘it's about a murder, it's about a man who kills for land’ for instance, ‘it's about a man who was frustrated in love’ (quoted in Gonzalez, 1992, p. 86).

It is the final part of Keane's assertion that this dissertation would now like to focus on through a Freudian lens, that is, the Bull McCabe as a character frustrated in love. On the surface one may assert that McCabe's most obvious love affair is with the land itself, as evidenced by the conversation between himself and Tadhg as they lay in wait for William Dee:

'Tis April boy. 'Tis April. Listen and you can hear the first growth of the grass. The first music that was ever heard (Keane, 1966, p. 47).

As commented in an earlier chapter of this dissertation, McCabe, in this highly poetic passage, is inscribing his own origin myth on the landscape around him, bestowing upon the land elemental, primordial and spiritual qualities. Land is the altar at which McCabe kneels. Keane, in an interview with Marie Hubert Kealy, describes observing such a relationship with the land as quite common in his North Kerry environs:

I've seen men love land the way they love women - kneeling on their knees and stroking the fleecy grass of a young meadow, or catching a fist of wheat in their hands and rubbing it and sniffing it. I've seen them goin' down to an oat field and stroke the sheaves, the stalks of oats, the way they'd stroke a young girl's hair, a daughter's hair or a wife's hair ... It transcends affection and it transcends love as we know it. It's a commitment to that which sustains them; it's sacrificial in a sense, and it's their way of responding to the nerves of nature. Nature doesn't speak, but it can communicate beautifully with people who appreciate it, and the seemingly inarticulate Kerry farmer has a greater relationship with nature than it is possible to define (quoted in Kealy, 1989, pp. 289–290).

Thus, McCabe, when seen in this light, is reflective of a certain rural tradition, committed to that which sustains him, something that is all the more relevant when it is considered that the field in question is his 'only passage to water' (Keane, 1966, p. 34)⁴, and therefore essential to his existence on the land. He is also reflective of a tradition of

⁴ Perhaps McCabe is also channelling common law prescription here as 'Prescription is the acquisition of such rights by long user over a substantial period of time [...] under the Prescription Act, 1832' where, in common law, 'The use and enjoyment [of the property] must be for a continuous period which has been interpreted as regular user as opposed to intermittent user' and must be traceable back to at least '20 years' of continuous use (Property Registration Authority, 2016, online). Thus, despite his only working the field for 'five years' (Keane, 1966, p. 34), McCabe may be attempting to assert a common law right to a passage to water,

agricultural heredity and legacy, observing, and psychologically appropriating the field just as his father is said to have done:

I watched this field for forty years and my father before me watched it for forty more. I know every rib of grass and every thistle and every whitethorn bush that bounds it [...] This is a sweet little field, this... an independent little field that wants eatin' (Keane, 1966, pp. 22–23),

and also as he hopes his offspring, Tadhg, will do in the future:

When you'll be gone, Father, to be a Canon somewhere [...] Tadhg's children will be milkin' cows and keepin' donkeys away from our ditches. That's what we have to think about and if there's no grass, there's the end of me and mine (Keane, 1966, p. 76).

Therefore, as evidenced above, McCabe's love of the land is one of survival, legacy, and potency, a love perhaps enshrined in McCabe by McCabe's own father, an inheritance that McCabe hopes Tadhg will both accept and instill into his own children, thereby perpetuating the McCabe name in both title and nature. For McCabe, the field, and its acquisition through any means necessary, is a symbol of potency, enabling the furthering of his own particular inherited ideology, and maintaining his position at the top of the social hierarchy of Carraigthomond. However, from a Freudian perspective, one may argue that the field in question is also a repository for displaced libidinal energy, an object of desire that must be attained through dominant masculinity, and a site of condensation in the text, and these assertions will now be explored.

In terms of structure, the eventual murder of William Dee is preceded by a conversation between McCabe and his son Tadhg that revolves around nature, women, and McCabe's relationship with his wife, Tadhg's mother (who significantly remains nameless in the piece and will be analyzed in more depth in chapter five). Tadhg asks his father 'Why don't yourself and ma talk, Da?' (Keane, 1966, p. 48) and a glimpse into the psyche of McCabe results. He tells Tadhg that it has been 'eighteen years since I slept with her or spoke to her' (Keane, 1966, p. 48), as a result of his having 'walloped

her more than I meant, maybe' (Keane, 1966, p. 49). Thus, McCabe constitutes one half of a loveless marriage, one without any physical or psychological connection with his wife, having not spoken to, nor slept with, her for eighteen years. The reason for his beating of her, and their subsequent separation in all but name, is her giving a tinker's widow permission to let a 'pony loose in one of the fields' (Keane, 1966, p. 48), and McCabe's finding out of this when he had a 'share of booze taken' (Keane, 1966, p. 49). McCabe's wife's offence is two-fold in the eyes of McCabe. Firstly, she has interfered with his labour of love, the land, allowing a tinker's pony in to graze when 'the land was carryin' fourteen cows an' grass scarce' (Keane, 1966, p. 48), not having the innate knowledge of the land assumed by McCabe and confirmed by Tadhg: 'Cripes, Tadhg, a tinker's pony would eat the hair off a child's head! / He would Dad, he would', a concept backed up by McCabe's assertion that 'you can't explain these things to women' (Keane, 1966, p. 49). Secondly, by allowing the pony in to graze she has also offered a challenge to McCabe's authority, one that in McCabe's traditional, insular, patriarchal realm cannot be allowed expression. Such patriarchal dominance is referenced in McCabe's conversation with his son regarding his potential taking of a wife:

Tadhg: I wouldn't try to rush her, though. She's pampered and headstrong.

Bull: That will be knocked out of her. (Keane, 1966, p. 50).

Social dominance and status within the community become cornerstones of McCabe's identity, and for him land is both status and power, as he seeks to displace his own sense of impotence in his marriage.

Tadhg: I often drops a hint and she don't seem unwilling to listen.

Bull: Nine acres o' land! Think of it! Keep your napper screwed on and we'll be important people yet, important people boy! (Keane, 1966, p. 50).

McCabe's wife is exercising her only form of agency against him, denying him physical and mental contact in every form, thus placing him in a position of impotency in their relationship. His quest for social dominance through land may be interpreted as displaced libidinal energy, seeking to assume a position of authority within the community that he has been denied, on a primal level, at home.

Interestingly, in the same passage of dialogue, a changing world to that of McCabe's, and an advancing of modernity, is hinted at. Reference is made to a passing 'Jet... one of them new ones with the high boozin' sound' (Keane, 1966, p. 49) as McCabe and Tadhg lie in wait for Dee. McCabe describes his fruitless attempts to make amends with his wife by putting 'in electric light and bought the television. I built that goddamned bathroom... *for her...*' (Keane, 1966, p. 49). Therefore, Leonard Robert Falkenstein's assertion that though 'the forces of modernity and social reform are held at bay, overwhelmed by the simple brutality of the old parochial hegemony [...] the outside world is encroaching on Carraigthomond' (Falkenstein, 1997, p. 35) is a very apt one. McCabe is undoubtedly aware of a changing landscape, one that, in his eyes, has the potential to 'do me out o' my rights' (Keane, 1966, p. 34) and sound the death knell for McCabe's assumed dominance. This results in a crisis of potency for McCabe, and land, and the subsequent subjugation of the community in its pursuit, becomes the medium through which he expresses his desire for the masculine dominance denied to him at home, thereby allowing one to identify Maggie Butler's field as a focal point of displacement, a repository for his repressed desires.

Unquestionably, McCabe is the dominant male of Carraigthomond. He demonstrates his assumed superiority by intimidating the Bird O Donnell in only his second line of the play 'Who gave you the right to call me Bull, you pratey-snappin'

son-of-a-bitch' (Keane, 1966, p. 14). When in the bar, attempting to coerce the community into giving him an alibi for the beating he intends to give Dee, McCabe meets light resistance from Maimie, who questions the ethics of the situation 'It's a terrible thing to beat a man up. He's alone here' (Keane, 1966, p. 45). McCabe reasserts his authority and position of dominance through the physical threat of 'puttin' a bomb up ag'in your door' and the more extortionate threat of 'I know enough about you to cause a right plateful of trouble' (Keane, 1966, p. 45). Similarly, the widow who is putting the field up for sale, Maggie Butler, is threatened by McCabe, who exploits the vulnerability of her living alone. She is warned by McCabe, following her support for Dee at the auction, to 'Look out for yourself, you! Look out for yourself', and the stage directions tell us '*(He cows the old woman)*' (Keane, 1966, p. 38). Following this Butler states 'I'll have to be goin'. There's no one in the house but myself' and is met with the menacing reply from McCabe 'You should remember that!' (Keane, 1966, p. 39). Thus, no one is spared the bullying of McCabe, not even an old woman, when they do not subscribe to his world-view and submit to his assumed authority.

The outsider, William Dee, is threatened with violence several times by McCabe, being told that 'You're tacklin' a crowd now that could do for you, man. Watch out for yourself' (Keane, 1966, p. 34). Dee is further advised by McCabe to submit to his assumed dominance 'If you know what's good for you, you won't bid' (Keane, 1966, p. 35), before being threatened with brutal physical violence 'You'll do as you're told or your wife won't know you when she sees you again... an' I'm not foolin' you, boy!' (Keane, 1966, p. 53). Ultimately McCabe follows through on these threats and Dee meets his end due to his outright rejection of McCabe's self appointed position of authority. The auctioneer, and publican, Mick Flanagan must also submit to

McCabe's authority in order to function in Carraigthomond. Should the auction go ahead as planned with public notices issued and a level of transparency abhorrent to McCabe, Flanagan is threatened with a form of social castration by McCabe 'there's nothing to prevent a boycott of your shop [...] There's a hundred relations of mine in this village and around it. Not one of them will ever set foot in this pub again if I say so' (Keane, 1966, p. 21).

Even the traditional figures of authority in rural Ireland, the Church and the Guards, do not escape the ire of McCabe if they do not subscribe to his own particular ideology. McCabe informs the priest and the Sergeant: 'Tadhg and me are sick of your dirty informer's tactics [...] We're watching your shifty peeler's questions [...] You have the law well sewn up, all of you... all nice and tidy to yourselves' (Keane, 1966, p. 74). In contrast, McCabe speaks of an earlier priest, one that subscribed to McCabe's worldview, and therefore was accepted by McCabe 'He sat on his bottom and spoke to Tadhg and me about hard luck, about dead-born calves and the cripples you meet among dropped calves [...] and if he wanted to stay with us for a year we'd have kept him' (Keane, 1966, pp. 74-75), illustrating McCabe's acceptance of those who submit to his world-view and his rejection of those that challenge it, regardless of status.

Thus, McCabe dominates Carraigthomond and is met with submission to his self-appointed authority by most of the inhabitants of the village. Any challenge to his dominance is met with derision, in the case of the Church and the Guards, psychological extortion, in the case of Maggie Butler and Maimie, the threat of social castration, in the case of Mick Flanagan, and physical violence resulting in death, in the case of William Dee. Such an exercise in authority, as demonstrated by McCabe, hints at the importance of a dominant status to his psyche and reinforces the view discussed earlier,

that he is suffering a crisis of male potency as a result of his failed marriage and the advancement of a changing world. This crisis manifests itself in his subordination of the community through both psychological and physical violence, and in his brutality towards those that challenge his authoritarian position, and is one that McCabe remains enslaved by throughout the text as his repressed anxieties place him in conflict with the world around him.

The field itself is also symbolic of McCabe's standing in the social order of Carraighthomond, and McCabe's actions regarding it, while on the one hand are born from a love and a desire to see his child prosper, on the other it also exhibits elements of another form of love, the love of the self, narcissism. Narcissism, according to Pamela Thurschwell, 'was a term used by Freud to describe the sexual attitude in which a person directs his love towards himself, rather than towards another' (Thurschwell, 2000, p. 80). Just as Narcissus became enthralled by his own reflection in a pool of water, it may be argued that the field that McCabe desires acts as a mirror that reflects his own image, and that of his essence, back to him. Narcissism, in the Freudian sense, results in the alignment of two opposing and seemingly separate instincts, bringing together the realm of uninhibited desire and that of its protective censor, the id and the ego. Thurschwell surmises:

The id says 'Go for it', and the ego says 'Protect and preserve yourself – survival is more important than instant gratification'. Narcissism, however, appears to bring together these two sets of instincts – if you have enough self-love you will certainly do a good job at preserving yourself. You will be your own primary object of concern (Thurschwell, 2000, p. 82).

Thus, it may be argued that McCabe exhibits narcissistic traits as id and ego convene in what is essentially an act of self-preservation on a subjective level, and a defence of his praxis on a symbolic level.

It may also be argued that McCabe exemplifies the traits common to secondary narcissism in his attempted domination of the social order of Carraigthomond. In psychoanalytical theory, having identified the mother as a separate entity there comes an end to primary narcissism for the infant. He then suffers a sense of loss comprised of a loss of unity with the world, and the loss of a sense of omnipotence. This leads to what is termed secondary narcissism, 'a reflux of primary narcissism' where infantile omnipotence is substituted for 'an internalization of the other, an internalization that brings the child into the wider context of social and cultural relations' (Elliott, 2002, p. 61). Thus, one may interpret McCabe's attempted domination of the 'social and cultural' relations of Carraigthomond in his pursuit of the field, a locus of perceived power for McCabe, as symptomatic of his narcissistic sense of loss of 'infantile omnipotence' and representative of his desire to recover it. Considering the points argued earlier regarding McCabe's crisis of potency in a world gradually limiting his powers, and viewing them in terms of the assertion by the American psychoanalytic theorist Joel Kovel, who 'argues that narcissistic states of grandiosity in fact hide deeper feelings of worthlessness and inadequacy' (Elliott, 2002, p. 62), this approach provides further insight into the unconscious motivations behind the actions of McCabe's character. The field, having already been identified as a site of displaced love may now also be seen as a symbol of McCabe's failings, that is, his failed marriage, his increasing sense of sexual and social impotency in a community on the margins of change as a result of an encroaching modernity, and his subsequent ideological redundancy following that change, thus manifesting, through his narcissistic grandiose actions, those 'deeper feelings of worthlessness and inadequacy' as asserted by Kovel above.

On stage McCabe is inseparable from his ashplant, a sapling taken from an ash

tree often used as a walking stick. McCabe utilizes this ashplant as a threatening weapon at times. When informed by the Bird that there may be outside bidders for the field the stage directions state:

(*Bull* points at his ashplant, which is on the counter, seizes it and strikes the floor with force. He brings drink with him and leans on the counter)

Bull: That's what I care about outsiders. Accursed friggers with nothing in their heads only to own the ground we're walkin' on. We had their likes long enough, hadn't we. Land is all that matters. Own your own land (Keane, 1966, p. 16).

When confronting Dee we are told in the stage directions that '(*The Bull* draws a sweeping blow with his ashplant which *William* narrowly avoids)' (Keane, 1966, p. 53). Thus, one may argue that the ashplant has a phallic significance in relation to McCabe. Sexually impotent in his relationship with his wife, and displacing his libidinal energy into the land around him, the ashplant becomes a symbol of authority and sexual dominance for McCabe. It is an object that McCabe uses to penetrate the community and demand its obedience through fear, and also to challenge any threat to his authority. It is also noteworthy that the ashplant was commonly used as a walking stick in rural Ireland, thus the argument may be made that it is representative of a crutch, as McCabe, wounded by a changing world, a world where fields can be used to make concrete blocks, and one where wives can deny their husbands, utilizes a phallic violence to support not only himself, but the insular, patriarchal, traditional, and above all, elemental world from which he came.

If one considers the field that Maggie Butler is selling as a site of displacement for McCabe's libidinal energy, then one would have to situate the outsider who is intent on buying it, William Dee, in the position of sexual rival to McCabe. Returning to Kealy's interview with Keane, quoted at the beginning of this section, he speaks of the relationship between the farmer and the land as being extremely sensual. Keane speaks

of men loving the land as they would women, stroking the vegetation ‘the way they'd stroke a young girl's hair, a daughter's hair or a wife's hair’, ‘catching a fist of wheat in their hands and rubbing it and sniffing it’ (quoted in Kealy, 1989, pp. 289–290).

McCabe speaks of the land in similar terms ‘I keep thinking of the grass they eat on me, and the clover ... the fine young clover’ (Keane, 1966, p. 19). Sexuality and nature are paired in McCabe’s vision of the world, illustrating further displacement of his repressed sexual desires and anxieties. In discussion with his son Tadhg, and the Bird O’ Donnell (somewhat of a yes-man to McCabe and very much a subservient subject of McCabe’s) about his son’s possible finding of a wife for himself, women are discussed in almost exclusively animalistic terms. They are appraised on their physical attributes and ability to perform animal related duties, for example, having ‘Good bones and a great buzzom’; being ‘a good milker’ and ‘a fine heifer’ who ‘knows her bonham and her pig. Strong too, and not bad-lookin’ when you get used to her’ (Keane, 1966, pp. 62–63). Thus, as nature and sexuality are intrinsically linked, and as the field up for auction may be seen as a site of displacement of McCabe’s repressed sexual anxieties, the clash between McCabe and Dee may be seen as a McCabe’s attempt at reclaiming a position of sexual dominance and potency.

McCabe, as illustrated earlier, is without question the dominant male in Carraighmond, and he is met with a younger man who is representative of a major challenge to his beliefs, and therefore his position within that community. Ultimately, aided by his son Tadhg, he performs the ultimate act of potency, taking the life of the challenger Dee, thereby maintaining his position of dominant masculinity in the community of Carraighthomond. It must also be noted that it was never McCabe’s intention to murder Dee, as before the confrontation he tells of his intention to give Dee

‘a fright and a bit of a beatin’ (Keane, 1966, p. 44). However, in the altercation that ensues both McCabe and Tadhg lose control and end up killing him, with the stage directions denoting that ‘(*Tadhg* throws *Bird* aside and gets in a crucial kick at *William’s* head)’ (Keane, 1966, p. 54). It may be argued that in the frenzy of combat McCabe’s (and Tadhg’s) repressed desires are allowed full and free expression, the inevitable returning of McCabe’s repressed masculine essence manifesting itself in a violent expression of uncontrollable brute force. Thus, one may view the field itself as a vehicle that enables McCabe to attempt to reclaim his masculine potency, and reassert his sexual dominance which has been threatened by both his wife’s silent rebellion and by the younger and wealthier Dee’s affront to McCabe’s primacy within the confines of Carraigthomond.

Through McCabe’s referencing of jet-planes, televisions and indoor plumbing, as evidenced earlier, one may infer that he is highly aware of a changing world around him, one that challenges the roots of his very existence, and therefore it may be argued that the field in question becomes a site of Freudian condensation in the text. On the surface, of course McCabe needs that field, as it is his only passage to water. However, McCabe’s desire for that field runs deeper. The field itself may be seen as representative of a traditional form of living under threat from modernity. Dee plans to ‘cover the field with concrete’ and use its resources ‘to make concrete blocks’ (Keane, 1966, p. 34). Such use of the land is a completely alien and diabolical concept to McCabe: ‘God Almighty! ‘tis a sin to cover grass and clover with concrete’ (Keane, 1966, p. 38). McCabe’s own roots lie deep within that field, and it becomes an object that is symbolic of heredity, legacy, tradition, communal and nationalistic identity, and the hegemonic order of Carraigthomond. McCabe argues:

I won't be wronged in my own village in my own country by an imported landgrabber. The sweat I've lost won't be given for nothing. A total stranger has come and he wants to bury my sweat and blood in concrete. It's ag'in God an' man an' I was never the person to bow the head when trouble came and no man is goin' to do me out of my natural-born rights (Keane, 1966, p. 44).

McCabe delivers the speech above to the community as present in Flanagan's bar before informing them of his plans to give Dee 'a fright', 'just enough to teach him a lesson' (Keane, 1966, p. 44), and demanding their acquiescence in providing himself and Tadhg with an alibi for the time of the beating. This tirade may be seen to be reflective of a form of nationalistic rhetoric, with McCabe channeling a communal identity in the face of an outsider. Social cohesion and an idyllic, harmonious way of communal living is referenced by McCabe later in the same speech: 'What is friends, I ask, unless 'tis to pull one another out of hoults' (Keane, 1966, p. 44), as he channels a sense of communal identity to enable his removal of an outside threat to said community. The irony of course is that McCabe has very few friends in Carraigthomond, but instead operates on a level of intimidation of the very community he is alluding to protect.

McCabe's reference to his never being the person 'to bow the head when trouble came' (Keane, 1966, p. 44) may perhaps be a reminder to his community of the blood that had been shed, under both a colonial regime and also in the ensuing civil war, just to acquire the right to own the land. The past and the concept of heritage is also referenced in McCabe's line that a stranger wants to 'bury my sweat and blood in concrete'. McCabe here is expressing both his heritage and his right to the land through his working of it. To bury McCabe's 'blood' is to end his legacy, again rendering him an impotent figure in a changed world. His reference to burying his 'sweat' refers to his working of the land, 'twas our sweat that fenced it and our dung that manured it' (Keane, 1966, p. 36), and in McCabe's eyes he has invested so much into the field that

he has a natural claim to it. As Kealy states 'His is the primitive concept that use gives him a claim on the land that supersedes even the owner's rights' (Kealy, 1993, p. 94), a point echoed by McCabe: 'no man is goin' to do me out of my natural-born rights' (Keane, 1966, p. 44).

McCabe also reinforces his position within the hegemonic order in the speech, portraying his motives as common sense, and thus consented to by the villagers, though they may not be in the best interests of the community. Had Dee gone ahead and created an industrial site in Carraigthomond the community may have prospered as a result of it, and given the industrial prosperity, referenced in the previous chapter, being experienced by the nation at the time of writing of the play, it is a possibility. However, as the dominant ideology always serves the interests of the powerful, such a prospect is not entertained in a world where McCabe is the dominant force. Thus, one may assert that the field at the heart of the play is a site of condensation, a composite image representing, as illustrated earlier, McCabe's heritage, legacy, ideology, status in the community, and on a broader scale, an image symbolic of national identity in a time of psychological transformation in a modernizing world.

As the Bull McCabe is the central character in the work, one may refer back to the assertion made by Keane in interview and consider is the play essentially about 'man who was frustrated in love'? (Gonzalez, 1992, p. 86). On a superficial reading of the text one may identify the play as being about McCabe's utilitarian love for the land around him, and the murderous lengths he will go to as a result of it, after all it is McCabe who utters the lines 'Land is all that matters. Own your own land' (Keane, 1966, p.16). Though such a reading merely scratches the surface of McCabe's character, it nonetheless illustrates the frustration and perversion of morality, on

personal and communal levels, by McCabe's love of the land. McCabe's moral compass, and that of a complicit, silent community, is distorted by his killing of Dee, an act, it may be argued, that had its roots in a form of utilitarian love for the land, a love for that which sustains.

However, having looked at the motivations at work within the character of the Bull McCabe the argument can be made that McCabe's frustrations in love run a little deeper than a mere functional utilitarian love. It has been argued earlier that the field in question is a site of McCabe's displaced libidinal energy in the text. McCabe's failed marital relationship has been outlined, and the field identified as a surrogate focal point for the desires that McCabe is unable to express in his relationship with his wife. In this context, this author agrees that *The Field* is about a man frustrated in love, frustrated both psychologically and physically by his failed relationship with his wife. Keane, in an interview quoted earlier, spoke of the love of the land, as seen in his native North Kerry, as being 'a commitment to that which sustains them; it's sacrificial in a sense' (quoted in Kealy, 1989, pp. 289–290). Thus, McCabe, through his beating of his wife for letting a tinker's pony in to graze on his land on a superficial level and challenging his assumed position of authority and dominance on a psychological plane, ultimately sacrifices his marriage for the protection of both his land and his hegemonic position as a dominant figure of authority within the relationship.

Physically, as his wife hasn't slept with him in eighteen years, it may be assumed that McCabe has been further undermined by his wife, this time in terms of masculinity and potency, and his most basic and primal desires have been repressed in an act of self-preservation by McCabe. However, such repressed desires emerge and manifest themselves in his desire for the field, a site that, for McCabe, enabled the

sublimation and projection of such primal desires as reproduction, potency, and in many ways, love itself. Tadhg informs Mick Flanagan that ‘There wouldn’t be a stitch of grass in it only for the manure of our heifers... our heifers!’ (Keane, 1966, p. 18), illustrating the McCabe’s fertility in their nurturing of that field, an act of creation if you will. When a younger and wealthier man, Dee, attempts to procure the field, McCabe’s displaced sense of essential masculine potency is challenged, and such a threat to McCabe’s sexuality, and its frustrations as manifested in his working of the field, is eradicated through the murder of Dee. Thus, one may interpret McCabe’s actions that result in the murdering of Dee, as representative of a man frustrated in love, certainly frustrated in a sexual sense, but also frustrated by the attempt by Dee to appropriate the focal point of his repressed unrequited love, which McCabe can only read as attempting to acquire, and annihilate in concrete, a living testament to his potency.

McCabe’s actions have also been debated in terms of another form of love, the love of the self. It has been argued that there is a narcissistic element to his actions as he strives for potency through the manipulation of the social world around him. It has also been suggested that such an aggressive, narcissistic grandiosity as seen in the character of McCabe, and his aggressive manipulation of the society that is Carraigthomond, merely serves as a screen, behind which lies McCabe’s own sense of inadequacy. Thus, this form of love ultimately frustrates McCabe also, as through recognizing his narcissism his unconscious shortcomings must also be acknowledged.

The field in question has also been identified as a site of personal condensation in the text, a symbol of McCabe’s heritage, legacy, ideology, and his status in the community. Thus, McCabe’s murderous obsession with the land may also be seen as the actions of a man frustrated in love. McCabe’s actions may be interpreted as a form

of protectionism of both his heritage and his legacy in order to maintain control of the field in order to prevent 'the end of me and mine' (Keane, 1966, p. 76). McCabe's character may be said to be acting out of love in this regard, a love for the traditional way of life represented by his admiring the field for forty years, just as his father before him 'watched it for forty more' (Keane, 1966, p. 22). Though McCabe's actions in murdering Dee, and his subjugation of the entire community, are vile, egoistic, narcissistic, and aggressive acts, one may argue that they are fundamentally acts that are born out of love, a love for McCabe's own past, and a love that wishes to provide for his offspring. This elemental, innate love frustrates McCabe as the world around him is changing and he is powerless against it, resulting in his rebellion against such transformation by murdering its chief avatar in the text.

On a larger societal level, the field may also be viewed as a site of condensation. It has been argued that it is a composite image representing a national identity in flux, as rural ways of life became increasingly threatened by an industrializing, modernizing society. Thus, McCabe becomes a guardian of the older ways, a defender of an agricultural Ireland under threat from industrialist policies as evidenced in the previous chapter. Therefore, it may be argued that again McCabe is acting as a man frustrated in love, a love for an idealized pastoral form of identity, such as that espoused in the rhetoric of the newly formed state by de Valera, a love that is ultimately frustrated by his growing inability to defend such a position against an encroaching modernizing world, resulting in a crisis of potency for McCabe that runs throughout the text and reaches its ultimate manifestation in the murder of Dee. Thus, McCabe is ultimately frustrated in a form of love that is both primordial and elemental and is one that not only reflects the pastoral idealism of de Valera's

constitution but also pre-dates it. This is an assertion backed up by Gabriel Fitzmaurice, who, in a personal interview, argued that:

For a farmer like the Bull McCabe who stands for most of rural Ireland and the farming community, to turn an agricultural field that has been made into land, reclaimed by his bare hands by the Bull and his son, into a quarry is a sin against nature. And nature is very big in these people. Sometimes they are Christians but they are also pagans. Nature is huge in their lives, the four seasons, the way they celebrated May eve for instance, going out with the holy water to the four ends of the land and sowing the face of the dead, November, Halloween, all this stuff. These people are as pagan as they are Christian and nature is a huge force in their lives because they are living elementally [Devaney, 2012(b), Appendix Two].

Thus, it has been argued that McCabe was indeed frustrated by love, by marital love, by sexual love, by love for his offspring, by love for his heritage, and by love for the form of Irish identity that constituted his own perspective on life. This love is ultimately frustrated by the encroaching of a changing world, one where industry meets agriculture, one where women are finding expression and are no longer subservient agents, and one where the concept of national identity is in flux, and ultimately becomes a tragic love. Having looked at these frustrations through a Freudian lens it has been posited that much of McCabe's actions, and the dramatic impetus of the work, have been manifestations of such frustrations, as McCabe seeks to reassert his potency in a world that is increasingly limiting it. However, it is precisely this love that makes McCabe a tragic figure as opposed to an outright villain. The Freudian concept of ambivalence adds to the conception of McCabe as a tragic figure. As ambivalence may be defined as 'the simultaneous co-existence in the mind of opposite emotions, particularly love and hate' (Thurschwell, 2000, p. 56) one may posit that as much as McCabe professes to love the land, he is also enslaved by it. As referenced in a previous chapter Fintan O'Toole defines tragedy as:

possible when there are two worlds existing at the same time [...] two sets of reference for how we should live, which have equal weight and which therefore trap people within

the no man's land or no woman's land between the two of them (O'Toole in Fitzmaurice, 2004, p. 35).

McCabe inhabits precisely this space, he is trapped between the world from which he came and its changing face in a time of massive social upheaval. Ultimately, McCabe commits a murder and sentences an entire community to communal guilt through fear and intimidation. However, his actions, though brutal, are ones born of love. They have been distorted by a frustrating of that love, and a Freudian glimpse into the turbulent psyche of McCabe has been offered in order to identify the manifestations of such frustrations. As stated by Kealy:

While the audience is not asked to condone either the murder or the silence that protects him, we can understand that it is McCabe's inarticulate love that surfaces in his recitation of all he has done for the land, and he answers the fear of loss with his own weapon, violence (Kealy, 1993, p. 95).

McCabe stands to lose a lot more than the field in question, his is a struggle for the essence of his identity, a sexual, traditional, and agricultural essence in McCabe's case, a struggle that, Freud argues, resides deep within the psyche of mankind, illustrating the presence of a profound, perhaps unconscious, resonance within the work.

3.4 - *The Field*: The Role of Two Opposing Sons Within the Text.

Having given some considerable space to examining the unconscious motivations behind the actions of the protagonist of the play, the Bull McCabe, and the subsequent manifestations of unconscious desire in the text, this dissertation would now like to briefly examine the children of the play in a similar fashion. Two characters, namely Tadhg and Leamy, occupy filial roles in the text, and in their oppositional positioning they are cleverly counterpointed by Keane.

We first encounter Tadhg as he enters the bar with his father, McCabe. Both characters are introduced simultaneously and Tadhg instantly mirrors his father's

actions. Following McCabe's dismissal of Bird as a 'pratey-snappin' son-of-a-bitch' (Keane, 1966, p. 14), Tadhg repeats his father's behavior by bullying Bird and telling him to 'Hump it!' (Keane, 1966, p. 15). Tadhg's mirroring of his father's actions, and his complete subscription to, and validation of, his father's point of view continues throughout the text. Tadhg may be seen as an extension of McCabe, in both name and nature, continuing on his father's ideology, something that has been instilled into him by his father in an attempt to ensure his legacy survives. He echoes McCabe's love for land as a necessity 'We'll have to get this field' (Keane, 1966, p. 17). He also shares his father's views on land as commodity, a commodity that supersedes any traditional concept of love. When telling McCabe that he has been courting Patsy Finnerty's daughter, who has 'nine acres o' land', he adds knowingly: 'Why do you think I'm chasing her?' (Keane, 1966, p. 50).

Tadhg also serves to validate and justify his father's actions in the text. Following McCabe's revelation of his wife, Tadhg's mother, having withdrawn from the marital relationship due to his beating of her, Tadhg justifies his father's actions 'You had to do it, Da. Carrying fourteen cows. You had to do it' (Keane, 1966, p. 49). Tadhg's mimicry of his father's actions is celebrated by McCabe when he describes Tadhg's killing of an ass, an act that foreshadows the lethal use of savage force to protect the land: 'Tadhg there beat him to death. He was a solid hour flaking him with his fists and me with a blackthorn' (Keane, 1966, p. 19). McCabe attributes the killing of the ass publicly to his son and denies his own part in the act, thereby providing public validation for his son's actions, and assigning him a rank of status in his eyes, in order to foster the son's replication of the father's ideals. Thus, validation in the relationship between McCabe and his son is two-fold; McCabe's actions are justified to him by his

son, who he has moulded and fashioned in his own likeness, and, in return, Tadhg receives paternal acceptance for reflecting his father's deeds and ideals.

Despite the situational apperception⁵, a term used by Kohler and cited by Lacan (Lacan, 2006, p. 93), demonstrated by his mimicry of his father, there is also a hint at the presence of innocence and naivety in the character of Tadhg. One may see him as a character of limited intelligence, one that is exploited by McCabe in furthering his agenda. While lying in wait with his father for the arrival of William Dee in order to give him a beating, Tadhg exhibits a childlike innocence and wonder at the world around him: 'all I seen was crows... nothin' but crows. What do they be doin' [...] Do they be thinkin' like us?' (Keane, 1966, p. 47) and 'Can they [crows] talk to one another? I'd swear they have a lingo of their own' (Keane, 1966, p. 48). Such childlike wonder is in harsh contrast to the heinous act about to be committed by Tadhg and his father, and highlights both Tadhg's blind submission to his father, and his father's manipulation of his son's childlike nature. Tadhg exhibits such innocence and naivety again when questioned by the Sergeant regarding the death of a donkey, as he is almost caught out by the Sergeant's guile in asserting that the donkey was poisoned. Tadhg responds immediately 'He wasn't poisoned' (Keane, 1966, p. 25), thereby admitting his knowledge of the particulars of the case when, along with his father and Bird, he was 'at home playin' cards [...] till morning' (Keane, 1966, p. 24). In his rescuing of the situation McCabe admits his son's simplicity:

Because there's no poison on our lands. That's how he knows an' don't be doin' the smart with your tricky questions. What is he but an innocent boy that never told a lie in his whole life (Keane, 1966, p. 25).

⁵ Derived from the *Aha-Erlebnis* (or the aha-experience of a moment of recognition) cited by Kohler and expanded upon by Lacan. It is the consciousness of one's physical position in the world, and an awareness of that position in relation to other physical objects. In Tadhg's case, it may be argued that his situational apperception reveals his subordinate position to his father and therefore results in his mimicry of him.

Thus, Tadhg is seen by his father as merely being an ‘innocent boy’ despite being referred to in the stage directions as being ‘in his twenties’ (Keane, 1966, p. 14), suggesting an element of arrested development in his character. He is also a tragic figure as he is merely replicating his surroundings and operating on a primordial level of identification. When one considers this in the light of McCabe’s crisis of potency discussed earlier, further motivation for him to ensure the survival of a legacy that may be threatened by the limited intelligence of his son, becomes evident. Tadhg may be seen as functioning on a level of continuous parental validation, having identified himself with the figure of his father, who appears to treat him in an exploitative manner. Ultimately it is Tadhg, in his quest for the approval of his father, who delivers the ‘crucial kick at *William*’s head’ (Keane, 1966, p. 54), therefore it can be asserted that it is Tadhg that murders Dee to seek paternal validation in his mimicking the actions and opinions of his father. Following the beating Tadhg utters an ambiguous line ‘That’s what he wanted, wasn’t it?’ (Keane, 1966, p. 54). Perhaps he is referring to Dee, who under threat of violence refused to leave the scene, or perhaps it is a more primal questioning, one that constitutes Tadhg’s psychological reliance on the approval of his father.

Tadhg is identified with masculinity in the text, or rather, he identifies himself with his father’s interpretation of masculinity. He inherits his views on women from his father, referring to them as his father does, in animalistic terms, or those of commodity. Tadhg identifies himself with the figure of his father and replicates his actions and attitudes with his father’s approval. It has been argued that this illustrates the exploitative nature of McCabe, and it may appear as such on the surface, but it may also be posited that, on a much deeper level, the opposite is the case. It may be argued that

McCabe's actions arise out of genuine compassion for his son. As has been identified earlier, Tadhg appears to be of limited intelligence in the text, and therefore his prospects in the murky world of Carraigthomond may not be good. Thus, it may be argued that McCabe, through his actions, is attempting to provide for his son, instilling in him a knowledge of the land, and protecting his estate, in order to create a future for his son, one where 'Tadhg's children will be milkin' cows and keepin' donkeys from our ditches' (Keane, 1966, p. 76).

The character of Tadhg is counterpointed by the other son present in the text, Leamy. Leamy is the son of Mick and Maimie Flanagan, and spends his time helping out behind the family bar. However, in sharp contrast to Tadhg, Leamy is shown to have quite an intellect and is more than capable of critical thinking. His is a questioning nature, and he challenges the validity of the status quo in Carraigthomond. As evidenced by his outlining of the incident involving the Blezzop brothers, detailed at the beginning of this chapter, Leamy questions the hegemony surrounding him and the ethics involved in furthering that hegemony. When describing Mr. Broderick, who suffered a beating from the Blezzop's due to his challenging of their position of assumed dominance, Leamy describes him as being 'no pity. He was a brave man' (Keane, 1966, 56). Mr. Broderick also foreshadows Leamy's repression from the consciousness of the community, as following his challenge to the hegemonic order, he is excluded from Carraigthomond, having moved to England. In the same passage Leamy asks his mother 'Muddy, why are the Bull McCabe and Tadhg and my father and the Sergeant such bullies?' (Keane, 1966, p. 55). Leamy here may be seen to be operating on the level of morality and conscience, reflecting a trait often seen in his mother Maimie (a detailed analysis of her character will follow in chapter five which

will focus on the subject of Keane's women), who also offers a resistance, albeit a subdued one, against the hegemonic order in Carraigthomond. After all, it is Maimie who offers resistance on moral grounds against McCabe's proposed beating of Dee, telling him 'It's a terrible thing to beat a man up' (Keane, 1966, p. 45), and it is she that challenges the social positioning of the Sergeant and the priest, referring to them as 'thicks like you climbing on other people's backs because you have authority' (Keane, 1966, p. 69). However, unlike Maimie who eventually reluctantly submits to the world around her, Leamy threatens 'going to the Barracks again and telling them about the Bull' (Keane, 1966, p. 56), and only submits out of love for his mother:

Do you love me, Leamy? [...] Then say no more about this. If you love me and trust me, you will say no more... never again until my family is reared and able to look out for themselves (Keane, 1966, p. 56).

Thus, just as Tadhg may form part of the motivating force behind McCabe's actions, so too Maimie, in her acceptance of the social order, may be seen to be acting on Leamy's behalf.

Leamy's replication of his mother's attitudes mirrors that of Tadhg's mimicry of his father, and just as Tadhg occupies a paternally identified masculine space, Leamy occupies its inverse, a feminine space with a strong maternal bond. Leamy, when not working in the bar, is helping his mother minding one of her many children, and it is only with his mother that he has open and free conversation. At the beginning of the play Leamy is scolded by his father, Mick: 'Tis too fond you are of hanging about with women and children. 'Tis a daughter you should have been, not a son' (Keane, 1966, p. 7), thereby foregrounding Leamy's occupation of a gender space that challenges not only traditional gender roles, but is also symbolic of Leamy's rejection of the hegemonic order in Carraigthomond, and its ultimate rejection of his position. Leamy is

also trying to create a space in Carraigthomond for his own anti-hegemonic position. He states that his chief desire is that he wants ‘to be different from *them*’ (Keane, 1966, p. 56), which expresses his awareness that he is indeed different from them, in terms of morality and traditional gender identity, but may not be allowed the space to exist within the insular, patriarchal community that surrounds him.

Ultimately, Leamy is not afforded that space to exist, and his character is removed from Carraigthomond, an act perhaps representative of a communal repression by a collective consciousness. He disappears from the community, with Maimie having ‘had to send my Leamy away since he got the breakdown’ (Keane, 1966, p. 75). Symbolically, this is a grim development in the realm of Carraigthomond. Unable to deal with Leamy’s morality and his challenge to traditional roles within the community, he is removed from that world. He becomes a figure that is denied agency and is repressed by the community, which may be indicative of the perpetuation of stasis, and the silencing of dissent, within the realm of Carraigthomond. We do not see a return of the repressed rebellious figure in the text, thus the outlook for Carraigthomond is bleak. However, in Freudian theory there is always a return of the repressed, so in these terms, perhaps there is a glimmer of hope for Carraigthomond in the future.

Looking at the Ben Barnes edition of the play⁶, the ending is somewhat different. Leamy remains present in a far more central role, and the text offers a far bleaker prognosis for Carraigthomond. Following McCabe’s admission of guilt through his assertion that ‘the grass won’t be green over his [Dee’s] grave when he’ll be forgot by all... forgot by all except me!’ (Keane, 1990, p. 167), Leamy emerges from a cubbyhole having heard the entire scene. According to stage directions he climbs out

⁶ The play was revived by the Abbey Theatre in 1987, and director Ben Barnes, in conjunction with Keane, made some revisions to the text, the ending being one of them.

and stands centre stage. '[We feel that he is in the grip of torturous indecision, but finally he turns reluctantly to the table and begins clearing the drinks away]' (Keane, 1990, p. 167). Thus, in Barnes' production, one may interpret Leamy's actions in returning to his work in clearing glasses following his 'torturous indecision', as his acceptance of and submission to, the social order of Carraigthomond, an acceptance and submission attested to by the fact the he has survived unrepressed. Thus, by looking at the Barnes ending of the play one may surmise that submission to the dominant social order of Carraigthomond is a necessity to survive there, and no hope for the future is presented.

In conclusion, two sons are counterpointed in the text. Both sons suffer from defects, in Tadhg's case a natural, and perhaps inherited one, and in Leamy's a socially constructed one. Tadhg can be seen to be of limited intelligence and engaged in a constant quest for the validation of his father with whom he has identified, thus representing a masculine energy that is representative of the patriarchal world. Tadhg is an unwitting agent of the dominant social order in the text, as illustrated by his mimicry of his father's actions and opinions. In contrast, Leamy has been shown to be an intelligent, questioning figure, often being the voice of conscience in the text. He inhabits a feminized space, one that threatens the very notion of masculinity and is at odds with the patriarchal system within which he finds himself, and is seen as a defective male. In terms of identity, Leamy's identity is bound with that of his mother, mimicking her disregard for the hegemonic order of Carraigthomond. In the end only one character survives in the original version of the play, and that is Tadhg. Leamy is repressed from collective communal consciousness and removed from the world of Carraigthomond, thus the survival of the old order, and the futility of any attempt at

change, is hinted at. One could also reach such a bleak prognosis if one looks at the work in Oedipal terms. Leamy could be seen to represent maternal unity and the bond experienced by the infant with his mother. However, such a bond must ultimately submit to the authority of the father, which can be seen in Tadhg's relationship with McCabe in the text. Leamy, representative of maternal unity in this sense, is removed from the text, and submission to the father is granted primacy, therefore submission to external authority, in this case that of the hegemonic order represented by McCabe, is granted. This leads one to a gloomy prognosis for Carraighthomond, as it becomes a site of stasis, a stasis echoed in Ben Barnes' alternative ending of the play detailed earlier.

Having discussed Carraighthomond as a site of neurosis, examined in depth the unconscious motives that may lie behind the Bull McCabe's actions, and probed the counter-pointing of two sons in the text, in an examination of what prognosis the text offers for Carraighthomond, and by extension society itself, this dissertation will now discuss Lacanian theories of identification in relation to the text, and will explore resonance within the work, with both the Ireland of its time and also the present-day nation .

3.5 – Misrecognition and Identification in *The Field*.

Having looked at Maggie Butler's field as a mirror that facilitates the Bull McCabe's narcissism, it is also of merit to look at both the site and the text itself as mirrors in the Lacanian sense of the word.

In the essay 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the of the I Function – as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience' (Lacan, 2006), Jacques Lacan speaks of the moment an infant encounters his reflection in a mirror, and how this misrecognition leads to a narcissistic sense of self-unity. However this identification is an imaginary

one as the mirror distorts and deforms, it ‘situates the agency known as the ego, prior to its social determination, in a fictional direction’ (Lacan, 2006, p. 76). Put simply by Anthony Elliott ‘the mirror stage is a narcissistic process in which human beings construct a *misrecognised* image of self-unity’ (Elliott, 2002, p. 104). Such identifications are not limited to infancy and ‘the imaginary realm of traps and distortions is in ongoing relation to subjectivity; it is continually rerun and played out with other persons’ (Elliott, 2002, p. 104). Thus, human beings continue to misrecognise themselves in others, through the operation of what is termed the Ideal ego, which is ‘an ideal of narcissistic omnipotence constructed on the model of infantile narcissism’ (Glowinski et al, 2001, p. 83). Therefore human beings, according to Lacan, constantly seek to recover that ideal of unity that constantly escapes us, as ‘this ideal of unity is essential to perception; its absence produces enormous anxiety, especially in the form of imaginary decomposition’ (Glowinski et al, 2001, p. 83). In the present-day, the cultural roles played and perpetuated by elements such as advertising, celebrity culture, the beauty industry, and television may be seen to reinforce the importance of such imaginary identifications in ‘structuring the identities, gender patterns and aspirations in which society reproduces itself on an imaginary plane’ (Elliott, 2002, p. 104). Thus, it must be asked, on a micro level, how the field at the heart of the text acts as a Lacanian mirror for the Bull McCabe, and also on a much broader level, how the text itself may be seen to act as a Lacanian mirror, and what imaginary identifications that structure ‘the identities, gender patterns and aspirations in which society reproduces itself on an imaginary plane’ (Elliott, 2002, p. 104), may be seen to resonate within the text?

Firstly, the Bull McCabe’s identity is intrinsically linked to the land around him.

He is an elemental figure in the text, speaking mostly in terms of the nature that surrounds him, as surmised in a prophetic line by the sergeant: 'There's nothing in your heads but pigs and cows and pitiful patches of land [...] a man might be beaten to death here for all you'd give a damn' (Keane, 1966, p. 25). Women are reduced to an animalistic status by McCabe, who posits that Dee was drawn to his murder by 'Some doxy with no grazing of her own' (Keane, 1966, p. 73), and, on sending Maimie upstairs to fetch her husband, Mick, McCabe boasts 'there's nothing like a bull to move a heifer, hah!' (Keane, 1966, p. 17). Therefore, sexuality and nature are interconnected for McCabe, who, as argued earlier, has displaced his sexual desires onto nature and the land that supports not only his lifestyle, but also his own idealized self. In an attempt at addressing his own sense of lack, he identifies himself with nature, particularly Maggie Butler's field, which, in the eyes of McCabe is 'as much mine' (Keane, 1966, p. 21). McCabe feels a sense of entitlement to the field as he has worked it for the last five years 'By all rights 'tis our property an' we're not men to be cheated out of our property' (Keane, 1966, p. 17). The field represents McCabe's imagined identity, his Ideal ego, and when one considers the argument made earlier regarding McCabe's crisis of potency as represented in the text, it conforms to the definition of Ideal ego offered by Glowinski et al, that is; 'an ideal of narcissistic omnipotence constructed on the model of infantile narcissism' (Glowinski et al, 2001, p. 83).

McCabe's ideal of narcissistic omnipotence is threatened by the arrival of William Dee, who plans to buy the field and turn it into a facility for the manufacture of concrete blocks. This is an abomination to McCabe on both practical and egotistical levels. Practically McCabe cannot allow that to happen, as he needs the field, as it is his only passage to water. However, on an essential level, Dee is challenging the very basis

on which McCabe has structured his identity, drowning nature in a sea of concrete.

McCabe's aggression in defending his position may be understood in terms of his essential ideal of unity being under threat, the threat being the one referred earlier to as 'imaginary decomposition' (Glowinski et al, 2001, p. 83). This may be further developed by the theory of Muller and Richardson, cited in Glowinski et al, who state that:

Narcissistic passion converts into primitive aggressivity when the fragile unity of the ego is threatened. [...] They further suggest that, in Lacan's scheme, the aggressive imago of the fragmented body is the inversion of the Gestalt of the unified ego. Fear of the imago of fragmentation arouses aggression (quoted in Glowinski et al, 2001, p. 6).

Thus, McCabe's narcissism transforms into primitive aggression as his sense of identity and unity are threatened by the outsider, Dee, who presents to McCabe an image of his own fractured self that is in complete opposition to his imagined unified ego through nature. As Lacan termed the unconscious to be 'the Other's discourse' (Lacan, 2006, p. 10), Dee's challenge to McCabe, and the fragmented image it presents to him, forms a part of McCabe's unconscious also, a part denied by him in favour of his unified ideal ego as represented by the field itself. Thus, by looking at the character of the Bull McCabe in terms of Lacanian imaginary identification, further insight into his unconscious actions are garnered.

Having looked at McCabe's ideal ego as manifested in the text on a narrow level of personal anxiety and repressed desire, one may apply the theories on a much broader scale. As McCabe may be seen to be representative of rural, agricultural Ireland in a time of changing economic and social standards, what may be inferred from an examination of rural Ireland's sense of self through a Lacanian looking glass? As illustrated in chapter two, rural Ireland, at the time of writing of *The Field*, was located at a crossroads of identity, as de Valera's somewhat insular, protectionist, and pastoral

idealism was challenged by the industrially sympathetic, outward looking, and economically expansive policies engineered by Whitaker and Lemass⁷. Thus, William Dee's threatening presentation of the Bull McCabe's own fragmented imago to him in the text may be interpreted as symbolic of a nation being forced to reconsider and reappraise its own identity in a changing world. In the text such a threat is not allowed to survive, and in an act of ultimate aggression, McCabe murders that which threatens his own imaginary sense of unity, thereby preserving his position in Carraigthomond, and sentencing the silent community to an existence marked by continuing stasis. On a representative level one may interpret the text as a damning critique of social inertia and the inability to recognise one's own faults in the face of change, meeting such change with an aggression that is completely intolerant of it, thereby situating national identity in a site of embryonic stasis.

Having looked at the character of the Bull McCabe and his actions through a Lacanian lens, and uncovered further unconscious motivations behind such actions on both a narrow textual level and also on a broader representative level, it has been argued that the text offers a social critique of national identity in transition. However, the popularity of the play suggests a level of identification with the work by the public, conscious or unconscious, and this dissertation will now examine such identifications made both at the time of writing of the play and also in present-day Ireland.

The area of audience reception is a difficult one to address in an abstract form such as this dissertation, as one can never emphatically state why a work resounds with the public. However, as theatre is a temporally and spatially governed medium, one that

⁷ For further analysis of the change in economic and social policies presented by Whitaker and Lemass refer back to chapter two of this dissertation, which discussed changing political, social, and economic landscapes in more detail.

is essentially experiential, one may suggest that it is a medium that engages strongly on a psychological level. In terms of Keane, his popularity, and the presence of his characters in collective cultural consciousness, allows one to infer that his work did, and still does, resonate profoundly with theatregoers. As argued by Anthony Elliott, 'Lacan's theory of the mirror stage is profoundly evocative of the narcissistic bent of much contemporary culture' (Elliott, 2002, p. 104), thus through this lens one may identify possible sources for this resonance, possible markers of identification presented on stage that captured the imagination and gave expression to something present, on a conscious or unconscious level, within the collective psyche. Thus, what distorted reflections can be seen by the audience at large within the work, and in what sense does such identification with the work offer an imaginary sense of unity to the public?

As dealt with in some depth in the second chapter, the time of writing of *The Field* was one of massive upheaval socially, economically, politically, and in terms of identity. McCabe may be seen as an archetypal figure representative of a rural populace, a populace that was coming under increasing pressure to change their style of living, as exemplified in the previous chapter by the 1974 Farm Modernization Scheme (Brown, 2004, p. 251) that forced the small farmer into early retirement if his way of life did not conform to European standards. However, the message is not as clear-cut as that. Ultimately, through the collective rejection of change, and submission to the aggressive narcissism of McCabe, the village of Carraigthomond remains in a state of paralysing stasis, offering a bleak prognosis for such insular, stubborn, and enclosed communities.

The theory of such rural identification with the work appears to be reinforced by the originally less than enthusiastic reactions of the urban populace, who did not want to

be reminded of where they came from, as posited in the previous chapter by theatre critic Aodhán Madden; ‘If we came from backwoods, we wanted to forget it pronto. Our self-delusion could be better served by imitations of Syngian romanticism or the mean city angst of Beckett’ (Madden, 1987, p. 17). Thus, Keane may have been perceived as representing a past that, in the case of urban audiences, was better off forgotten in an effort to affect a distance from the unflattering realities of a collective past in favour of a cosmopolitan future. Thus, one may view the text as constituting a Lacanian mirror to the theatre-goers of a changing Ireland, projecting a sense of unity for rural audiences that necessitated an examination of their own fragmented sense of self, and forcing urban audiences to address and reappraise their own sense of self-unity through the depiction of their fragmented roots.

Another possible area of resonance within the work may be that of the role of women in the play. Maimie, like most of Keane’s women, is a strong character, as is, to a lesser extent, Maggie Butler, who is after all the titleholder to the field in the play. Both women submit to the dominance of the social order in the end, but their roles, and identifications made with them by a female audience, would offer an insight into Keane’s treatment of gender in the work, something that will be entered into in chapter five of this work, which deals with Keane’s representation of women.

It is also worth mentioning the Abbey Theatre’s revival of Keane’s work, including *The Field*, in the late 1980s with director Ben Barnes at the helm. This revival was hugely successful for the Abbey and it ‘did its best business in years’ (Madden, 1987, p. 17). Significantly, the Ireland of the 1980s was not all that dissimilar to the Ireland of the 1950s and 1960s. As noted by Vic Merriman: ‘The reality was that the 1980s reprised much of the social malaise of the 1950s, most notably in the re-

emergence of the abiding scourge of Independent Ireland, emigration' (Merriman in Maher and O'Brien, 2014, p. 198). Emigration loomed large over the population, as economic policies simply were not working, thus mirroring the rural depopulation that had resulted from de Valera's failed policies at the time of writing of the text. The Catholic church, having been challenged by government on numerous issues, such as divorce and contraception, was in a state of decline among a younger generation, so much so, that 'by the early 1990s many church congregations in Dublin were dominated by persons over forty years of age, and that in a city with a markedly youthful demography' (Kiberd, 1996, p. 573). This created a psychological vacuum as a traditional marker of Irish identity disappeared without any replacement. Kiberd continues:

By the 1990s three hundred thousand were unemployed and one in every three lived below the official poverty line. For them the loss of the old coherent codes would prove especially traumatic, for they had few material comforts to make the new spiritual emptiness bearable. [...] Emigration, which had halted during a brief period of affluence in the 1970s, began again to assume chronic proportions, with up to 40,000 leaving in some years. Entire villages in the west of Ireland now had few, if any, inhabitants in their twenties and thirties (Kiberd, 1996, p. 573).

Thus, once more, Ireland found itself situated at a crossroads of identity, situated in a vacuum between the past and the future, where the present was failing its people. The success of *The Field's* revival by Barnes and the Abbey is best summed up by Aodhán Madden, in a quote that this dissertation has used in a different context in the previous chapter:

Dubliners discovered in Keane a writer who spoke to them of their deepest fears, their inescapable inheritance. They saw an Ireland of brutes and saints, moving statues and sexual savagery, hidden murder, shame. The Abbey did its best business in years (Madden, 1987, p. 17).

Keane's work resonated with theatregoers, holding up a Lacanian mirror to a society that identifies itself with the distorted images therein. The Bull McCabe's crisis

of potency may be seen to be reflective of the national unconscious sense of despair and hopelessness at a failing Ireland, a nation seeking to redefine itself without having any cohesive unifying objective outside of economic goals. Martine Pelletier argues, in her work on Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*, that its themes 'bear the mark of encroaching globalization' (Pelletier in Grene and Lonergan, 2012, p. 31) and it may be argued that the same may be said for *The Field*. The dramatic impetus of the work arises from the intersection of tradition and progress, agriculture and industry, and, in essence, insularity and expansion. Thus, the success of *The Field* in the late 1980s may mirror that of *Dancing at Lughnasa*, in that it may have been, in part, due to 'being closely connected, consciously or not, with the early tremors of globalization felt by Irish audiences' (Pelletier in Grene and Lonergan, 2012, p. 31). Thus, Keane's representations of 'brutes and saints, moving statues and sexual savagery, hidden murder, shame' enabled a form of escapism for theatre-goers, allowing them to identify with, and live vicariously through, the characters onstage, while offering up a disjointed world on stage, a world that is highly reflective of the one inhabited by the audience and representative of the anxieties contained within it.

Finally, what of present-day Ireland and its relationship to *The Field*? At the time of writing of this dissertation, Ireland and national identity is once again in a state of flux. Having abandoned such social regulators as the Catholic Church, and experienced the prosperity that accompanied the Celtic-Tiger boom, the nation now finds itself adrift in a post-Celtic Tiger state dogged by emigration and austerity. Without veering into the realm of the political, Ireland of recent years has undergone huge changes, with increased European intervention in the state, as evidenced by turf-cutting protests, enforcement of E.U. led water charges and fishing quotas. Thus, as

McCabe's identity is intertwined with the land, and land is commodity, perhaps his manifesto: 'Land is all that matters. Own your own land' (Keane, 1966, p. 16) may be seen as a statement relating to political economy, thereby unearthing a further possible source of resonance within the piece for audiences in a state whose powers may be perceived as being diminished at the hands of European intervention. A further example of this may be seen in a YouTube clip (BillyQuilter, 2014) that overdubs a narrative relating to the imposition of water charges on to footage of McCabe from Jim Sheridan's 1990 film adaptation of the play. This clip is discussed in more detail in the final chapter of this dissertation in relation to Keane's portrayal of masculinity in the piece.

It can also be argued that there is an element of nostalgia at work in the popularity of Keane's work today. The setting of his work, and his imaginative use of the North Kerry dialect, locate it in a rural space, one of a certain time and place, reflecting back to the audience the notion of heritage, a concept that is identified with by the audience as it speaks to them of their past, a point reinforced by Fintan O'Toole's assertion that; Keane's plays 'tell us a lot about how we got to be where we are now' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 257).

As *The Field* deals directly with identity in a state of transition and transposes on stage a primal sense of loss, it may be argued that, as identity is in a continuous state of flux, the work operates on a continually resonant plane. At the heart of the work is the central character's inability to come to terms with change, change that challenges the core of his being, a dilemma that is both psychologically universal and experientially personal, locating the work in the space between social change and the personal anxieties that are encountered because of it.

3.6 – Conclusion.

In conclusion, this chapter has examined, through a psychoanalytical framework, the unconscious as represented in *The Field*. Carraigthomond has been identified to be a site of collective neurosis in the text, suffering from an excess of repression as a result of the interaction of oppressive hegemonic orders, formal and informal, at work in the community, and may be seen to be reflective of one's struggle against such repressive social structures in any given community.

A Freudian analysis of the chief protagonist of the work, the Bull McCabe, was entered into, and numerous unconscious motivations behind his actions speculated upon. The field at the centre of the play was identified as a site of displacement and condensation, and also as a focal point for what was termed McCabe's crisis of potency. McCabe's constituting a character that was frustrated in love was debated, and a conclusion reached that McCabe was indeed acting as a man frustrated by love on many different, and often unconscious, levels. The text itself was seen to act in a repressive manner, removing completely one character at odds with the dominant structures of power in Carraigthomond from the fictional world, thereby mirroring the action of the neurotic community in removing any threat to its survival, and thereby offering a bleak prognosis of the social dynamic as presented in the village. An analysis of two opposing sons in the piece was offered, exposing Keane's implied social commentary on what the future may hold for Carraigthomond, and questioning gender roles on a societal level, through the application of psychoanalytic theories of identification as presented in the characters of Leamy and Tadhg.

The Field was then looked at in terms of Lacanian imaginary *méconnaissance* of the 'mirror stage' and the Bull McCabe's narcissistic aggression commented upon. This

theory was then expanded to look at the text itself as a distorting mirror through which society itself is under examination, and individual assumptions regarding identity questioned. Finally, the popularity of the work throughout the years was noted and an attempt was made to probe into the timeless resonance of the work incorporating the theories of Lacan and the relevant social contexts. The goal of this chapter was to explore unconscious motivations and resonances at play within the work through the application of Freudian and Lacanian filters to it. From the neurosis of Carraighthomond, to the psyche of the Bull McCabe, this chapter has probed behind the characters and beneath the text itself, in an effort to unmask unconscious motivations, identifications, and resonant factors at play within the piece.

Following on from this, the next chapter will now focus on *The Field* as a postcolonial text, and will attempt to unmask further resonance within the piece.

Chapter Four: *The Field* – A Postcolonial Perspective.

4.1 – Introduction.

Having explored, through the application of Freudian and Lacanian filters, possible unconscious resonances at play within the text, focus will now be turned onto a postcolonial reading of the play. Firstly, the question of how does Ireland, and Irish literature, fit into the scope of postcolonial studies will be addressed. Secondly, Edward Said's seminal work *Orientalism* will be referred to, and applied to *The Field*, paying particular attention to binary constructions within the text and their operation in terms of unconscious assertions of dominance and power. Following on from this, Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of ambivalence, mimicry, and liminality will also be shown to add meaning to the text, as will an exploration of his concept of the Third Space of enunciation and its presence in, and through, the text. Finally, the concept of nationalism will be debated in relation to the work while maintaining a Lacanian referential in terms of national identification and the paradigmatic role played by his concept of the mirror-stage in the development and performance of the epistemology of nationalism. The concepts of land ownership, language, and religion all operate in a performative nature within the text to both facilitate and at times subvert, identifications on an unconscious level. The representations of such imaginary identifications in a postcolonial context, and the resultant unconscious resonances implicated within such identificatory processes, will be looked at.

The analysis outlined above will reveal something further regarding unconscious identifications and resonances at work within the play in the postcolonial national

*imaginaire*⁸ and will add a further layer of meaning and possible interpretation to what, on the surface, may appear a simple text.

There has been some debate as to whether or not Ireland, and its literature, may be seen to operate in a postcolonial context for many reasons, some of which are addressed by Clare Carroll in her introduction to the edited collection *Ireland and Postcolonial Theory*. She argues that:

Ireland, because part of the West, both geographically and culturally in Europe, is seen by some as a transgressive site for postcolonial theory that has been generated from Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, and Asia. But by the same token Ireland was the first of England's colonies, the training ground for the colonists of North America, and the context of the first English discourse on why and how to conquer and colonize. This discourse represented the Irish, though European and Roman Catholic, as non-European in origin and pagan in custom. [...] The Irish were also subject to representation as racially 'other' (Carroll and King, 2003, p. 3).

Therefore, despite the ethnic, cultural, and geographic proximity of the Irish to their colonizers, the English, they were still represented by an 'image of Ireland as an "other" against which they [the colonizer] could proceed to define themselves' (O'Brien, 2002, p. 86). Such a specular image of 'other' would also serve to further political agendas on behalf of the colonizer and, as Carroll points out, represents a foundational tenet of colonial discourse made 'on the training ground for the colonists of North America' (Carroll and King, 2003, p. 3).

Ultimately, this 'other' land would be appropriated and incorporated into that of the colonizer through 'The Act of Union of 1800 which yoked the two countries together under the Parliament in London [and] represented further integration of Ireland into English political life' (Kiberd, 1996, p. 20). However, from an Irish perspective such integration changed little. Economic practices 'still continued to operate along

⁸ A term used in the Lacanian sense by Eugene O'Brien in his enlightening work, *Examining Irish Nationalism in the Context of Literature, Culture and Religion – A Study of the Epistemological Structure of Nationalism*, from which the argument put forward will draw frequently.

colonial lines' (Carroll and King, 2003, p. 4). Carroll holds that it was 'the persistence of a long established and deeply entrenched colonial system' along with the potato blight and the 'ruthlessness of the free market economy' that was responsible for the Great Famine and the devastating effect it had on Ireland's population, culture, and language (Carroll and King, 2003, p. 4). The Irish peasant's perception of the situation, as referenced in Kiberd, seemed to be summed up in the statement that 'God sent the potato-blight, but the English caused the Famine' (Kiberd, 1996, p. 21). When Declan Kiberd's assertion that:

As far as the Irish were concerned, colonialism took various forms: political rule from London through the medium of Dublin Castle; economic expropriation by planters who came in various waves of settlement; an accompanying psychology of self-doubt and dependency among the Irish, linked to the loss of economic and political power but also the decline of the native language and culture (Kiberd, 1996, p. 6)

is taken into consideration, Seamus Deane's definition of colonialism as 'a process of radical dispossession. A colonized people is without a specific history and even [...] without a specific language' in his introduction to the Field Day publication *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature* (Eagleton et al, 1990, p. 10) would seem an astute one.

Thus, due to the English 'radical dispossession' of Ireland's power, land, culture and language, it cannot but be surmised that the nation has had a colonized past, one which lives on in the collective unconscious of the nation despite relatively recent independence. To return to Kiberd, he argues that 'it was less easy to decolonize the mind than the territory' (Kiberd, 1996, p. 6). It is precisely this colonial psychological residue, and its postcolonial counterpart in the re-imagining of the nation, as seen in Keane's *The Field*, that this chapter intends to explore. This will be done through a close reading of the text, in conjunction with the application of postcolonial theory as

put forward by Edward Said and Homi K. Bhabha, while maintaining a Lacanian perspective in terms of the concepts of nationalism that are both revealed and subverted by the text. Such an approach will reveal further unconscious resonant and identificatory elements at work within the text. To begin with, this dissertation will now explore binary oppositions at play in the text in terms of Said's *Orientalism*, and will examine power-relations that are revealed and also questioned through such oppositional methodology, thereby positing possible unconscious and resonant levels of identification that may be seen to operate within the work.

4.2 – 'Outsiders. Accursed friggers': The construction and subversion of opposition.

Having identified Ireland as being a site of previous colonization by its neighbouring colonial power, England, the suitability of *The Field* as a postcolonial text must now be looked at. In terms of social context it has already been illustrated in chapter two of this dissertation that the text was published at a time of great change in Irish society, most notably in the area of national identity, and the representation of such changing contexts within the text was noted. However, the question remains: what of the play's resonance today, in a more modern, somewhat ethnically diverse Ireland? The use of postcolonial theory in answering this question is appropriate, as the postcolonial position is a fluid and unending one, particularly in the case of Ireland where the language of the people remains the colonial tongue and the geographical, societal, and cultural proximity of our past colonizers necessitates close relations. Such fluidity and presence is illustrated by Ashcroft et al when they state:

We use the term 'post-colonial', however to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European

imperial aggression (Ashcroft et al, 1989, p. 2).

Thus, one's colonial past remains an influence on the present-moment due to the influencing effect it has on one's definition of the self, and on a broader scale, how a nation defines itself by attempting to create a national identity through nationalism as a direct reaction to the colonizers, reflecting the 'continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression' indicated by Ashcroft et al above. Victor Merriman's utilization of Awam Ampka's definition of the 'postcolonial moment' as being 'the point of emergence of sustained critique of the material circumstances of the social order that has been settled for in the successor state' (Merriman, 2011, p. 21) is particularly apt, and it is precisely in this 'postcolonial moment' that this dissertation situates *The Field* and the subtle social critiques contained therein.

Secondly, one must look at the text being studied here, *The Field*, and assess its suitability as representative of a postcolonial text. At the heart of the text is the issue of land its possession. Two conflicting ideologies meet in what is ultimately a violent battle for ownership. The Bull McCabe feels entitled to the land through the past, his heritage, and his working of the field, whereas the character of William Dee represents a more modern, logical, capitalist, and futuristic (for Carraighthomond) claim on it. McCabe, like his predecessors, is rooted in the landscape, and presents a naturalistic, and somewhat essentialist, perspective on land ownership, one that is challenged by the arrival of the 'imported landgrabber' that is Dee (Keane, 1966, p. 44). Thus, as land and its ownership, and more importantly the rights to the ownership of it, form the central impetus of dramatic movement in the text, a postcolonial reading of it is appropriate. McCabe may be seen to act as both a post-colonial subject and as a

colonizing force in the text, thereby enabling a discussion of nationalism and its propensity to repeat colonialist structures in the struggle for national identity. To begin with, *The Field* will be looked at closely with reference to Said's *Orientalism* in order to examine the subtle unconscious power structures operating within the text.

Though criticized and developed further by later thinkers, Said's *Orientalism* remains one of the founding texts of postcolonial studies. In essence, and at the risk of over-simplification, the work deals with the production and proliferation of images of the Orient by the west through a highly motivated and distorting lens, in order to re-affirm the ideological dominance of the image creators. He describes Orientalism as a 'myth-system' (Kennedy, 2000, p. 10), through which the Orient is 'man-made' (Said, 1979, p. 5) or as a 'Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient' (Said, 1979, p. 3). In describing the operation of the discourse of Orientalism and its institutions 'Said stresses the emergence of what he sees as the principle of binary opposition and comparison whereby Europe always emerges as superior to the Orient' (Kennedy, 2000, p. 17). Thus, binary opposition, and by extension identifications made through negative differentiation, may be seen to operate to further certain specific ideological positions, specifically those of the instigators of such opposition. With this in mind one must look at *The Field* in this context.

Though Said's work deals primarily with concepts and images of the Orient as created and perceived by the West, his theories may be extrapolated and applied to any text that deals with the construction of an 'other' in order to dominate and have authority over that 'other'. In this context one may view *The Field* as representative of Orientalist discourse in operation within a microcosm. To begin with the text operates on a level of binary opposition in relation to the main protagonists that is reflective of

Said's theories of Orientalism. McCabe's creation and proliferation of Dee's image as an 'other' functions to further his own agenda and his own perceived position of dominance in the village of Carraigthomond. The creation of the image of Dee as an outsider through such binary opposition is also achieved structurally in the text itself, which is something that will also be explored. The function of this opposition will be addressed in terms of audience/reader identification within the text, and the subversion of such identifications will be discussed. Firstly, the role of binary opposition in the play needs to be looked at.

The play opens in 'the bar of a public-house in Carraigthomond, a small village in the southwest of Ireland' (Keane, 1966, p. 7), thereby setting the action in a fictional but also instantly familiar space, to the Irish audience/reader at least. The opening lines of the play are a comic interaction between 'The Bird' O' Donnell, Mick Flanagan and his son Leamy, thereby further easing the audience/reader into the familiarity of the space. The first introduction of a sense of exteriority comes in the form of Maggie Butler's arrival to inform Flanagan of her intention to put the field up for sale. Butler enters a predominantly masculine environment and in her opening line greets Flanagan and states that 'I don't be in the village very often' (Keane, 1966, p. 8). Thus Butler, already an incongruent presence through her being a female landowner, acknowledges her position of exteriority to the dominant order of Carraigthomond. This position is further highlighted when she announces her intentions of auctioning off the field to the highest bidder. By doing so, Butler is also performing an active rejection of the masculine hegemony to be found in such familiar settings. In contrast, Flanagan's first reaction to her statement is to inform her that 'I fancy the Bull won't want to see it bought by an outsider' (Keane, 1966, p. 10), thereby reflecting back to Butler,

Flanagan's own position within the order of Carraigthomond, and her position outside of it. The term 'outsider' in the line also acts as a foregrounding oppositional term that serves to delineate an oppositional context that will run throughout the work, and also, along with the familiarity of the setting and the comedy of the opening, functions to draw the audience/reader into an identificatory process where they become as much a part of Carraigthomond as the characters on stage.

The term 'outsider' is also utilized to great effect by the character of the Bull McCabe who, on hearing of Mrs Butler's intentions foreshadows the violence against the 'outsider' that will be William Dee. When told by Bird that 'There's bound to be outsiders bidding. There's a craze for land everywhere', the stage directions tell us that '*Bull* points at his ashplant, which is on counter, seizes it and strikes the floor with force' before declaring 'That's what I care about outsiders. Accursed friggers with nothing in their heads only to own the ground we're walkin' on. We had their likes long enough, hadn't we' (Keane, 1966, p. 16). McCabe, through his use of inclusive language, that is, his use of the collective personal pronoun 'we', and his use of rhetoric in equating any 'outsider' to a previous colonial force, is creating a sense of community that is defined in terms of violent opposition to a fabricated image of an other, or in McCabe's phraseology, a 'hangblasted shagger of a stranger' (Keane, 1966, p. 21). Structurally this exchange comes just before McCabe's account of his son's, Tadhg's, killing of a wandering donkey, a prophetic metaphor for the fate of any intruder into McCabe's realm, and another subtle unconscious image that links the concepts of death and intrusion.

Act Two opens in a similarly jocular fashion as the opening act, with comic relief coming from the Bird's selfish flattery of Maimie's curious vanity. It is at this

point that we are introduced to the ‘outsider’ as ‘*A newcomer enters* and nods both to *Maimie* and *The Bird*. He is a young man in his late twenties, well dressed and presentable. He is *William Dee*’ (Keane, 1966, p. 28). From the off, this ‘well dressed and presentable’ newcomer is in contrast to McCabe who ‘wears a hat and an overcoat, carries ashplant’ and his son Tadhg who is ‘well-built and dour’ (Keane, 1966, p. 14). Dee’s language is another marker of difference as he speaks a language devoid of colloquialism that is in sharp contrast to McCabe’s language, and that of most of the characters in the play, thereby removing him from the linguistic contextual locus of Carraigthomond. Dee also acts in an extremely polite and mannerly way in the bar, again something in sharp contrast to the forcefulness of McCabe seen previously. Thus, the signifiers of clothing, language, and action, all demarcate areas of difference between the characters, and unconsciously create the anticipation of conflict within the audience/reader. However, such an oppositional reading of Dee is further complicated by the fact that he is a returning Irish emigrant and therefore ‘not a stranger ... not a complete stranger, that is’ (Keane, 1966, p. 29), something that will be looked at later in this chapter in terms of Bhabha’s theories of hybridity. As stated previously, the familiarity of the setting, the comic relief, and McCabe’s rhetoric all encourage an identification to be made by the audience/reader with Carraigthomond, and the arrival of Dee presents a challenge, not only to McCabe, but also to the audience/reader themselves and any identifications they may have made with the characters and setting on stage.

Undoubtedly the chief creator of the distorted image of the ‘other’ is the character of the Bull McCabe. He persistently references Dee’s outsider status in order to reinforce his own position within the society of Carraigthomond. However, it will be

argued that such oppositional images as presented by him are also subverted within the structures of the text, thereby complicating such identificatory processes as outlined previously, and presenting a challenge to such simplistic definitions. It may be argued that this is where the resonance of the text lies, in a space where the audience/reader fall victim to a crisis of identification, and are torn between two identificatory processes which thereby result in a questioning of the essence of the self. First, the binary constructions offered by McCabe that create the distorting lens that locates Dee in the position of 'other' and reinforce McCabe's superiority must be addressed.

In McCabe's initial encounter with Dee it takes only eight lines of dialogue before Dee is cast into a position of outsider. McCabe refers to him as a 'foreign cock with hair-oil and a tiepin' that is going to 'do me out of my rights' (Keane, 1966, p. 34). In this single line McCabe is casting Dee into the position of a foreign presence, and given Ireland's history of being colonized, immediately locates Dee as a potential colonizing force. Dee's exteriority to McCabe's community is furthered by reference to his hair-oil and tiepin, markers of modernity and class that are alien to McCabe's realm. Hair-oil may also be seen to represent artificiality, in the sense that it is unnatural, which is in stark contrast to McCabe's constant referrals to, and by extension his identification with, the natural world. McCabe's reference to Dee doing him out of his rights highlights the role that referencing the past, a collective past, plays in McCabe's construction of the distorted image of Dee. McCabe explains in the same passage 'I've had that field for five years. It's my only passage to water. You're tacklin' a crowd now that could do for you, man' (Keane, 1966, p. 34). In these three sentences McCabe is associating his own sense of heritage and entitlement with those of the community at large as he identifies his own personal history with that of the 'crowd' that will

eliminate any potential threat to that history, thus further casting Dee into the role of outsider. McCabe's history becomes the history of the collective, while at the same time Dee is dispossessed of his own history through its irrelevance to the community, as projected by McCabe, in an act reminiscent of imperialist discourse, the very discourse McCabe purports to be opposing. McCabe's rejection of Dee's difference, and his dispossession of the outsider of his history is doomed to emulate colonial structures. As argued by Merriman, 'A refusal to engage with actual historical experience of difference is fatal to the project of developing a decolonized state. In these circumstances, the establishment of the nation state will do no more than enshrine the aspirations and desires of a community which is itself no more than a fantastic projection of an unrealisable homogeneity – a return to the patterns of colonialism itself' [Merriman, 1999(b), p. 309].

Dee is continually referred to as an outsider by McCabe throughout the text, portraying him as an 'imported whoresmaster, taking over the village as if he owned it' (Keane, 1966, p. 35), an 'imported landgrabber', and a 'robbin' gazebo' (Keane, 1966, p. 44), who 'don't belong here' (Keane, 1966, p. 45). McCabe distorts the image of Dee that he presents to the community by inscribing it with a narrative of dispossession and colonization, thereby exploiting a shared collective memory of a colonized past, in order to further his own personal agenda. McCabe's community subscribe to his mode of thought, as evidenced by Flanagan's warning to Dee should he go ahead with his intention of buying the field: 'I thought I'd warn you. The village would hold it against you' (Keane, 1966, p. 32). Such acquiescence of the village and its inhabitants, as presented in Flanagan's statement is reflective of Said's utilization of the Gramscian concept of hegemonic consent in the context of Orientalism: 'he [Said] takes

Orientalism as an example of how cultural hegemony works in civil society to reinforce the ruling ideology of political society not by domination but by consent' (Kennedy, 2000, p. 31). Thus, through McCabe's projection of distorted images of Dee, and the community's acceptance of, and submission to, such images, McCabe reinforces his own personal ideology on the community through their consent.

Of the Carraigthomond residents⁹, only two characters present any resistance to McCabe's ruling ideology, namely Maimie and her son Leamy. Though Maimie resists, ultimately she consents to the hegemonic order she finds herself in. Having protested against McCabe's plan to give Dee a beating, she ultimately agrees, along with the rest of the community, to provide him with an alibi for the night in question. Leamy however remains a resisting force and ultimately is removed from the community under the pretence of his being sent away suffering from 'his nerves' (Keane, 1966, p. 64) in what may have been an act of both love and fear by his parents. However, Leamy also represents a threat to McCabe's dominance through his potential refusal to consent to the hegemonic order of Carraigthomond, therefore he is removed from McCabe's society. The character of Dee, having been cast as an outsider, represents a stronger challenge to the structure of dominance in operation in Carraigthomond and his refusal to consent to that structure ends in his death at the hands of McCabe and his son Tadhg. Following this, through their silence in the face of an inquiry into the murder, the community display in microcosm the operation of cultural hegemony through consent as outlined by Said above. Such a position is reached through McCabe's manipulation of Dee's image into that of an outsider, a potential colonizing force, and a reflection of previous hardship encountered during colonial rule in the community. Therefore, as

⁹ I intentionally exclude the characters of the sergeant and the priest from this group as both characters are cast in a role of exteriority to the community in the play.

Said defines Orientalism as ‘a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and (most of the time) “the Occident”’ (Said, 1979, p. 2), and ‘a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient’ (Said, 1979, p. 3), it is possible to surmise that Orientalism, albeit a form that replaces the term Orient with ‘other’, and its methodology may be seen in operation within the microcosm that is Carraighthomond. McCabe, as the chief protagonist and central figure of the piece, controls the images, and resultant ideas, absorbed by the community, and through his distortion of such images, particularly those of the ‘other’ he reinforces his own position within a consenting community.

At this point it is appropriate to look at some other binary constructions found in the text and its structures, and explore how the simplistic oppositional images offered by McCabe are challenged in the text.

Returning to Act Two, Scene One, and the introduction of the character of William Dee. The act opens, as illustrated earlier, with some comic interplay between the characters of the Bird and Maimie, thereby placing the audience/reader at ease in a familiar setting. Dee enters as a well-dressed, well-spoken and gentlemanly figure. Bird’s misogynistic jibe regarding Maimie is met with a stony unacceptance by Dee, who refuses to partake in such unmannerly behaviour: ‘*Bird*: She’s a regular flier that one. Thirty thirty. *William*: (*Somewhat coldly*) She struck me as a nice friendly woman’ (Keane, 1966, p. 31). Thus, though Dee’s attire, his diction, and his manners demarcate him as an outsider, they also function to present him in an honourable fashion, something that is at odds with the distorted image of him that is presented by McCabe. In the dialogue that follows between Dee, Flanagan, Maimie and Mrs Butler, Dee

defends his desire to purchase the field in a mannerly fashion, using a cool, calm, and collected application of both logic and reason. Following Flanagan's warning to him that 'there's a boycott on outside bidders' Dee replies logically and quite reasonably 'It's a public auction, isn't it?' (Keane, 1966, p. 32). On the entering of McCabe into the bar such social graces are quickly dispelled as his first utterance is to command Flanagan to 'Give us three pints o' porter' (Keane, 1966, p. 34). This is quickly followed by threats of violence to Dee as manners, logic, and reason are eliminated from the scene and McCabe's dominating force is felt once more.

The action of this scene then proceeds to the auction of the field itself and again Dee's use of reason and logic differentiates him from his surroundings. As Flanagan attempts to discourage him from bidding on the field, Dee counters with a logical, rational argument: '*William*: You're an auctioneer? *Mick*: Yes. *William*: And this is a public auction? *Mick*: Yes. *William*: Well, I'm a prospective buyer, so how about getting along with the auction?' (Keane, 1966, p. 33). Dee's is a dialogue of logic, equality and legality, a form of discourse described by McCabe as 'the dirty hand of the law' when Flanagan begins to officiate the just and legal terms of the auction (Keane, 1966, p. 35). McCabe's dominance of the community, and his own confidence in his position within the society of Carraigthomond is once more reflected as he stops Flanagan mid-sentence and orders him to desist with the legalities of the situation and commence with the auction: 'O, Merciful God, that's the rigmarole. Start the bidding and get it over' (Keane, 1966, p. 36). McCabe, having created an image of Dee as a foreign 'other', and having threatened him, assumes Dee's consent, and therefore hurries the auction along. Dee, however, accepts no such position of alien inferiority, and bids against McCabe, outbidding him by a large sum at the end, thus reinforcing his

position as an outsider to the social environs of Carraigthomond.

The currency in which Dee bids in, guineas, also serves to underpin his exteriority. The Oxford English dictionary defines a guinea as ‘A former British gold coin that was first minted in 1663 from gold imported from West Africa, with a value that was later fixed at 21 shillings. It was replaced by the sovereign from 1817.’ (O.E.D., 2016, online). By his bidding in guineas, McCabe’s projected image of Dee as a potentially colonizing force appears to gather some momentum, and McCabe doesn’t take long to remind Dee that the guinea is no longer recognized in Carraigthomond and that Dee is an invalid presence there. ‘He should be disqualified. There’s no such thing as guineas going these days’ (Keane, 1966, p. 37). Dee then counters with a bid of three hundred pounds, one hundred more than McCabe’s final bid. However, the auction is then abandoned, as Dee’s logic, reason, and legality are no match for his illegitimacy in the eyes of the community, a perception that has been molded and shaped by McCabe and the distorted images of Dee that he has presented to them.

It is also of interest to note Dee’s motivation behind owning the field. Though he intends to use it to manufacture concrete blocks (something which is beyond McCabe’s comprehension), the primary motivating force behind Dee’s actions is to look after his ill wife, who ‘Since our last baby her nerves haven’t been too good and she wants to come back to Ireland’ (Keane, 1966, p. 31). Thus, Dee may be said to be acting on behalf of his wife and her wellbeing. This is in stark contrast to McCabe’s relationship with his wife, who he hasn’t spoken to or slept with in ‘eighteen years’ (Keane, 1966, p. 48) as a result of the domestic abuse suggested by his having ‘walloped her more than I meant’ (Keane, 1966, p. 49). It is also of note that McCabe’s wife is never named in the piece but Dee’s wife ‘was born six miles from here [...] a

place called Tubber' and is a 'Connolly' (Keane, 1966, p. 29). Thus, the image of Dee presented in the work is at odds with his image as presented by McCabe, revealing to the audience/reader to distorting nature of McCabe's manipulating practices, and creating within the audience/reader something of an identificatory dilemma. The audience is situated between two opposing forces, and, in terms of identification, they are asked if they identify with the familiarity of the setting, the sense of a shared heritage as represented by McCabe, or do they relate to the noble, forward thinking newcomer William Dee? It is within this dilemma, and the exploration of self that is intrinsic to it, that further possible resonant elements at play in *The Field* may be found.

Thus, it has been illustrated that McCabe's created image of Dee is challenged by the text, enabling further examination of McCabe's motivation behind his casting Dee as outsider. However, it must also be noted that McCabe's projected image of himself is also challenged in a similar fashion. In McCabe's world-view he is representative of the community, and the figurehead of it. As seen previously his personal history becomes that of the collective, and his desires become inscribed on that of the society of Carraighthomond through dominance and manipulation. However, such an archetypal position is challenged within the structure of the text itself. An example of this subversion of McCabe's self-projected imaginary self can be seen in Act Two, Scene Two. The scene takes place in Flanagan's bar and opens with Leamy and Maimie sharing some tender, affectionate moments. This passage of dialogue ends with Leamy's reference to the ugly realities of life in Carraighthomond, which is in stark contrast to the utopian, almost embryonic moments shared by the two characters in the previous lines. Leamy asks his mother if she feels 'The fear! I'm getting afraid already. I'll bolt the door and put up the shutters and let nobody in. Let's just sit here and never

open that old door again' (Keane, 1966, p. 40). Maimie acknowledges the sentiment but also presents the futility of resistance and hints at the everyday practicalities involved in surviving in Carraigthomond in her reply: 'I know what you mean Leamy... Too late now to bolt the door... Take the glasses, quick' (Keane, 1966, p. 41).

This exchange is followed by the arrival of the character of Dandy McCabe and his wife. Dandy wants to settle up with Flanagan for an 'acre of bog' and enquires 'Is the boss in?' (Keane, 1966, p. 41). On hearing from Maimie that her husband is absent, Dandy replies 'You'll do, just as nicely' and pays her, thereby removing patriarchal authority from the scene, something that is in stark contrast to McCabe's persistent referral to women in derogatory animalistic terms. The act of Dandy's paying for the bog is also contrasted with the end of the scene where McCabe demands an alibi in order to procure land through nefarious means. Dandy then launches into a comic dialogue with Leamy and addresses his wife with a blazon of comic attributes as he holds a mock auction in the bar: 'She have two medals for making toast and four for making pancakes. She have a gold cup for drinking sour milk and a certificate for snoring... Do I hear a bid. Do I hear a bid for this prime specimen of womanhood' (Keane, 1966, p. 43), while his wife 'laughs to her hearts content' as does Leamy (Keane, 1966, p. 42). Thus the scene, having opened with an undercurrent of affection, through Dandy's humour and the underlying love evident between him and his wife, has now developed into an unrestrained expression of joy, representing a level of existence possible in Carraigthomond without the presence of McCabe.

However, this joy is short-lived as Dandy is silenced upon the arrival of McCabe to the scene: 'Suddenly *Dandy* stops dead and looks towards the doorway. Enter *The Bull McCabe*, followed by *Tadhg*, followed by *The Bird O' Donnell*. *Dandy's* wife gets

up immediately and stands near her husband' (Keane, 1966, p. 43). The effervescent and gregarious Dandy now becomes 'subdued' and 'cautious' (Keane, 1966, p. 43). McCabe's first line on entering the bar once again channels common heritage and foreshadows the violence that lies ahead: 'You came Dandy. Blood is thicker than water' (Keane, 1966, p. 43). Just three lines later McCabe assumes an authoritative position once again, ordering the group collected to 'Sit down... All of you, sit down!' (Keane, 1966, p. 43). McCabe continues by explaining why he has gathered everyone together in the bar, and seeks their consent in providing him with an alibi for the time of his planned attack on Dee. McCabe makes his argument under the guise of logic, commencing his rhetoric with the assertion that he is 'a fair man' (Keane, 1966, p. 43) while referencing once again the past and the burying in concrete by an outsider his own 'sweat and blood' (Keane, 1966, p. 44) that has gone into his working of the field. He also transposes his own stilted logic onto those around him; 'And you all know the cure for a robber... He must be given a fright and a fright he's goin' to get' (Keane, 1966, p. 44), once again utilizing his distorted projected image of Dee as a thief, and the communities acquiescence to such a view, to further his agenda through hegemonic consent.

Ultimately, all present consent to McCabe's proposal, and McCabe's self-projected image as figurehead of the community is revealed through his closing statement that 'Tis a weight off my mind to know that my friends are behind me' (Keane, 1966, p. 45). The scene concludes with McCabe ordering Dandy to sing a song, Dandy duly complies, and the sounds of 'The Poor Blind Boy' accompany the exit of McCabe and his son Tadhg. It may be posited that this is a mirroring of the joy seen at the scene's opening, however it is a forced, unnatural joy, one that has been

ordered by McCabe and is placed both structurally and thematically, in direct opposition to the organic cheer of the bar previous to McCabe's entrance into it. Through this opposition, the images created by McCabe in terms of the 'other', that is William Dee, and in terms of his own standing within the community are subverted, and McCabe's 'myth-system' akin to that of Orientalism is denuded, revealing to the audience/reader the harsh realities of subscription to McCabe's Carraigthomond and the inconsistencies that lie within it.

Another example of how McCabe's projected image of himself is subverted in the text through opposition occurs in Act Two, Scene Three, the murder scene. The scene opens with McCabe and his son Tadhg laying in wait for Dee. Their dialogue revolves around the natural world, discussing the intelligence of crows, crafty water rats, and the growth of the grass. The subject matter then develops into a discussion of female relationships as Tadhg questions McCabe about his relationship with his wife, and McCabe quizzing Tadhg about any potential girlfriends. In the case of McCabe's relationship with his wife we discover that it is a failed one, predominantly due to McCabe's beating her for allowing a tinker's pony to graze on his land. Tadhg's potential romantic partners are spoken of almost exclusively in terms of agriculture and their ability to milk and 'handle pigs and feed calves' (Keane, 1966, p. 50). Thus, nature is seen as an intrinsic and inseparable entity from the McCabes. An encroaching modernity, as discussed in the previous chapter, is also hinted at with reference to a passing aeroplane, electric light and television, but such items are not spoken of with the reverence applied to subjects of the natural world. Dee's arrival at the scene is marked by his taking 'a flashlamp from his pocket' and shining it 'on the directive part of the signpost' (Keane, 1966, p. 52) before any word is uttered by him. The flashlamp itself

may also be seen to be a marker of modernity, but also, similarly to the tiepin and hair-oil discussed previously, marks an artificial, unnatural presence. Ultimately it is the men of nature, McCabe and his son, that perform the most unnatural of acts by killing Dee, an act that is in strict opposition to their love of nature professed earlier in the scene. Thus, McCabe's actions are at odds with his projected image of self, and his self-image is subverted on stage as the reality of his actions betrays the idealism of his thought.

Having looked at the play in terms of the application of Orientalist principles to the text and analysed the operation of binary opposition in terms of dominance, manipulation, and hegemonic consent, possible resonant elements at work in the text as a result of such oppositions have been identified. McCabe's use of opposition in terms of positioning himself within a community that is also defined through consent to his projected images of otherness has been explored and discussed in terms of its adherence to Orientalist principles. McCabe's creation and manipulation of such oppositions to further his own perceived superiority has been analysed, and the resultant hegemonic consent of the community commented on, again with reference to Said's principles of Orientalism. The operation, and ultimate subversion, of opposition within the text has also been highlighted, and the resulting destabilization of essentialism that is revealed through that subversion has been commented on. Throughout the analysis presented there has been a focus on potential identificatory processes at play in the text, thereby revealing possible resonances working within it. In the section of this chapter dealing with representations of nationalism, further emphasis will be placed on these identificatory processes in the context of nationalism, and the concept of national identity, as revealed through a somewhat Lacanian reading of the oppositions discussed

thus far. The performance of such oppositional aspects of the text in the creation of identity, on both personal and national levels, will be explored, as will the possible subversion of simplistic nationalist definitions by the text.

However, the scope of the application of postcolonial theory to *The Field* will now continue through the application of the theories of Homi K. Bhabha to the text, an application that will illuminate further layers of possible interpretation of the work, while still highlighting additional possible identificatory processes at play within it.

4.3 – ‘Not a stranger... Not a complete stranger, that is’: The role of ambivalence.

Having looked at *The Field* in terms of Said’s *Orientalism*, the operation of opposition within the text has been identified. Further examination of these oppositions has enabled an exploration of dominant discourse and its subversion in the piece. Through the examination of the operation of such discourses, further interpretations of, and identifications with, the work have been suggested. Attention will now be focused on the theories of Homi K. Bhabha, and his further expansion on the theories of Said, and his theoretical assertions will be applied to the text in an attempt to reveal further resonances and possible identificatory processes within *The Field*.

Bhabha, from a theoretical perspective, departs from Said’s notions of the role of binary opposition in the construction of the Orient, and by extension, the self. Bhabha maintains that the ‘function of a theoretical perspective [...] would be necessarily anti-binary, “a negotiation (rather than a negation) of oppositional and antagonistic elements”’ (Kennedy, 2000, pp. 116–117). Thus colonial and post-colonial experience is one of heterogeneity as opposed to the monolithic narrative offered by Said’s

argument. That is not to discount Said's work, as through the application of it, as seen earlier in this chapter, further insights into levels of interpretation of, and identification with, a postcolonial text may be garnered. Bhabha acknowledges the originality of Said's 'pioneering theory [that] could be extended to engage with the alterity and ambivalence of Orientalist discourse' had Said not contained 'this threat by introducing a binarism within the argument' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 102). Bhabha continues by developing what Said termed the 'median category [...] a category that allows one to see new things, things seen for the first time, as versions of a previously known thing [...] it is a method of controlling what seems to be a threat to some established view of things', with the result that 'The threat is muted, familiar values impose themselves' and 'The orient at large, therefore, vacillates between the West's contempt for what is familiar and its shivers of delight in - or fear of - novelty' (Said, 1979, pp. 58–59). Through Bhabha's application of the Freudian concept of fetishism to the question 'What is this other scene of colonial discourse played out around Said's "median category"?' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 105), Bhabha arrives at the concept of the 'in-between' (Kennedy, 2000, p. 120). Thus, the issue of ambivalence is foregrounded by Bhabha and is essential to his work, as seen in Kennedy's contention that:

Bhabha's importance in the field of postcolonial studies may be attributed to three factors; his insistence on the heterogeneity of colonial and postcolonial experience; his concept of hybridity in colonial and postcolonial societies, and his concept of mimicry. All three – can be seen as continuing the work Said began in *Orientalism*, but they do so in unexpected ways (Kennedy, 2000, p. 119).

Though this dissertation has maintained, and intends to maintain, a close textually focused perspective with reference to various theoretical frameworks as opposed to the inverse, something must be said on Bhabha's theories as outlined above.

Firstly, Bhabha insists on the heterogeneity of colonial and post-colonial

discourse, a theory that is, as stated previously, something that is at odds with 'Said's presentation of it as an essentially unified and dominant system which effectively silences those it rules' (Kennedy, 2000, p. 122). Furthermore, Bhabha establishes, through an analysis of the act of both linguistic and cultural interpretation, what he terms the 'Third Space of enunciation' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 54). He states:

The pact of interpretation is never simply an act of communication between the I and the You designated in the statement. The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot 'in itself' be conscious. What this unconscious relation introduces is an ambivalence in the act of interpretation (Bhabha, 1994, p. 53).

Thus, as there is the presence of ambivalence in the act of interpretation itself, and as the utterance offered, through interpretation, can only be repeated with a difference, any utterance, or on a broader scale, any narrative may be interrogated. Therefore, without straying into post-modernism, any grand narrative, be it a linguistic, cultural, or historical one, is subject to interpretation and therefore ambivalence. Furthermore, any monolithic, essentialist, and originary narrative of dominance and subjugation becomes somewhat questionable, and in relation to studying literature from a postcolonial perspective, a further level of possible interpretation is created. This point is reiterated by Bhabha as he continues:

The intervention of the Third Space of enunciation, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code. Such an intervention quite properly challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the people. In other words, the disruptive temporality of enunciation displaces the narrative of the Western nation which Benedict Anderson so perceptively describes as being written in homogenous, serial time (Bhabha, 1994, p. 54).

In a nutshell, it is Bhabha's concept of the Third Space of enunciation which 'shows systems of meaning to be ambivalent, and which replaces cultural and historical and

national homogeneity with heterogeneity and hybridity of the post-colonial world' (Kennedy, 2000, p. 117). In relation to the text at the centre of this dissertation, *The Field*, the existence of the text within the Third Space, and the simultaneous representation of such an interpretative space by the work will be addressed, leading to an exploration of the ambivalence of meaning contained within it.

This leads us on to what Kennedy deemed the second of Bhabha's important contributions to the field of postcolonial studies, the concept of hybridity. Kennedy states that 'Ambivalence, most notably in the forms of hybridity and mimicry, is Bhabha's most important means of theorizing the heterogeneity of colonial and post-colonial experience, especially in relation to resistance to the hegemonic discourses of the West' (Kennedy, 2000, pp. 121–122). Where Said saw the discourse of the Orient as being created and constituted by clearly defined, oppositional, Western produced images of it, Bhabha presents a far more ambivalent, interactive and intersubjective process, one where there is, as illustrated earlier, an 'in-between' space, that is, a liminality where one is not quite one thing, nor yet the other. Bhabha explains:

Hybridity is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of colonialist disavowal, so that other 'denied' knowledges enters upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority – its rules of recognition (Bhabha, 1994, p. 162).

Thus, hybridity may be equated with a form of resistance on some level against the dominating force, as the discourse of the subjugated, in the form of 'denied knowledge enters upon the dominant discourse' through Bhabha's concept of hybridity and therefore obscures relations of power between the colonizer and the colonized.

This point is emphasized by Kennedy: 'Colonial discourse becomes hybrid when the language of the colonized intersects with that of the colonizer' resulting in a juncture where two cultures and 'systems of representation' meet, and through differing

interpretations of language conflict occurs (Kennedy, 2000, p. 122). She continues: ‘This leads to subversion, potentially, at least, since what begins as part of the dominant discourse turns into an inappropriate and therefore challenging reply’ (Kennedy, 2000, p. 122). Thus, at its heart, the concept of hybridity contains the notion of ambivalence, and the manifestation of that hybridity is a potential form of resistance. Put simply by Bhabha hybridity is both ‘the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities’ and also ‘the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects’, something that is, in a typically ambivalent metaphor, ‘a negative transparency’ (Bhabha, 1994, p. 160). Thus, colonialism may be seen as a fluid presence and an unending process through its ‘shifting forces and fixities’ that constantly interact with the present due to the constant ‘revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity’. Its histories and cultures become that ‘negative transparency’ that continue to both conceal and reveal. Such notions of hybridity will be examined through an analysis of the hybridity to be seen in *The Field*, with reference to the ambivalence central to Bhabha’s theories, and its potential as a resisting force within, and by, the text.

Mimicry, in Bhabhian terms, may be seen in an equally ambivalent fashion as it is said to act in both a dominating and a resisting context. Put simply, mimicry may be seen to be the act that occurs when the colonized imitate and adopt the culture of the colonizer. This is an act that is ambivalent as it not only reflects back to the colonizer a recognisable, and therefore appropriable, image of the colonized, one that is ‘almost but not quite’ the same (Bhabha, 1994, p. 129), but also the act of mimicry, and the utterance of that mimicry, signifies an appropriation and subversion of the colonizer’s culture by the colonized. It is ‘both a means of facilitating the operation of imperial

power, when used by the colonizer, and resisting it, when used by the colonized' (Kennedy, 2000, pp. 122–123). Lacan's definition of the effect of mimicry is employed by Bhabha to illustrate the ambivalence of the position: 'The effect of mimicry is camouflage, in the strictly technical sense. It is not a question of harmonizing with the background but, against a mottled background, of being mottled' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 172). Thus, the dualistic and ambivalent nature of mimicry is revealed by Lacan's metaphor, it is both camouflage and the act of being mottled, both an active and a passive pursuit, one that is reminiscent of the 'negative transparency' of hybridity addressed earlier. In terms of the text at the heart of this dissertation, *The Field*, concepts and manifestations of Bhabhian mimicry will be explored within the text, and the operation of such elements in modes of dominance or resistance addressed, thereby adding further interpretative possibilities to the text and suggesting further potential resonances at play within the text.

In the previous section of this chapter, Said's theories of Orientalism were discussed and particular attention was paid to the construction of identity in *The Field* in terms of binary opposition. This revealed possible identificatory processes at work within the text and suggested possible resonances to be found in it. Having now discussed Bhabha's contribution to postcolonial theory in terms of his concepts of ambivalence, hybridity, mimicry, the Third Space of enunciation, and his emphasis on the heterogeneity of post-colonial discourse, these theories will now be applied to *The Field* and another layer of interpretation and possible identification will be unmasked. The character of William Dee, and the construction of his image as an oppositional image by McCabe in order to further his own personal agenda has been explored in an Orientalist context earlier. However, there is also the presence of ambivalence at the

heart of his character, which is something that will now be looked at.

From the beginning Dee is placed in the position of an outsider, or an 'other', in relation to the social order of Carraigthomond. His attire, language, manners, and his relatively modernistic progressiveness all demarcate his difference from the villagers that inhabit McCabe's realm. He is consistently referred to in terms of an outsider in McCabe's ideologically loaded discourse. However, this simplistic construction is challenged within the text, an act that then locates the audience/reader at the juncture of two opposing cultures, resulting in an act of mimesis where the text, and the audience/reader's interpretation of it, recreates the hybridity and ambivalence presented on stage by the characters in it. On an essentialist level, Dee shares the same nationality as McCabe. The text informs us that he is a returning Irish emigrant, having done 'fairly well' (Keane, 1966, p. 32) for himself in England, looking to return home on account of his wife's ill-health. Despite this, Dee remains an exteriority to McCabe's community as he refers to Dee as a 'foreign cock [...] goin' to do me out o' my rights' (Keane, 1966, p. 34). Thus, it may be posited that Dee occupies Bhabha's 'in between' space (Kennedy, 2000, p. 120), that is, a repetition with a difference, reminiscent of Bhabha's concept of mimicry that is 'almost the same but not quite' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 122). It is also of interest that despite history and tradition, Dee identifies himself with his new home, England, instead of his historical, national home. He informs Maimie and Bird: 'Im a Galway man. I live in England. Living there now twelve years. Me, if I had my way, that's where I'd want to live' (Keane, 1966, p. 29), thus further rejecting the parochial and myopic social order of Carraigthomond, and by extension Ireland itself, and expressing the full extent of his hybrid identity.

Thus, two opposing colonial narratives are presented on stage in the form of Dee

and McCabe. McCabe relates an essentialist position, identifying himself and his position through the relation of his heritage, a heritage that is transposed onto the community around him, and through his identification with the land around him. In contrast to this, Dee relates a relatively modern and developed concept of nationality, assuming a hybrid position that rejects simplicity and blind nationalism. Dee's intentions to use the field to manufacture concrete blocks are symbolic of this opposition as it challenges McCabe's traditional and somewhat antiquated perceptions on the function of land, and by extension, nation. Inevitably, such opposing narratives collide on stage, and result in an ambivalent identificatory process for the audience/reader. On the one hand, McCabe's essentialist definition of nation, as expressed by his position on the use of land, his violent rejection of 'outsiders' (Keane, 1966, p. 16), and his constant referrals to a colonized past, function to stimulate collective, and perhaps unconscious, memories of the historical and cultural past within the audience/reader. Contrastingly, Dee's representations of progress, sexual equality (he is after all attempting to purchase the field for his wife's sake), and the complexities of national identity serve to enable an identificatory process that operates on the level of rationality within the consciousness of the audience/reader. Therefore, the audience/reader is placed in an ambivalent identificatory space, torn between two opposing processes. Thus, it may be posited that the play itself exists in Bhabha's Third Space of enunciation, as the interpretation of it by the audience/reader is a somewhat ambivalent process, a process that 'challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 54).

It is also of note that, in terms of postcolonial discourse, the character of

McCabe may be interpreted as being the representation of Said's discourse of Orientalism, acting in a somewhat monolithic fashion that silences the oppressed. Conversely, Dee may be seen as representing Bhabha's challenge to that discourse in terms of heterogeneity and ambivalence. Therefore, two of the most prominent theories on postcolonial discourse are represented mimetically on stage, thereby presenting further possible resonant factors at work within the text, as a collective post-colonial unconscious is both stimulated and challenged by the work. The work manifests on stage, through the characters of McCabe and Dee, 'that conflictual economy of colonial discourse which Edward Said describes as the tension between the synchronic panoptical vision of domination – the demand for identity, stasis – and the counter pressure of the diachrony of history – change, difference' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 122), thereby facilitating the ambivalent interpretation of that tension. Within that tension Bhabha sees mimicry as representing an 'ironic compromise' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 122). Bhabha defines colonial mimicry as 'the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 122) (italics in original). Having spoken of the character of William Dee representing a form of both hybridity and mimicry in the text, this is something that will now be explored further.

As stated earlier Bhabha sees mimicry as an ambivalent entity, it can be used for dominance by the colonizer, or be seen as an act of resistance by the colonized. Firstly, mimicry within the context of it being a mode of domination will be looked at. As seen above, in a colonizing context, mimicry is the desire for a recognisable Other that differs sufficiently to enable a dominance of differentiation. Dee fulfils that role for the dominant McCabe. He is a recognizable 'other' in that he shares his nationality and to

some extent, and on a very basic level, his language with McCabe. However, despite these similarities, there are also great differences between the two characters, for example, their notions on the purpose of land as outlined earlier. Thus, Dee fulfils the role of the recognizable 'other' for McCabe, and through McCabe's ideologically motivated exaggeration of these differences he enacts a discourse of domination, a discourse that Dee resists.

Dee's utilization of mimicry as an act of resistance is somewhat harder to delineate given the linguistic and cultural similarities between himself and McCabe. However, it may be argued that Dee enters into McCabe's discourse of domination and resists it from within. Structurally, Dee enters as a 'newcomer' (Keane, 1966, p. 28) into the setting of Carraighthomond, and remains there despite multiple threats made to him by McCabe. Dee engages with the other residents of the village, visits Flanagan's bar on a few occasions, and was present there for a while on the night that he is murdered (Keane, 1966, p. 51). Thus, it may be posited that Dee conforms to village life to some extent, thereby appropriating the culture of McCabe. His presence there is both an act of acceptance and one of appropriation, a form of physical resistance, a resistance also seen in his rejection of McCabe's dominance in relation to the field he wishes to purchase. Ultimately, Dee's resistance results in the application of brute force by McCabe, who exploits Dee's difference in getting the community to provide him with an alibi. Following Dee's murder the community remains silent in relation to the police inquiry into it. The tension arising from Dee being constituted as being 'the same but not quite' through colonial mimicry can be seen in the intersection of the community's silence, Maimie's resistance but ultimate submission to McCabe, and the ultimate removal of Leamy, the voice of reason in the text, from the community due to

his rejection of Dee being positioned in the role of ‘other’.

In conclusion, Bhabha’s theories of the heterogeneity of colonial discourse, his concepts of hybridity, mimicry, and the Third Space, have been explored and applied to *The Field*, in an attempt to examine further possible resonances and identificatory processes contained within the text. The representation of the heterogeneity of post-colonial discourse has been examined, primarily through the opposing characters of the Bull McCabe and William Dee. Such heterogeneity has been seen to run throughout the text and the existence of Bhabha’s Third Space within the text, and also its representation by the text in terms of audience/reader interpretation has been explored. The concept of mimicry has been applied to the text in modes of both domination and resistance. It has been illustrated that such heterogeneity, and ambivalence, as represented by, and in, the text leads to conflicting identificatory processes at the level of audience/reader reception, as both the collective unconscious and individual rational consciousness is addressed in a challenging manner, thereby adding further possible resonant elements at work within the piece. Further applications of Bhabha’s theories to the text will be explored in the next section of this chapter, particularly in relation to Keane’s language, a hybrid entity in itself, and McCabe’s representation of a form of nationalism, a nationalism that mimics that of the oppressor.

4.4 – ‘An independent little field that wants eatin’’: Representations of Nationalism.

This work has looked briefly at the character of the Bull McCabe through a Lacanian lens in the previous chapter and offered a Lacanian reading of possible unconscious motivations at work within his character. Now attention will be turned to

representations of nationalism and its epistemology as seen in the text, while maintaining a Lacanian viewpoint. A free state since 1922, and only a republic since 1949, Ireland remains a relatively young independent nation. As this chapter has been dealing with *The Field* as a postcolonial text, it is apt to now enter into a discussion of nationalism and national identity in that context. Eugene O'Brien, in his work on the aetiology of nationalism, defines its roots as lying:

in racial, territorial, linguistic and ideological homogeneity, a homogeneity expressed and solidified by linguistic, cultural, and religious practices, and by the exclusion of any other racial input (O'Brien, 2002, p. 10).

Thus, it must be examined how such homogeneity is both created and maintained and also, in the context of this dissertation, how such homogeneity is represented in *The Field*. Such an endeavour will reveal identificatory processes functioning within the text, thereby unveiling possible resonant elements on both a personal level and that of national identity. O'Brien continues:

Narratives create the myths of nationalism, and these are both protean and similar in that they feature a telling to the self of the self, a telling which, in the process, is performative in that it is creative of that self, at both conscious and unconscious levels (O'Brien, 2002, p. 14).

Thus the question must be addressed: what is the narrative of *The Field* reflecting back to the self of the self, and to what extent does the work enable the creation of the self through possible resonant and identificatory processes?

In order to examine the text in terms of unconscious identifications, on both individual and collective levels, the theories of Lacan must be revisited, particularly those of the development of the ego wherein:

human identity is seen as emerging from the crossing of a frontier, from what he terms the "imaginary order" (the dyadic world of mother and child) into that of the "symbolic order", which is concerned with symbolic systems, language being the main one (though both stages continue to coexist within the individual afterwards) [...] Lacan's notion of the imaginary order is one wherein the human being becomes attached to an image, and attempts to find wholeness and unity of meaning through a form of imitation or mimicry

of this image (O'Brien, 2002, p. 47).

However, this image that is intrinsic to 'the process of identificatory development of the ego, which he defines as a form of construct of self and image'' (O'Brien, 2002, p. 48) is merely a reflection of the self, thereby leading to the defining of the self in terms of a *méconnaissance* or misrecognition of 'an image of itself in the mirror, a process which he terms the "mirror-stage"' (O'Brien, 2002, p. 48). As the myths of nationalism are created by narratives that reflect back an image of the self to the self, O'Brien's use of Lacanian theory in his analysis of nationalism and its epistemology is very appropriate, and his analysis will be drawn from frequently in this section, while expanding upon it in terms of its application to *The Field*. This chapter began by identifying the operation of opposition within the text in terms of Orientalist methodology; therefore the performative and creative nature of these oppositions in terms of the epistemology of nationalism will be examined, with reference to O'Brien's use of Lacanian theory to establish what 'type of knowledge-constitutive interests are involved in the nationalist project - its *ordo cognoscenti*' (O'Brien, 2002, p. 27). The representation, manifestation, and subversion of this '*ordo cognoscenti*' as evidenced in *The Field* will be detailed, again through a close reading of the text while maintaining the theoretical referential outlined above. Bhabha's theories of ambivalence, hybridity, and mimicry will then be applied to both the text and the concept of nationalism itself, in an effort to explore the manifestation and subversion of nationalist mythologies within the text. By doing so further possible identificatory and resonant elements at play within the text will be suggested.

Firstly the character of the Bull McCabe will be looked at in terms of his being representative of the epistemology of nationalism itself, an abstract, theoretical concept

personified on stage, thereby enabling identification by the audience/reader on communal ideological grounds. McCabe's identification of self through opposition to an 'other', that is, the character of Dee, with reference to Said's *Orientalism*, has been discussed earlier in this chapter, as has his narcissistic aggressivity, in the Lacanian sense, in the preceding chapter. McCabe as representative of nationalist discourse is now to be examined.

McCabe forms his identity through a dyadic relationship with the land, one of the 'false fixities of the imaginary order' (Bowie in O'Brien, 2002, p. 55) similar to the dyadic relationship between mother and child in Lacanian theory. His language is one of nature, his actions elemental. McCabe's constant references to the land and nature surrounding him illustrate his own identification with it, and anyone that does not subscribe to that identification, or at least challenges it, is subject to scorn and aggression. This position, occupied by McCabe, is reflective of what O'Brien terms 'the symphysis between the Lacanian imaginary and the epistemology of nationalism' where:

At a basic level this reflective capitulation of the subject by an image is what constitutes the imaginary order. Imaginary relationships are predominated by ambivalent emotions; a desire to become the image in the mirror, and, on realising the futility of this aim, a resultant aggressivity towards both the image, and anything which intervenes with, or blocks, the desired identification with that image (O'Brien, 2002, pp. 52-53).

In the case of McCabe, any dissenting voices that intervene with his desired identification with a hypostasized specular image of the land is met with aggression in the form of threats, for example Maimie is threatened with a bomb if she refuses to provide him with an alibi for the night of his attack on Dee (Keane, 1966, p. 45). The character of Dee presents the biggest challenge to McCabe's dyadic identification with the land and, in an act of aggression, is murdered by the McCabe's.

In terms of nationalist discourse such dyadic identifications are intrinsic to the concepts of nation and nationalism. An idealized image of a nation is presented, and identification with that image is both created and developed through the narrative of the nation, and as O'Brien asserts: 'The displacement of [...] hatred on all that is deemed to be outside of this binary specular relationship is a possible explanation of the violence that seems to be inherent in practically all enunciations of nationalist ideology throughout history' (O'Brien, 2002, p. 53). Thus, it may be argued that McCabe is the personification of such elements of nationalist ideology, representing the workings of a much broader concept through both his construction of the 'other', and his aggression in the face of any challenge to the imaginary identifications he represents. The far-reaching nature of nationalist ideology, and its representation on stage by McCabe suggests another level of resonance that may be in operation within the text, especially when Conor Cruise O'Brien's assertion that nationalism is 'both an ideological position as well as a "collective emotional force in our culture"' (quoted in O'Brien, 2002, p. 59) is taken into consideration. Perhaps it is, to borrow from Althusser, the interpellation¹⁰ to the individual on the grounds of a shared heritage by nationalist discourse that creates an unconscious identification by the audience/reader with McCabe. Through the representation on stage of a constitutive element of the nationalist *imaginaire*, in terms of simplistic, dyadic identification as employed by certain nationalistic discourses, an instance of interpellation occurs, one where an act of identification and recognition by

¹⁰ 'The root meaning of to "interpellate" is to hail; in Althusser's essay, *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (in his *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* [1969; trans 1971]), it is nearer to a situation where our name is called out and we turn in response. The name provokes an individual reaction [...] yet the relationship is conventional; the name assigned us creates a sense of our individuality, yet having a name we call ours is only a token sign of our distinctiveness' (Butler in Lodge and Wood, 2008, p. 612).

Therefore, the individual being hailed must perform an act of both identification and recognition, and place himself/herself in the position of the receiver of the interpellation.

the audience/reader that places himself/herself in the position of the receiver of the interpellation is necessitated. By being interpellated by these discourses, the subject 'chooses to become like the specular image in this socio-cultural generative mirror, and hence the ego comes into being' through the *méconnaissance* that occurs in the nationalist *imaginaire* through the 'misreadings, or partial readings of texts [...] which prioritise essentialist identifications as opposed to hybrid or pluralist areas of difference' (O'Brien, 2002, p. 62). Thus, through McCabe's representation of a specular dyadic image, an image that may be seen to be representative of an essentialist form of nationalist rhetoric, identification may occur as the audience/reader, and their collective unconscious, is interpellated by what is connoted by his character. Essentially this is a *méconnaissance*, or merely a 'partial reading' of the text as it excludes the hybridity or 'pluralist areas of difference' offered by the text, but remains a possible area of identification within the text nonetheless.

McCabe's identification with the land may also be seen as a form of lococentrism, a term that may be defined as an 'imaginary fusion of a people and a place' that is 'focused on a specific notion of place as central to nationalist identity' (O'Brien, 2002, p. 5), and is a constitutive part of the epistemology of nationalism. This lococentrism may be seen as a concept that functions as one of many '*point(s) de capiton* in nationalist discourse' which 'become reified as master signifiers which control the flow and development of the discourse in question' (O'Brien, 2002, p. 57). Certainly in *The Field* all narrative and representations of discourse in the text are delimited from McCabe's imposition of lococentrism in the text, therefore he may be seen as representative of nationalist discourse itself. Furthermore, McCabe mirrors nationalist rhetoric in his references throughout the text to Carraighthomond's colonized

past, thereby reflecting nationalist ideology's use of 'a specific narrative of the past [...] as a binding factor in this imaginary relationship' (O'Brien, 2002, p. 58). His imposition of history on to the community of Carraigthomond serves to exclude the threat, in the form of Dee, to the dyadic lococentrism represented by McCabe, thereby advancing his own particular ideology.

McCabe's re-inscription of the past onto the surroundings of Carraigthomond is also an act of mimesis that echoes the essentialist roots that can lie at the heart of nationalism as it looks back towards a point of genesis in the search for identity. This retrospective gaze is described as essential to nationalism by O'Brien: 'Notions of an *ur*-beginning, and *alpha*-point from which the history of the *Volk* derives, are a *sine qua non* of the enunciation of nationalism' (O'Brien, 2002, p. 57). In this light, it is of note that McCabe similarly constructs an originary moment when he describes the growth of the grass as 'The first music that was ever heard' (Keane, 1966, p. 47). Structurally this line comes at the beginning of Act Two, Scene Three, as McCabe and his son lie in wait for Dee, who they subsequently murder. Thus, the scene opens with a line that is representative of origin, of birth, of natural genesis. Conversely the scene ends with Dee's murder, representing death and unnatural humanity. Therefore, the scene opens with an inscription of an '*ur*-beginning' by the dominant McCabe, and develops into a physical manifestation of an epistemic form of violence, ultimately resulting in death, highlighting the physical and sociological violence that can occur when that notion of a nationalistic '*alpha*-point' is resisted and rejected as it is by Dee. It may then be argued that this scene acts in a subtly subversive manner, challenging essentialist notions of nationhood as portrayed by McCabe.

Dee's outright rejection of McCabe's concept of an '*ur*-beginning' is evidenced

in his industrial plans for the land and, on a broader level, may be seen as the intrusion of Lacan's symbolic order on to McCabe's imaginary realm. As the symbolic order presents a challenge to specular, dyadic identifications through one's becoming a subject to the larger, infinitely deferred, and independent system of signification that constitutes it, such '*points de capiton*' as McCabe's originary myth 'can serve as master signifiers, and as such they can block the development of the signifying chain, and freeze the ego in the dyadic imaginary' (O'Brien, 2002, p. 57). Dee's disregard for McCabe's 'master signifier' represents a threat to McCabe's frozen dyadic imaginary sense of identity, and is met with aggression, violence, and ultimately, death. Thus, just as imaginary, essentialist concepts of identity and nation, as represented in the character of McCabe, are challenged by the intrusion of the symbolic as represented by Dee, the text itself may be seen to operate in a similar fashion. The symbolic order has its roots in the signifying chain, that is, language, and the text, a work of language, may be seen to be representative of that symbolic order, particularly when the challenge presented by it to simplistic, dyadic theories of identification, on both personal and national levels, is taken into account.

To further examine the representations of nationalism and its epistemology as seen in *The Field*, the work and the character of the Bull McCabe must be interrogated further in terms of ambivalence. The concept of ambivalence is central to the play as it is only through the intersection of two opposing cultures that dramatic movement is achieved. However, it will be argued that within such opposing forces there is the presence of further ambivalence, particularly in the case of McCabe who may be seen as

both a post-colonial figure and also as a neo-colonial¹¹ force that replicates colonial discourse, a representation that reflects the somewhat hybrid nature of Irish nationalism as a '*mutatis mutandis*, a copy of that by which it felt itself to be oppressed' (Deane in Eagleton et al, 1990, p. 8).

McCabe's constant channelling of Ireland's colonized history undoubtedly places him in the position of a post-colonial figure. References are made by him throughout the text to colonial imposition and dispossession. McCabe's position as a post-colonial subject is asserted by his professing of his mantra, his alleged *raison-d'être*, which also channels the national dispossession of the past: 'We had their likes [outsiders] long enough hadn't we. Land is all that matters. Own your own land (Keane, 1966, p. 16). The force of objective law in Carraigthomond, that is, the law that disregards McCabe's personalized version of it, is referred to as 'the same law the whole time. The same dirty English law. No change at all' (Keane, 1966, p. 24). Thus, it may be argued that the colonized past remains a living entity in the mind of McCabe, and perhaps on a simplistic level, proves to be a source of identification to be found in McCabe's character by a post-colonial audience/reader. However, the ambivalent character of McCabe, and his actions, also reflects the presence of aspects of a neo-colonial mind-set within his efforts to realise his ideal state of owning his 'own land'. Such aspects may also be seen to act in the ideology of nationalism itself, reflected in the highly conservative nature of the Irish Free State following independence for example, and McCabe may be seen to personify the '*mutatis mutandis*' (Deane in

¹¹ The term is used as per Victor Merriman's development of Awam Amkpa's work on the 'iterative process of struggle between orders of domination and movements for liberation' [Merriman, 1999(b), p. 306], which describes neo-colonialism as happening when 'Those who lead the anti-colonial revolution frequently take the place of the colonisers and in fact repeat the processes of colonisation' [Merriman, 1999(b), p. 310].

Eagleton et al, 1990, p. 8) of Irish nationalism as posited by Séamus Deane. Thus, the character of McCabe as a colonizing force, or indeed as a representation of a neo-colonial order, in the text must be explored, and his imitation of that by which he felt himself to be oppressed commented upon.

Firstly, McCabe's use of Orientalist discourse in creating incongruent images of Dee in order to further his own position of dominance through the hegemonic consent of the community of Carraigthomond has already been examined in a previous section. Such discourse has been utilized by imperial powers to exert dominance over allegedly lesser nations throughout history, and the history of Irish domination by England is no different. One example would be John Pentland Mahaffy's 1869 publication *Twelve Lectures on Primitive Civilisations and Their Physical Conditions* in which 'the Celtic Irish represent a "perpetually" primitive people, semiotically linking the Drunken Irishman to the Red Indian and the Black Sambo' (Carroll and King, 2003, p. 137). Further examples may be seen in representations of the peasant Irish that featured in *Punch* magazine (established in 1841) over the years, for instance 'when Bernard Partridge, the chief cartoonist of the magazine *Punch*, used the pig to denote the Irish people throughout the war of independence' (Kiberd, 1996, p. 505). Thus, the creation of an image of the Irish formed a great part of English colonial discourse. In O'Brien's chapter dealing with the Elizabethan cartography, both physical and ideological, of Ireland he analyses the branding of the indigenous Irish as 'natives...that is born of the earth' (O'Brien, 2002, p. 76). This may be seen as creating an image of the Irish as native 'other' in order to justify English occupation of the land. This was done through enabling an anthropomorphized image of the land to claim ownership over its inhabitants, or as O'Brien states:

Hence, the mapping processes produced narrative and literary images of the Irish, as well as attempting to delineate their territories, and thus made the point that the natives, who were belonging to the land, had few rights of ownership over that land (O'Brien, 2002, p. 76).

This anthropomorphizing of the land into a female (due to the natives being born of it) entity by the English to justify her occupation bears a striking resemblance to McCabe's discourse on land. As discussed in chapter three the land may be seen as a repository for McCabe's displaced sexual anxieties, thereby occupying a similarly female space for him, and the feminine nature of the field itself is something that will now be briefly addressed. It must be noted that McCabe's rhetoric around the land is extremely similar to that used to justify imperialist occupation. He speaks of the field as being 'a sweet little field [...] an independent little field that wants eatin'' (Keane, 1966, p. 23), thus the land is presented in a passive form, requiring McCabe's masculine input to fertilise it. Such dialogue reflects prominent Elizabethan images of the Irish land, a land described by Luke Gernon's *A Discourse of Ireland*, circa 1620, as being 'at all poynts like a yong wenche that hath the green sickness for want of occupying' (quoted in O'Brien, 2002, p. 81). Thus, McCabe may be seen to represent both a colonized figure in his references to the past, and a neo-colonial force in his repetition of colonial discourse, and therefore personifies the hybrid nature of Irish nationalism itself as a '*mutatis mutandis*, a copy of that by which it felt itself to be oppressed' (Deane in Eagleton et al, 1990, p. 8).

Victor Merriman, writing on Tom Murphy's *The Famine*, describes 'the plays' constitution of an apparently homogenous community around a feared and despised negative' as being 'a blatant reinscription of colonial relations' [Merriman, 1999(b), p. 313]. The same may be said of *The Field*. However, this apparent homogeneity and the figure of the despised negative are also subverted by Keane. The resistance offered by

both Maimie and Leamy to McCabe offers an insight into a world in opposition to apparent homogeneity and totalising definition. Similarly, the glimpses the audience/reader get at McCabe's insecurities and motivations subvert his position as a definitive 'feared and despised negative'. The presence of this ambivalence in the text enables the interrogation of totalising, polarising narratives in their intersection with lived reality as presented in Carraigthomond. Thus, it may be argued that the text functions in that 'postcolonial moment' described by Ampka, and expanded upon by Merriman, which is 'the point of emergence of sustained critique of the material circumstances of the social order that has been settled for in the successor state' (Merriman, 2011, p. 21), as the social order and its failings are questioned by the work. Identifications with the text by the audience/reader, and with McCabe in particular, function on a similar level of ambivalence. A common history of oppression is channelled by McCabe's stance as a post-colonial figure, and the ambivalent and arduous nature of forming a new national identity is expressed through his neo-colonial actions, thus suggesting further possible resonant factors at work within the piece.

The language of the play also functions on an ambivalent level, as Keane's use of the poetic North Kerry dialect offers something directly akin to Bhabha's resistance through mimicry. To look at it simplistically, Keane's appropriation of the language of the colonizer (English) and his subversion of that language through his use of an often Gaelic inspired North Kerry dialect, is both an act of acceptance and subversion. In terms of audience/reader reception this dialect locates the work in a specific place, one of familiarity to an Irish audience/reader at least. One of the main examples in the text of this ambivalence that both subverts the language of the dominant, and locates the audience/reader in a position of familiarity is the constant references to religion that run

throughout the piece. The entire play is punctuated with casual references to God, the Holy Ghost, and the Catholic religion in general; as such references make up the *patois* of the villagers. Having been formerly oppressed by a predominantly Protestant England such a *patois* becomes a very subtle, perhaps unconscious form of resistance, and, as religion may be seen to be another Lacanian *point de capiton*, or anchoring point, in terms of national identity, this Catholic dialect may be seen to function as a form of self-definition. However, such monolithic constructions are subverted within the text as, despite constant references to religion in the dialogue of the villagers of Carraighthomond, the Church is cast as an exteriority to the community.

Father Murphy and the bishop both plead with the community to do the honourable Christian thing and reveal the murderer, but they are both met with stony silence. Such ambivalence in the community's relationship with religion may be seen to be reflective of further ambivalence in the public's relationship with the Church, who in many ways may be seen to have operated in a colonizing fashion in a newly independent Ireland. Thus, the ambivalence of Keane's language may be seen to operate to enable further identificatory processes within the text. From a postcolonial perspective his use of the North Kerry dialect may function as a form of identification through common resistance, one that challenges the language of the colonizer. Keane's treatment of religion, incorporating his use of religious references in the *patois* of Carraighthomond, further acts to enable identification through resistance, but also acts in a subversive manner, one that highlights the inconsistencies in such monolithic narratives. This facilitates a further identificatory process, where the ambivalent nature of the public's relationship to the Church is represented on stage. Such processes may be highlighted further through the play's performance on stage, but this dissertation is

focusing, in terms of analysis, on the text itself¹².

In conclusion, to return to a concept mentioned at the beginning of this section, that is, that nationalist mythologies are formed through narratives that feature a telling of the self to the self by the self, what can be said of *The Field*, and how does the work contribute to, or indeed subvert, the national *imaginaire*? Having revisited the theories of Jacques Lacan in terms of identity formation, and extrapolated those theories to be paradigmatic of the construction of nationalist identities, the character of the Bull McCabe was looked at in some detail. McCabe was analysed in terms of being representative of nationalist discourse, and an analysis of McCabe's specular dyadic identifications was entered into. Such essentialist, lococentric, and somewhat monolithic narratives of nationalism, as represented by McCabe, are subverted by the text as it challenges, through its ambivalence, such over-simplified identifications. The text was seen to operate in an ambivalent manner through McCabe's position as both a post-colonial subject and a neo-colonial force. McCabe's essentialist position as a previously colonized figure, which he achieves through opposition and through persistent references to a collective past, is challenged by his adoption of somewhat imperialist techniques, such as creating an image of an inferior 'other' and his anthropomorphizing of the land, thereby representing a form of neo-colonial Irish nationalism which is merely 'a derivative of its British counterpart' (Deane in Eagleton et al, 1990, p. 7). The ambivalent nature of the language used in the work was

¹² In the 2015, 50th anniversary production of the play at the Gaiety Theatre, directed by Padraic McIntyre, the bishop's sermon, in which he accuses the community of protecting the murderer and damns their silence on the matter, was addressed directly to the audience, with no other cast member on stage, thereby removing the fourth wall of theatre and encouraging further identification on the part of the audience in terms of their own ambivalent involvement. In a 2012 Quarry Players production of the play at the Belltable Theatre in Limerick, the scene was approached in the same way. Such representations of the text on stage offer further possible identificatory processes within the work. However, it must be noted that the theatre is an experiential and variable medium and interpretations of the text vary from director to director.

discussed, as was the appropriation of religion in terms of identity. The role played by religion was examined in terms of its ambivalent relationship to the text, and further subversion of monolithic national narrative and definition was revealed.

In terms of *The Field* contributing to the nationalist mythology by means of its being a narrative that features a telling of the self to the self by the self, what can be said of the work? As the analysis above has outlined, *The Field* rejects an oversimplification of nationalist discourse. Through the subversion of the oppositions present in the text, and through the ambivalence at its heart, the work refuses to delineate nationality in terms of polarities, but instead suggests that post-colonial Ireland is a complex and interweaving space, where the past mixes with the present, and therefore, the future. It is a work that lives up to Fintan O'Toole's assertion that it tells 'us a lot about how we got to be where we are now' (quoted in Smith and Hickey, 2004, p. 257). Furthermore, through its interrogation of simplistic identificatory definitions in terms of both self and nation, it may be posited that, in an increasingly culturally diverse Ireland, it also tells us something about who we, are while simultaneously highlighting the dangers of essentialist national and cultural definition.

4.5 – Conclusion.

In conclusion, this chapter has explored postcolonial resonances to be found within *The Field*, and analysed any adherence to, or possible subversion of, nationalist discourse by the text. To begin with, the position of Ireland as a post-colonial nation was explored, and having verified that position, the application of postcolonial theories to the text was suggested as a method of extracting further possible interpretations of the text. The character of McCabe was seen to operate in an Orientalist manner, creating and proliferating images of the outsider, William Dee. McCabe's generation of these

images was explored and his motive of personal advancement revealed. Structurally the text was seen to operate in a similarly binary fashion at times in relation to Dee also locating him in the position of 'other'. However, McCabe's created image of Dee was also seen to be subverted within the text, thereby revealing to the audience/reader the dangers that lie within over-simplification of identificatory processes on both individual and national levels, and locating them at the intersection of two opposing discourses.

This chapter then progressed onto the application of Homi K. Bhabha's theories to *The Field* in order to attempt to uncover further levels of possible interpretation and post-colonial resonance contained within the piece. The character of William Dee was explored in terms of having a hybrid identity, not English but not quite from the village of Carraighthomond either. Bhabha's concept of the Third Space of enunciation was applied to the text, and through the analysis presented, the play was shown to represent the Third Space through the collision of two opposing discourses on stage, and also exist within that Third Space as the interpretation of the work by the audience/reader is a somewhat ambivalent process that 'challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 54). Bhabha's concept of mimicry as both an agent of domination and an act of resistance was then applied to the text through the character of William Dee in an exploration of further ambivalent factors within the text. Through the application of the concepts outlined above to the characters of Dee and McCabe, the representation of the heterogeneity of post-colonial discourse as seen in *The Field* was examined, resulting in the exploration of conflicting identificatory processes at the level of audience/reader as both the collective unconscious and individual rational consciousness are challenged by the text.

Finally, the concepts of nationalism, nationalist discourse, and national identity, as represented in the text, were addressed, with reference to Lacanian theories of identification, particularly the mirror-stage. The character of McCabe was looked at in terms of his being an on stage representation of nationalist discourse itself. McCabe's specular dyadic identification with the land around was shown to be symbolic of essentialist nationalism, a point reinforced by the analysis of lococentrism in the play that followed. McCabe was then looked at in terms of his ambivalence and his being both a colonized figure and a neo-colonial force. In terms of nationalist discourse McCabe's position was shown to be representative of Deane's description of Irish nationalism as being a '*mutatis mutandis*, a copy of that by which it felt itself to be oppressed' (Deane in Eagleton et al, 1990, p. 8). The examination of the representations of nationalism in *The Field*, as explored in this chapter, has highlighted the essentially flawed nature of simplistic ideological endeavour, thereby revealing the interrogation and subversion of conventional modes of nationalist discourse by the text. Further complex identificatory processes and possible resonances were suggested by this analysis, which attempted to examine what exactly *The Field* was 'telling to the self of the self, a telling which, in the process, is performative in that it is creative of that self, at both conscious and unconscious levels' (O'Brien, 2002, p. 14).

Having explored the text in a postcolonial fashion, and questioned the representations of nationalism within it, possible resonant factors at play within the text have been suggested. Following on from this, the next two chapters will suggest further possible identificatory processes at work within the text through an analysis of gender roles at play and the cohesion to, and the possible subversion of, traditional gender politics by the play will be addressed. To begin with Keane's representation of women

will be now be explored.

Chapter Five: Representations of Gender, Part One – Femininity.

5.1 – Introduction.

Having offered a short biography of Keane, the roots and the germination of *The Field* have been traced from its inspiration in the real-life murder of Moss Moore in Reamore, to its presentation as a national success (albeit in a slightly altered form of the work) on the boards of the Abbey Theatre. Various modes of enquiry have been entered into in order to examine such popularity, and possible resonant factors at work within the play that have contributed to that popularity, have been posited.

Firstly, the play was examined in terms of social, economic, and political contexts. The reflection of these contexts within the work, and the questioning of such contexts by the work, was explored in an attempt to reveal possible resonant factors at play in a changing Ireland, a country where identity was, and still is, in a state of perpetual flux. Secondly, a Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytical approach was taken in an endeavour to unmask unspoken motivations at play within both the characters of the play and the audience observing it, thereby suggesting further possible resonant factors within the work, factors that perhaps propelled the work further into the national unconscious. Thirdly, *The Field* was looked at through a postcolonial lens and representations of nation and national identity in the work were identified and analysed. Through this analysis further possible resonant factors, contained within the discourse of national identity and its histories, conflict, and fluidity, portrayed on stage in *The Field*, were identified through the challenging of essentialist monolithic nationalist narratives of the past in the face of a necessity to adapt to a changing future.

Finally, in these two concluding chapters, the area of gender and the socially constructed roles played by gender will be examined in an attempt to explore further possible resonant factors in operation in *The Field*. This chapter will begin by offering an historical context of traditional female gender-roles present in Irish society of the time of writing of *The Field*. The development of these roles will be traced up to the present day and a context of female gender anxiety will be identified in preparation for the exploration of Keane's female characters that will follow.

An analysis of some of Keane's prominent female characters will then be entered into, paying particular attention to both Sive and Mena in *Sive*, and Maggie Polpin in *Big Maggie*. The character of Mame Fadden in *The Change in Mame Fadden* will be looked at briefly also. The analysis of these characters, all eponymous leading ladies which is in itself significant, will demonstrate Keane's ability to both highlight and challenge traditional gender-roles and will form the bedrock for the analysis of Keane's female characters in *The Field*.

Within *The Field* the character of Maimie must be given particular focus, as she is a character both imprisoned by, and rebelling against, her gendered place within the patriarchal confines of Carraighthomond. The character of Maggie Butler will also be looked at as she occupies the space of a female landowner, and thereby should be empowered within her locale, however she is largely rejected and excluded from the inner sanctum of McCabe's Carraighthomond. The wives of Carraighthomond will then be addressed and the fortunes of McCabe's wife, who remains nameless, and Flanagan's wife Maimie, will be contrasted with Dandy McCabe's and William Dee's treatment of their respective wives. Through the above analysis Keane's representation and subversion of traditional gender-roles will be highlighted and a further resonant factor

contained within his work suggested.

Through the analysis of gender-roles as represented in *The Field*, further elements of the play working beneath the text and in the collective unconscious will be explored. Keane's treatment of women, and his at times almost proto-feminist stance, will be outlined through an analysis of his female characters. Similarly, in the following chapter Keane's treatment of masculinity will be investigated, and his voicing of masculine anxieties through his male characters identified. Through the above analysis, these chapters endeavour to illustrate the presence of an unquantifiable entity that this author names resonance, within his work, for past and present audiences both male and female.

To begin with, the context of traditional female gender roles at the time of writing of *The Field* will be examined in tandem with contemporary gender issues in an effort to aid the interpretation of Keane's representations of gender within his work. *The Field*, first performed in 1965, came at a time of great social, political, and economic change in Ireland, as has been discussed in chapter two of this dissertation. Thus, traditional gender-roles at the time in rural Ireland, and the challenges presented to them by a changing landscape, must be examined, and their representation in the play explored. According to Declan Kiberd, during the 1940s and 1950s 'Rural Ireland remained a deeply conservative patriarchal society' (Kiberd, 1996, p 476). Further to this, due to the emigration of the non-inheriting younger sons of farmers, and the farming daughters' rejection of an arranged marriage to an older, land-owning son in favour of seeking employment in England:

Rural Ireland was filled with broken families, whose fate seemed quite at variance with the official ideology enshrined in de Valera's 1937 Constitution, of a society which constructed itself on the sacredness of family life. Yet somehow the myth of the Holy Family seemed to grow ever more glamorous and wholesome the more the facts told

against it. Far from feeling valued or ratified by it, some women felt themselves demeaned (Kiberd, 1996, p. 477).

Thus, it may be seen that traditional gender-roles within rural Ireland, as defined by patriarchy, primogeniture, and the somewhat idealistic constitution of 1937, were a source of great anxiety as rural families attempted to find a stable equilibrium between social expectation, survival, and personal fulfilment.

Women were expected to act in a subservient manner and cater for the breadwinning male of the house, whereas men were expected to work and provide exclusively for the household. In a recent article published in *The Irish Times*, Keane's daughter, Joanna, described the role women played in Irish society of the 1950s and 1960s:

I'm no Diarmaid Ferriter, but we know that life was no bed of roses for women in Ireland in the 1950s and 1960s. There was the marriage bar, whereby women had to give up their jobs upon marriage. There was no equal pay, and women didn't automatically inherit their husbands' worldly goods. Men generally held key positions in society and families prioritised their sons' education over their daughters' futures. Women were expected to be subordinate to men and were repressed by the Catholic Church, which disapproved of contraception. Women weren't meant to drink much alcohol, especially in public. (Keane, 2016, *The Irish Times* [online]).

It may be argued that in order to survive under such oppressive conditions women had to be mentally robust, and Keane's representation of women very often featured very strong women who challenged such positioning within patriarchal society. This is a point echoed by the actress and theatre producer Phyllis Ryan who stated 'Long before the term "Women's Lib" became the catch-cry for female frustrations [...] John B. Keane was writing plays featuring tough women with rebellious tendencies' (Ryan in Feehan, 1979, p. 61). Thus, Keane's writing documented and challenged the status quo of gender politics in rural Ireland through his representations of strong female characters at odds with their surroundings. Through these representations Keane also gave voice to female anxieties regarding the role of their gender in Irish society, an issue that lies at

the heart of many of his strong female characters, a point that will be illustrated in the analysis of some of them that will follow.

In terms of the relevance of such issues to the audience of the present day, the role of gender within society remains an enduring, timeless site of contestation. In recent times, Hollywood actors have raised the issue of unequal pay between the sexes globally (Kohn, 2014); gender quotas in politics continue to be a source of debate (Byrne, 2015); breastfeeding in public has been under scrutiny (Meredith, 2014); the marriage equality referendum was passed by a majority of just over 62% to just under 38% (ReferendumIreland, 2015); and the Abbey Theatre was subject to protest over its inclusion of only one female playwright in its 2016 'Waking the Nation' programme, which was intended 'to interrogate the Easter Rising' in its centenary year (Blake-Knox, 2015). These are just a broad cross-section of some of the gender related issues in present-day Ireland, but they illustrate the fact that gender remains an issue of debate in the present, perhaps even more so now than in the time of writing of *The Field* due to the development of society, academia, and the huge changes in accessing information and mobilizing thought represented by the ever expanding social media which purport to allow ease of access to the public sphere for all.

To begin with, a brief analysis of Keane's female characters outside of *The Field* will follow. For the purposes of brevity, just three plays will be addressed, namely *Sive*, *Big Maggie*, and *The Change in Mame Fadden*. It must be noted that a broader analysis of all of Keane's female characters would form a worthy dissertation in itself, but as this dissertation is looking at *The Field* from multiple perspectives the space allocated will not allow such breadth. The three plays chosen are linked in that all three feature an eponymous female character, and all three deal with the issue of female

gender anxiety set against the backdrop of traditional gender stereotype.

5.2 - Keane's Women: Female Anxiety and The Failure of the Female Stereotype.

Having looked briefly at the anxieties of the gendered female, both in the period that *The Field* came from, and in its present form, and identified the contexts relevant to those anxieties, Keane's representations of femininity on stage will now be explored. To begin with, Keane's strong female characters, outside of those in *The Field*, will be looked at in an attempt to establish a literary context through which the analysis of the women of *The Field* may be examined and further illuminated. Firstly, an analysis of female gender roles as presented in Keane's first major play, *Sive*, will be entered into, with particular focus on the characters of Mena Glavin and the eponymous Sive.

Sive, first performed in 1959, opens in a rural setting on a 'late evening of a bitter March day' of 'the recent past' (Keane, 1959, p. 9), centres around the Glavin household, and the main dramatic impetus derives from the actions of the character of Mena, described in the opening stage directions as '*well-proportioned, hard-featured person in her early forties [...] She is Mena, wife of the man of the house*' (Keane, 1959, p. 10). From this opening description two things may be surmised. Firstly, though Mena is '*well-proportioned*' she is also '*hard-featured*', thus any traditional idealized concepts of femininity and feminine beauty are immediately subverted by the realities and lived experience of existence from the beginning of the play. Secondly, Mena is not described as the woman of the house, instead she is the '*wife of the man of the house*', indicating her position in the social order of the Glavin household, and by extension, that of the position of the female within rural Irish society, a position familiar

to many of that era. Central to the play is a discourse on the place of woman within society. The character of Sive is introduced to us in the stage directions as ‘*a pretty girl*’, ‘*aged about 18*’, and she ‘*wears a grey tweed coat which a little too small for her* [...] *She carries a satchel, filled with books, in her hand*’ (Keane, 1959, p. 12). Thus, she is immediately contrasted with the character of Mena, not only through her youthful beauty but also, due to the presence of her book-filled satchel, in her breaking from tradition as: ‘In the 1950s staying at school beyond the age of 14 was not a social norm; for some it was a privilege but for others it was not even an option’ (O’ Leary, 2013, p. 20). Sive is breaking even further from her traditional gender role when one considers that she is still at school at the age of ‘*about 18*’ as historically the number of girls continuing on from Inter Certificate to Leaving Certificate in 1959 dropped by approximately fifty eight percent (O’ Leary, 2013, p. 25). Thus, it may be argued that Sive has not only outgrown her grey tweed coat, but also her surroundings.

Such divergence from traditional social norms is highlighted by Mena in just her second line of dialogue with Sive: ‘Saints preserve us! Out working with a farmer you should be my girl, instead of getting your head filled with high notions. You’ll come to no good either, like the one that went before you’ (Keane, 1959, pp. 12-13). From Mena’s viewpoint Sive has little prospects in the tradition of marrying into land (her only possible future in Mena’s eyes) as she is an illegitimate child, and uses this as a justification for matching her with the elderly Seán Dóta. She puts forward her case to Mike:

Now listen to me! [*Her voice is insistent*] The child was born in want of wedlock [...] What is before her when she can put no name to her father? [...] There is a fine farm waiting her with servants to tend her so her hands will be soft and clean when the women of the parish will be up to their eyes in cow-dung and puddle. What better can she do? Who will take her with the slur and the doubt hanging over her? (Keane, 1959, p. 27).

Thus, it is apparent that Mena imagines no future for her gender, particularly when Sive was born ‘in want of wedlock’, outside of being the ‘*wife of the man of the house*’ (Keane, 1959, p. 10), and imposes that view upon Sive, who, despite her illegitimacy, embodies a far more progressive view of the future role of her gender, one rooted in education.

However, as with most of Keane’s creations, the character of Mena may not simply be assigned to one side of the good/evil binary, but instead may be seen as a product of her environment. She describes her upbringing to Sive:

I mind when I was a child, *when I was a woman*, there were four sisters of us in the one room. There was no corner of the bed we could call our own [...] We would fire embers of fire at the devil to leave the misery of our own house behind us, to make a home with a man, any man that would show four walls to us for his time in the world [...] Take no note of the man who has nothing to show for himself, who will be full of rameis and bladder [...] Take heed of a man with a piece of property (Keane, 1959, p. 70).

Thus, it may be inferred that Mena has experienced poverty from which the only escape, under traditional patriarchal rules, was through marriage. It may also be argued that she wants to secure some form of a future for the illegitimate Sive, one that is better than ‘the match I made... four cows on the side of a mountain and a few acres of bog’ (Keane, 1959, p. 20). Therefore, despite her acceptance of the two hundred pounds offered by Seán Dóta for the match, there is an ambivalence at the heart of Mena’s character. She is not represented as merely a cold, heartless woman, but as a multi-layered character who may be seen to be acting not simply in avarice, but also in her own personal interpretation of Sive’s best interests. This is a point echoed by Phyllis Ryan:

[Keane] has not created one-dimensional wicked witch puppets. He has written about human beings who have survived in situations involving hard work, no play, and nothing much in the way of marital satisfaction. The meaning of love has been driven from their understanding by years of hard usage (Ryan in Feehan, 1979, p. 63).

Mena also arranges the moving of her mother-in-law, Nanna, to Seán Dóta's care as part of the deal made for matching him with Sive. The relationship between Mena and Nanna Glavin is an interesting one, and her presence in Mena's homestead is representative of the traditional extended family. Marie Hubert Kealy argues that 'Nanna consistently subverts Mena's authority, unwilling, it seems, to abdicate her place at the hearth to another woman' (Kealy, 1993, p. 85). Nanna refers to Mena's childlessness several times throughout the play which may be seen as both an attack on her femininity and an assertion of the lack of a potential heir for the Glavin land. Thus, Kealy's assertion that Mena's 'bargaining with the matchmaker [...] becomes less an act of resentment or greed than an attempt to insure her proper place in the household by freeing her of both of her female rivals' (Kealy, 1993, p. 85) is an astute one. Ultimately, Mena is seeking authority within her household, and posits this desire as part of her argument for the match to Sive: 'Every woman will come to the age when she will have mind for a room of her own' (Keane, 1959, p. 70), a line reminiscent of Virginia Woolf's 1929 publication on female independence, 'A Room of One's Own' where the issues of female education, financial security, and independence are foregrounded (Woolf, 1929).

While subscribing to traditional patriarchal values, and equating Sive's marrying the ageing, but wealthy, Seán Dóta with independence; 'All I know is that you will be independent [...] You will have no enemy when you have the name of money' (Keane, 1959, pp. 66-67), Mena also challenges the traditional concept of the family. Kealy describes customary familial relations in rural Ireland as documented by Conrad Arensberg in his work, *The Irish Countryman* which:

Speaks at length on the changing relationships within a family when a son marries. The marriage contract includes the payment of a dowry to the father of the groom who, in

turn, signs over the land to his son. The old couple continue to live on the farm although they relinquish active control. This stepping aside in favour of the younger couple reserves to the older couple the best room in the house, the west room, and certain other marks of respect, in addition to their maintenance (Kealy, 1993, p. 85).

Thus, it would appear that the extended family forms a common traditional context against which Mena rebels. Mena envisions a future existence without such traditional attachments, one where she and her husband would be ‘clear and clane of the pair of ‘em [Sive and Nanna]’ (Keane, 1959, p. 21). Therefore, it may be argued that, though Mena is a product of her gendered position within society, she also rejects such traditions. Keane’s ability to allow Mena occupy the spaces of both villain and anti-heroine, due to the ambivalence at the core of her character, enables her to become a tragic figure, ultimately losing a ‘daughter’ (Sive is not her biological daughter, but that of her husband’s dead sister), through her own quest for place within the social order. It may also be argued that Mena’s actions are a result of a form of gender anxiety. She is a childless woman in her forties, a product of patriarchal hegemony which she rejects in her rejection of the extended family, but also participates in through her matching of Sive. She is also a woman whose womanhood is being constantly challenged by her mother-in-law in her own household. Thus, it may be posited that Mena’s actions result from an anxiety regarding her position, and by extension, that of her gender, within a changing society.

There is a similar ambivalence at the heart of another of Keane’s strong female characters, the eponymous Big Maggie Polpin. From the outset of *Big Maggie*, first performed at the Opera House, Cork, in 1969, Maggie is portrayed as a somewhat harsh and heartless character, feeling little remorse at the burial of her husband. When asked by Byrne if she would like to add anything of an affectionate nature to the inscription on the headstone he will make for her husband, she replies that ‘there’s enough lies written

on the headstones of Ireland without my adding to them' (Keane, 1969, p. 15). Like Mena, Maggie is also a product of her past, having lived in a loveless marriage, a marriage defined by traditional patriarchal values, one where 'she married him for the security' (Keane, 1969, p. 22). Maggie's late husband is described by the gossiping Old Man as being 'fond of a woman now and again', and Byrne informs us that 'A bottle of whiskey was no bother to him before his breakfast' (Keane, 1969, p. 22). Maggie's husband's infidelities are expanded on by the gossiping couple and Byrne, who proclaims, 'Didn't I see his red hair and big jaw on several here today. Maggie was never able to keep a servant girl in the house you know!' (Keane, 1969, p. 23) Through this the audience/reader gets a glimpse into Maggie's married life. This is furthered by Maggie herself as she remonstrates with her sons at the graveside, berating them for never standing up to him: 'You let him abuse me!' (Keane, 1969, p. 18). However the toughness of her character is immediately highlighted by her son's response to this accusation. Mick replies 'You were well able for him! Anyone that abused you wound up second best in the long run' (Keane, 1969, p. 18).

Thus, in the opening scene Maggie is presented as both a hard, somewhat cold-hearted woman, and a product of her environment, marrying into a loveless marriage with a serial adulterer in order to survive in the patriarchal realm. Byrne, who may be seen as a commentator of sorts on Maggie, reveals: 'She was all right at first. 'Twas the world hardened her [...] She had no real love for him. He was a good catch at the time' (Keane, 1969, p. 23). Later we learn that Maggie's relationship with her husband was somewhat sexless as she 'didn't sleep with him for years and when she did I doubt if she was any good to him' and Katie remembers her father saying 'that he was married for eighteen years and he never once saw his wife naked' (Keane, 1969, p. 35). In this

context Maggie may be seen as using her body as a form of negative agency in her marriage, exercising a form of authority, and punishing her husband's infidelities, through her physical denial of him. This challenge to dominant patriarchy may be interpreted as being central to the conflict between Maggie and her late husband. Byrne describes their failed relationship in the opening scene; 'He got his own way always [...] She was wrong for him. Another woman might have made a better fist of him. 'Tis a mistake to fight fire with fire' (Keane, 1969, p. 22).

Following her husband's death Maggie assumes control of the family, the farm, and the business, having manipulated her husband into signing over the Polpin estate to her following her catching him 'red handed' in the bedroom with Moll Sonders (Keane, 1969, p. 35). Maggie now considers herself to be in her rightful place, having 'got no more than my rights. I brought a thousand pounds fortune when I came here and I've slaved here for twenty-five years' (Keane, 1969, p. 29) and may be seen as a liberated force, assuming a position of authority denied to her within her marriage. She exercises this authority over her children, controlling their futures and limiting their freedom. On the surface this may be seen as simply replicating the subjugation she endured previously in an attempt to further her own position, however, such a polarizing reading would merely look at her character in a cursory manner. Superficially, she denies the farm to Mick, refuses permission to Maurice to marry, forces Katie into a marriage, and undermines Gert by making a move on her love interest, Teddy Heelin. Thus, Maggie's actions may be seen as profoundly unloving towards her children, and most certainly a departure from commonly held perceptions of motherhood. However, when explored further, Maggie's actions, though hard, may be seen to arise from, as Maggie informs us, 'the hardness of concern. Always remember that about me' (Keane, 1969, p. 81).

Mick, who has worked the farm since childhood with his brother Maurice, feels a natural right to inherit the land following the death of his father. He asserts, in a statement reflective of the traditional patriarchal rules of inheritance; 'If I'm to stay here I'll want a share. It was all understood that the farm would be divided between myself and Maurice' (Keane, 1969, p. 29). Maggie refuses to give him any commitment on this, which results in Mick's leaving, to which Maggie cold-heartedly replies 'Well, you know how to turn the knob on the door, boy' (Keane, 1969, p. 30). Similarly, Maurice's plans to marry Mary Madden are denied by Maggie, unless Mary can come up with a dowry of £1,500, an impossibility in Maurice's eyes, who states that 'she hasn't that kind of money and neither have I. At that rate I'll be waiting forever to get married' (Keane, 1969, p. 32). Maggie tells him that she will address the situation again sometime in the future despite having no intention of permitting the marriage. She justifies this lie to Katie by saying 'He'll get over her. Besides he's a good worker and help is hard to get. There's plenty of time for him to marry' (Keane, 1969, p. 37), simultaneously revealing a vulnerability in her situation, while imposing her own set of values upon Maurice. However, Maggie's opposing the marriage may also be a result of her anxiety in relation to her position within the household. She asks Maurice 'And you expect me to hand over the reins after my twenty-five years to a slip of a girl without a brown penny in her pocket?' (Keane, 1969, p. 32). This position of securing her own place in the pecking order is repeated towards the end of the play by Maggie when she is confronted by a pregnant Mary and her mother Mrs. Madden:

Wouldn't I be in a nice way now if I had signed over to Maurice before this! I'd be a walking tragedy, girl, depending on the likes of you for my breakfast, supper and tea and old before my time trying to judge your fads and humours, thankful for every hand-out and afraid of my sacred life for fear I might do something or say something to offend your ladyship (Keane, 1969, p. 88).

In this light, Maggie may be seen as acting in the interests of self-preservation. Having found a new form of independence and authority following the death of her husband, she is reluctant to relinquish it. She is also highlighting the subservient position she would occupy in the household should she sign it over, and exercises authority in her denial of Maurice's wishes, an authority that she would have to give up in her surrendering of the homestead to traditional expectations. Thus, it may be argued that Maggie is the vehicle through which traditional gender and familial roles are examined by the text.

Maggie's daughters fare no better in her treatment of them. Katie, described in the opening scene as an '*Attractive girl in a sexy way [...] She is about twenty-two*' (Keane, 1969, p. 18), is bullied by Maggie into stopping her work in the shop and taking up a domestic role tending to the kitchen in the Polpin household instead. Furthermore, Maggie reveals her knowledge of Katie's intimacies with a married man, Toss Melch, and uses this to force Katie into a marriage with a suitor who Katie is not interested in. In the course of the argument regarding Katie's promiscuity with a married man, the concept of womanhood, and what it means to be a woman in Maggie's eyes is interrogated. Maggie refers to Katie as a 'whore' twice, only relenting in her verbal onslaught once Katie admits that she 'was committing a sin¹³ with him [Toss Melch]' (Keane, 1969, p. 43). Finally, having broken Katie, Maggie instructs her to 'Get up and act like a woman [...] I was mistaken about you! I thought you were more brazen, more of a woman. You're still a child' (Keane, 1969, p. 44). It is also of interest that Maggie

¹³ The use of religious vocabulary is of note, particularly when one takes into consideration Maggie's final soliloquy on her sexual repression, and the role played in it by the Church, that is found in the Ben Barnes' 1988 revision of the text. This soliloquy will be addressed a little further later in the text in an exploration of Maggie's humanity despite her harshness, and the gendered environment that she is both a product of, and is rebelling against.

doesn't associate unwomanliness with promiscuity, instead she attributes it to Katie's not being 'more brazen', thereby challenging traditional conceptions around the nature of gendered activity, and subverting the idealized image of the passive, chaste woman.

Katie's sister Gert doesn't escape Maggie's intervention either. Having found a new sense of responsibility in being promoted from the kitchen to the shop, Gert falls for the lothario commercial traveller, Teddy Heelin, and the two of them arrange to go out together. However, Maggie also makes a play for Heelin and arranges for Gert to walk in on the two of them kissing, thus shattering Gert's romantic illusions while simultaneously reinforcing her subordinate female position within the household. Heelin, the commercial traveller, is portrayed a bit of a playboy, or as Maggie puts it 'no cock-virgin with innocent dreams of romance' (Keane, 1969, p. 58), and the ease at which he transfers his affections from Gert to Maggie seems to reinforce this perception. However, the superficial nature of his romantic liaisons are also highlighted by Heelin: 'As far as sex is concerned I've never really been satisfied. I don't mean I've been frustrated but something has been missing' (Keane, 1969, p. 59). He continues:

Meet a woman, make love to her and gone the next day – what does it all add up to? I used to promise myself that each time would be the last time. But I was tempted. I used to say maybe this time it's the right one (Keane, 1969, pp. 59-60).

Thus, as in Maggie's argument with Katie over her involvement with Toss Melch, casual sex becomes a real entity on stage, and its merits are debated by a very likeable character in the form of Teddy Heelin. By doing so, Keane was illuminating the darker corners of humanity, and human sexuality of a society that had transitioned from a 'deeply conservative and patriarchal society', one that was 'harshly impatient with those who stepped out of line, especially if embroiled in a sexual misadventure'

(Kiberd, 1996, pp. 476–477), to a more modernizing one. However, the waters are muddied further as Heelin’s speech may also be seen as part of his sweet-talking Maggie in an attempt to bring her to bed. When asked by Maggie if Gert is ‘the right one’, Heelin replies: ‘Maybe not. She’s a beauty but maybe I need someone more ... mature.’ (Keane, 1969, p. 60). Despite this, Maggie is far from an innocent party. Following her asking Heelin to stay away from Gert, she showers him with compliments in quick succession. Maggie’s line to Heelin ‘You’re a good-looking fellow! No doubt she finds you attractive, I honestly can’t blame her’ is quickly accompanied by her assertion that ‘You really are attractive and I can see how easy it would be for any woman to fall for you’ (Keane, 1969, p. 58). Maggie’s manipulation of Heelin, knowing his reputation as a womanizer, her denial of going upstairs with him, instead remaining in the shop kissing Heelin, and her having instructed Gert to ‘hurry back again’ from Katie’s (Keane, 1969, p. 68) all illustrate her engineering of the situation. Maggie’s manipulation of the situation again raises core issues of motherhood and female sexuality. She appears to relinquish the role of mother in favour of a new found sexual liberation in her reply to Gert’s disgust at seeing her mother kissing her love interest, ‘I’m single now, the same as you’ (Keane, 1969, p. 68).

However, to simply read Maggie as a cold-hearted and unloving mother is to ignore the ambivalence at the heart of her character. Though her actions may appear harsh and unloving, it may be argued that she is acting out of love, in what she perceives as the best interests of her children. Katie asks Maggie ‘Mother, do you have any feeling of love for me?’ (Keane, 1969, p. 83). Maggie’s reply illuminates the ambivalence at her core, the ‘hardness of concern’ (Keane, 1969, p. 81) demonstrated in her actions. She replies: ‘I have! I have it for all of you. That’s why I never let any of

you have your own way. If I hadn't love I wouldn't care' (Keane, 1969, p. 83). This point is echoed in Maggie's account of her treatment of Gert, 'It was the beginning of her education. I gave her the matriculation, you might say. 'Twas the best bit of schooling she's ever likely to get' (Keane, 1969, pp. 74-75). Through her actions Maggie believes that she has taught her children the importance of both independence and self-respect, lessons she has learned herself through the hardship of her own experience. This is a point echoed by Keane's wife Mary who related to this author that: 'She [Maggie] had to push them out, and I know she was cruel but you have to be cruel to be kind' [Devaney, 2012(a), Appendix One]. In an interview with Marie Hubert Kealy, Keane describes Maggie as being 'nurtured on hardship by a tyrannical, unloving, and wandering husband' (quoted in Kealy, 1993, p. 109), therefore Maggie's 'hardness of concern' as expressed through her actions, may be seen as an effort to spare her children the same fate.

Similarly to Mena in *Sive*, Maggie embodies an ambivalent relationship with tradition, one perhaps reflective of a changing female social landscape. She has been both a prisoner of tradition and, through her treatment of her daughters particularly, an advocate of its value. Her actions, as asserted by Kealy, 'reflect both her certitude about traditional values and her criticism of the norms that have enslaved her' (Kealy, 1993, p. 103). Maggie's most scathing criticism of dominant social norms come in the altered ending of the Ben Barnes' 1988 production of the play. Left alone, having driven three of her four children to England, and forced the remaining one into marriage, Maggie closes the play in soliloquy. In the revised version of the play, her final speech charts an awakening sexuality, one that has long lay dormant due to 'the stifling, smothering breath of the religion that withered my loving and my living and my womanhood'

(Keane, 1990, p. 234). In this soliloquy, traditional gender roles are represented and subverted by Keane, and Maggie voices a new interpretation of womanhood as a sexual being. Her final words present a woman re-born, free from the Catholic guilt assigned to her gender:

By God I can have any man in Ireland if there's a man I fancy and who fancies me. There's still time to fulfil myself. From now on I'll confess my fantasies to a lusty, lanky man with muscle, a man brimming with sap and tapsy, a man who'll be a real match for Big Maggie Polpin. The weal of the chastity cord is still around my belly and the incense is in my nostrils. I'm too long a prisoner but I'll savour what I can, while I can and let the last hour be the sorest (Keane, 1990, p. 235).

Thus, Keane interrogates what is to be a woman through the characters of Maggie and Mena. Traditional female roles such as that of being a mother, a wife and woman of the house are explored, and behaviours socially prescribed to femininity are challenged in the works. The examination of these gender roles within Irish society by Keane may function in a resonant manner, as anxieties, inconsistencies, and injustices in relation to gender, as experienced in the private sphere, were made public on the theatres of Ireland in both *Sive* and *Big Maggie*. By doing so Keane was representing, challenging, and ultimately subverting, dominant concepts of womanhood in the patriarchal realm, thereby giving voice to those disenfranchised by its constructs in the public arena.

Having spent some time addressing the representations of gender in both *Sive* and *Big Maggie*, one of Keane's other eponymous female characters will now be briefly explored. *The Change in Mame Fadden*, first performed at the Opera House, Cork, in 1971, marks somewhat of a departure for Keane as it is set in an urban environment, replete with its prostitutes, pimps, exclusive golf clubs, and mental health institutions, or as they are more euphemistically referred to in the text, rest-homes. However, the central issues within the work remain consistent with his previous offerings. The action

revolves around the title character, Mame, and her struggle to make sense of her position within life. She is introduced to us as ‘*an attractive woman in her mid-forties*’ sauntering along ‘*the quayside over the river in a fairly large city*’ in the evening time (Keane, 2001, p. 81), thereby removing her from the usual rural setting of Keane’s dramas and that of Maggie, Mena, and Sive. Our introduction to Mame by the river in evening time is also significant, as the ‘*Change*’ referred to in the title of the play may be seen as referring to the menopause, the evening’s twilight of Mame’s sense of womanhood and youth, set against the impermanence of time which is as relentless as the current flowing in the river beneath her.

Like Maggie Polpin before the death of her husband, Mame appears to be trapped in a loveless marriage, having little contact with her adult sons due their ‘precious wives’ not coming near her ‘in months and they’re keeping the boys away too’ (Keane, 2001, p. 84). Mame reveals to her old friend Sammy in the opening scene that ‘I spend the nights crying myself to sleep. I’m so lonely, Sammy. I’ve no one’ (Keane, 2001, p. 83). Phyllis Ryan contends that:

Like many sensitive beings Mame has come to accept her soulless existence, running her house and bringing up her children with decorum; staying quietly in the background and suppressing all natural urges until they ceased to cause pain. Until the advent of the menopause (Ryan in Feehan, 1979, p. 70).

Thus, it may be argued that Mame is suffering from a somewhat existential crisis, with her loss of youthful womanhood motivating her to take stock and look back over the sacrifices she made to be in the lonely position she finds herself in. Incidentally, it could also be argued that Maggie Polpin may have suffered a similar fate had her husband not passed away and left her in a position of authority, however this would be to overlook Maggie’s strength when compared to Mame’s passivity.

Mame seeks solace somewhat passively, instead of addressing her issues head

on. She takes to walking the streets at night and interacting with individuals outside of her normal realm, which is a source of great discomfort to her husband and his chances of becoming a member of 'the Royal Atlantic' golf club, 'one of the ten most exclusive clubs in the world' (Keane, 2001, p. 91). Her husband Edward, a headmaster with notions of grandeur, solely interested in keeping up appearances, is entirely unsympathetic to her dilemma, calling 'this change of life business [...] the greatest excuse for misbehaviour and self-indulgence I ever heard of' (Keane, 2001, p. 90). When Mame does raise her unhappiness with Edward, and reveals that her only desire is 'What I've always needed, to be loved, to be really loved in every sense physical and otherwise' (Keane, 2001, p. 109), she is called a liar, 'a most unreasonable and heartbreaking woman [...] bent on making my [Edward's] life a total misery' (Keane, 2001, p. 108). Furthermore, Mame's change and her rejection of her previous docile existence is said, by Edward, to be 'turning a once happy home into sheer hell' (Keane, 2001, p. 109).

Following this, Edward, Mame's two sons, Jack and Jim, and Jack's wife Kate, decide on the best course of action for Mame. They attempt to commit her to a mental institution, an action that may be seen as reflective of the muting of women's issues within society, as acknowledging them would challenge the dominant model, and thereby disrupt the status quo of the patriarchal order. Mame rejects their proposition and once again takes to the streets. Interestingly, on the streets Mame meets many other representatives of a broken social code. She meets prostitutes, pimps, and revellers in deeply unhappy marriages, signifying that her suffering is far from unique once the veil of privacy is stripped from human affairs, revealing the personal suffering endured to project an image of public harmony. It is also of note that there are only two other

female characters in the play, Kate, who is a domineering wife and the antithesis of Mame, and a prostitute who may represent a hardened victim of society. The prostitute's difference in mental fortitude from Mame is represented by her physical beating of her at a bus stop, a symbol at best 'a term for people in transit; at its worst, it symbolizes the person with nowhere to go' (Kealy, 1993, p. 92). Mame, caught between the idealized notion of passive womanhood she projected in her younger days and the harsh realities of the life she has created for herself, may be seen as being a character in transition. However, the bleak ending to the play, where Mame finds herself unable to position herself within her world and removes herself from it by committing suicide in the river, would suggest that the bus-stop metaphor may be interpreted in its darkest form.

On a symbolic level, having identified the river as representing the unrelenting passage of time, Mame's entering into it may be seen perhaps as her embracing the futility of resistance against both her ageing and her self-made position within her realm. Whether one sees Mame's suicide as a literal rejection of the world, or as a symbolic murder of her rebellion against it, the issues raised by the work are of broad relevance, particularly in terms of her gender. Like Maggie Polpin and Mena Glavin, Mame is a product of her gendered environment. Much of the conflict within Mame arises from her interrogation of her public performance as a woman and her private anxieties. In the work Mame's anxieties may be seen to be reflective of the anxieties created through submission to, and perpetuation of, stereotypical gender roles within society, thus suggesting another possible resonant factor at play within his work.

In conclusion, representations of femininity as seen in *Sive*, *Big Maggie*, and *The Change in Mame Fadden* have been explored in an effort to explore Keane's

subversion of traditional gender roles within his work. In total just four characters have been looked at in any depth, namely Sive, Mena Glavin, Maggie Polpin and Mame Fadden. Representations of gender in Keane's work could very easily form the basis of a further dissertation, therefore my discussion of his female characters outside of *The Field* has limited itself to the ones discussed above. Inherited traditional stereotypical gender roles form a common thread between the four characters discussed and their responses to that oppressive legacy have been debated. Death and womanhood are also intrinsically linked in the works. Mena's concept of womanhood and woman's position in society has been contrasted with that of the youthful Sive, resulting in a conflict that pits past tradition against present reality, and highlights a grotesque stasis of gender through Mena's utilizing the tradition of match-making set against the background of murdered possibility represented by the youthful Sive's demise. Inversely, Maggie's release from the chains of her marriage only comes about through the death of her husband, thereby enabling her re-birth as an authoritative and sexual woman, signifying the necessity to re-examine traditional concepts of gender. Contrastingly, Mame interrogates her inherited position and her own hand in perpetuating it, but is unable to affect change and, in an act that mirrors the young Sive, takes her own life in the ultimate act of rejection of such inertia.

The concept of motherhood is a further link between these characters. Commonly held beliefs regarding the role of motherhood are questioned in the three works. Mena's relationship with Sive, and her hand in her ultimate fate, question the very basis of motherhood, as does Maggie's treatment of her offspring. However in both of these characters there is an ambivalence at play within them that locates them at some point along the humanitarian spectrum. Mena, due to her past, may be seen as

acting in Sive's best interests, while also endeavouring to create a new version of the traditional homestead, and re-invent her traditional gendered space within society. Similarly, Maggie is also a product of her environment and may be seen to be acting in what she perceives to be the best interests of her children, acting out of the 'hardness of concern' that we are never to forget about her (Keane, 1969, p. 81). A more traditional concept of motherhood is represented in Mame Fadden, who has sacrificed herself for the sake of her family. However, this stereotypically maternal concept of femininity is harshly questioned by the work, as Mame is left alone, without a loving husband, without any significant interaction with her children, and most importantly, without any sense of her self, resulting in her committing suicide by drowning.

Thus, through the analysis of these four female characters, Keane's representation of traditional gender roles, and his exploration of the dangers contained within such stereotypes has been underlined. Through this analysis of Keane's women his destabilization of traditional ideals with regard to gender has been shown. In the words of Marie Hubert Kealy:

Each of his female characters draws on the traditional roles of Irish women, and each demonstrates in some way the failure of the stereotype to portray adequately the genuine concerns and the struggles of individuals within the social system (Kealy, 1993, p. 92).

Thus, through his representation of 'the traditional roles of Irish women' and through their illustrating the 'failure of the stereotype', once again Keane is highlighting the gulf that lies between the ideals of traditional concepts of womanhood, and the realities of lived existence that refute such constructs, a trope common to his work on multiple levels. With this in mind, attention will now focus on Keane's representations of women in *The Field*, beginning with the complex character that is Maimie Flanagan.

5.3 –Female Performance, Private Realities, and Traditional Roles in *The Field*.

Unquestionably the dramatic impetus of *The Field* centres on the iconic character of the Bull McCabe and his lust for land. The treatment of masculinity in the play, as seen through the characters of McCabe, Dee and Leamy, amongst others, is quite interesting in its presentation of multiple interpretations of it, and is something that will be discussed in the following chapter. However, the margins of Carraigthomond are also worthy of analysis, particularly the role of women in this insular, patriarchal realm. This section will begin by offering an in-depth analysis of the character of Maimie Flanagan, and the relationship of her character to social issues of gender, both in the 1960s and in the present day, will be commented upon. Traditional family values, and the gender specific ideals that they represent, will be measured against the realities of existence as portrayed by Maimie, thereby illustrating Keane's further examination of the stereotypical gender roles contained within Irish society.

Following that, an analysis of the only other female characters represented on stage will be entered into. Firstly the character of Maggie Butler will be examined. Butler is in a position of authority as she is the titleholder of the piece of land at the centre of the conflict within the play. However, her treatment by McCabe and, by extension, the entire village of Carraigthomond, appears to negate and disregard such positioning and an examination of her character will illuminate the reflection of further gender specific social contexts by Keane. The final female character represented on stage is that of Dandy McCabe's wife, who remains nameless. Her character will be examined in the context of her occupying the role of 'wife', and the treatment of wives within the text will be further examined in an attempt to unwrap varying representations, and subsequent subversions, of the most traditional of gender roles.

To begin with, the character of Maimie Flanagan will be addressed. We are introduced to Maimie as being Mick Flanagan's wife, and in her opening line of the play she informs her husband that 'Your dinner is ready' (Keane, 1966, p. 12). Thus, from the outset, Maimie is placed within the traditional female role of domesticity, catering for the man of the house. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, all but two scenes (the murder and the bishop's sermon) take place within Flanagan's bar, thus Maimie's role within this dualistic location, which is both a public house and a private sphere, is of central significance. Though positioned in a traditional familial role, Maimie also exhibits rebellious tendencies towards the submissive and sacrificial elements of that role, the very elements that resulted in Mame Fadden's demise discussed earlier. Despite having nine children with Mick, Maimie still has a sense of self and takes pride in her appearance, telling Mick that she is going to the hairdressers as 'its six weeks since I had my hair done' (Keane, 1966, p. 12). She orders Mick not to turn the radio on while eating as 'the baby's asleep [...] If he wakes that's the end of my hair-do' (Keane, 1966, p.12), and when he complains of the lack of variety in eating corned beef and cabbage again she adopts a somewhat mocking tone 'What do you expect – turkey and ham?' (Keane, 1966, p. 13). Therefore, from Maimie's opening lines of the play many things are revealed about her character and the challenge presented by it to traditional concepts regarding gender roles within a marriage. She occupies the traditional space of woman of the house, mother of nine children, but through her words and actions she also challenges the stereotype of the submissive, sacrificing wife and mother. This ambiguity is located in a space that is simultaneously a private and public sphere, thereby it may be argued that, as in *The Change in Mame Fadden*, the public performance of gender may be contrasted with the private realities of it.

The Bird exploits Maimie's vanity in his efforts to get free drink from her. He flatters her and tells her how Nesbitt, the solicitor's son, was admiring her as 'the finest-lookin' woman in the village' (Keane, 1966, p. 13), illustrating the importance of outward appearance to Maimie. There is also a suggestion that Maimie may be a little promiscuous in her relationships with men. Bird remarks to the newly arrived Dee that she is 'a regular flier, that one.' (Keane, 1966, p. 31). This is reinforced by Maimie's account of bringing 'a few of the boys in for a drink' (Keane, 1966, p. 27) after attending a dance while her husband was to be spending the night in Dublin. Such public performance by Maimie may be seen to be challenging the essence of traditional values of womanhood. However, we also learn something of her private reality in the same passage. Maimie's husband, Mick, having gotten a lift home unexpectedly had listened to everything going on in the bar in seclusion at the top of the stairs. According to Maimie:

He waited till the boys were gone and there he was sitting on the steps of the stairs as I was going up. I thought I'd drop dead... Christ, he took the wind out of my sails, I can tell you. He struck me and I fell down the stairs. I pretended to be unconscious. That frightened him, though. You should hear him! Oh, the lamenting would bring a laugh from a corpse (Keane, 1966, p. 28).

Though cloaked in humour, Maimie is directly referring to physical abuse at the hands of her husband, a reality endured as a fact of life within the private sphere of domestic living in the 1960s, and mirrored in the Bull McCabe's hitting his wife 'more than I meant, maybe' (Keane, 1966, p. 49). This is an actuality reflected in McKiernan and McWilliams's study entitled 'Women, Religion and Violence in the Family':

Domestic violence was left untouched and protected by church and state as part of the private sphere of family life. Despite attempts in the late 19th century to have domestic violence recognised as a crime, victims had relatively few rights until the mid 1970s (McKiernan and McWilliams in Byrne and Leonard, 1997, p. 327).

McKiernan and McWilliams trace the complicity of the Church in female subordination

through various feminist writings. They trace religious influence on the status of women from the 1500s and John Calvin's advice 'for an abused woman [...] to "bear with patience the cross which God has seen fit to place upon her"' (McKiernan and McWilliams in Byrne and Leonard, 1997, p. 328), to the 1945 Catholic Bishops' Lenten Pastoral which decried nursery provision for children as destroying 'the natural and divinely ordained traditional family' (McKiernan and McWilliams in Byrne and Leonard, 1997, p. 329), thereby opposing a life outside of the home for women. By doing so the authors attempt to illustrate how 'religious ideology has rationalised and legitimised the subordinate position of women, ensuring the acceptance of that order by both men and women' (McKiernan and McWilliams in Byrne and Leonard, 1997, p. 328).

Maimie finds herself in exactly this subordinated position, confined to a life of domesticity, a mode of living all too familiar to rural Irish women. The acceptance of physical abuse in the home as legitimate may be seen in Maimie's making light of her husband's striking of her and her humorous recounting of her playing dead after being beaten by her him. Her husband's response to seeing his unresponsive wife further affirms his position of masculine dominance, while also channelling religious imagery in the darkly comic line 'Will you wake up, in the name o' God, and don't disgrace me by being dead' (Keane, 1966, p. 28). The involvement of the Church in Maimie's subordination is further revealed when one looks at *Humanae Vitae*, an encyclical issued by Pope Paul VI in 1968, subtitled 'On the Regulation of Birth', which offered 'strong reaffirmation of past papal condemnations of every form of artificial birth control' (Keogh, 2005, p. 274). Maimie, being the mother of nine children, may be seen as a product of such adherence to religious doctrine, a fact further highlighted by her

euphemistic reference to her pregnancies as going on her ‘annual holidays’ (Keane, 1966, p. 68). She continues by emphasizing their regularity in a somewhat mocking tone: ‘I’d swear him [Mick] to the gallows if I thought I could spend a year without having a baby’ (Keane, 1966, p. 68), before voicing her anger at both the sergeant and the local priest, describing them as ‘thicks like you climbing on other people’s backs because you have authority’ (Keane, 1966, p. 69). Thus, the representatives of both Church and state are verbally challenged by Maimie in a passage that directly references her own gendered imprisonment through adherence to religious and dominant social ideology. By doing so it may be argued Keane is suggesting that a re-examination of such traditional values is necessary, as the realities of female existence, as prescribed by Church and state, are in conflict with any humanitarian ideal.

The extent to which Maimie has accepted her subordinate position within the society of Carraigthomond is highlighted in her persuading her son, Leamy, to keep quiet regarding the murder of Dee. She demands of him to ‘say no more ... never again until my family is reared and able to look out for themselves’ while revealing that she ‘was never afraid before. I feared nothing that walked the face of the earth until my first child was born. A child makes a prisoner of a woman and I have nine, but Leamy, you’re a lovely gaoler’ (Keane, 1966, p. 56). Thus, Maimie’s acceptance of her subordinate position and the resultant suppression of her moral conscience is an act of survival and protection in a traditional patriarchal sphere. There are also moments in the play where Maimie’s mask drops and she rebels against the traditional order. She rejects the Bull McCabe’s justification of giving Dee a beating, describing Dee as a man that has done no harm, and stating that ‘It’s a terrible thing to beat a man up. He’s alone here’ (Keane, 1966, p. 45). She also refuses to subscribe to McCabe’s perceived claim

on the field, asking ‘What’s so awful about that?’ (Keane, 1966, p. 33) when informed that Dee intends to buy it. However, such moments become short-lived as she ultimately submits to the dominant ideology of Carraigthomond. In relation to her objections to McCabe giving Dee a beating, she yields to McCabe following his threatening her with his knowing ‘enough about you to cause a right plateful of trouble’ (Keane, 1966, p. 45). Similarly, her questioning of McCabe’s perceived right to the land is quelled by her husband, who, in the stage directions, ‘seizes her and pulls her roughly to one side where with a good deal of gestures he whispers to her, but we catch the name “The Bull McCabe”’ (Keane, 1966, p. 33). Thus, due to violence, both psychological and physical, Maimie cedes to the dominant male and stifles her moral concerns.

Ultimately, Maimie has to continue living in Carraigthomond, and has a family to rear, and knowing the futility of challenging the gendered space she occupies within the society of Carraigthomond, she reluctantly submits to it. It may be argued that, through the character of Maimie, Keane is documenting a world in need of change but somewhat unready for it. When the founding of The Irish Women’s Liberation Movement in 1970 (Keogh, 2005, p. 289) is taken into consideration, along with the demand for contraceptives being reflected in ‘the establishment of the Irish Family Planning Association in 1969’, and ‘the setting up of Family Planning Services in 1974 and the Dublin Well Woman Centre in 1978’ (Keogh, 2005, p. 275), the character of Maimie is especially relevant in terms of gender. Maimie, first seen in 1965, predates such social changes, may be seen as representative of female anxiety resulting from a desire for change, while repressing that desire in order to survive, in an uncontested static space. Maimie may be seen as representative of female resistance against an

asphyxiating environment, illuminating, as asserted by Phyllis Ryan, ‘the plight of women trapped by the conventions of rural society in a life bereft of colour or meaning’, while also marking ‘the growing resistance of Keane’s women to slavery in the home or on the farm in a male-dominated society’ (Ryan in Feehan, 1979, p. 65). Ultimately, Maimie submits to the status quo in an act of survival. However, the conflict represented by her, and the issues raised by her character regarding the incongruence of the traditional ideal with the lived reality, give voice to private concerns in a public forum, just as her private life with Mick becomes public knowledge within the bar.

In essence, Maimie embodies a female struggle for recognition, identity and equality, and she represents female anxieties regarding these issues on stage through her subversion of the stereotypical rural Irish female. These are all universal gender related issues, and ones that still hold relevance today, as may be seen in a recent podcasted interview for *The Irish Times* with renowned theatre director Garry Hynes. When asked about the current issue of the lack of female representation in relation to the Abbey Theatre’s 2016 programme celebrating the centenary of 1916, and the subsequent Waking the Feminists movement, she comments that the ‘lack of representation of women is ground deeply within our culture and is ground within ourselves’ (*The Irish Times*, 2016), thus illustrating that matters of gender recognition, identity, and equality are still of extreme relevance today. Therefore, it may be argued that for present-day audiences Maimie is a character representative of both past and present inequalities and anxieties. She may be seen as rebelling against her gendered subordination through her challenging the dominant males of Carraighthomond and also through her suggested promiscuity which could be seen as ‘her only form of protest against an unbearable existence’ (Ryan in Feehan, 1979, p. 65). Her position within, and reluctant acceptance

of, traditional patriarchal rural Irish society in order to exist there makes her a somewhat ambivalent character, and it is in this ambivalence, as seen in Maggie Polpin, Mena Glavin, and Mame Fadden, that gender anxieties are to be found. As Kealy asserts 'Keane manages to create both a nostalgia for the vanishing traditions, with their secure social niches, and a sympathy for the men and women trapped by those same traditions' (Kealy, 1993, p. 92).

Following on from this, the character of Maggie Butler will be looked at briefly. Maggie, being the title-holder to the piece of land at the centre of the play, appears to be in a position that would refute the subordination of her gender outlined previously. How Maggie has come into possession of the land is also of note. When questioned by Mick regarding who gave her the right to sell the field she replies:

'Twas willed to me by husband five years ago 'Twas purchased under the Land Act by my husband's father, Patsy Butler. He willed it to my husband and my husband willed it to me. I'm the registered owner of the field (Keane, 1966, p. 10).

Therefore, along with Maggie being an incongruent presence as a land-owning female in the patriarchal realm of Carraigthomond, she also occupies a space that presents a challenge to traditional gender roles. Being a widow she cannot occupy the space of wife, and appearing childless, having 'no one in the house but myself' (Keane, 1966, p. 38), and no heir to inherit the field, she cannot occupy the traditional role of mother. Thus, through her non-adherence to the socially defining feminine roles of mother and wife, Maggie Butler may be seen to occupy a position of exteriority in relation to the traditional, patriarchal community of Carraigthomond. Maggie's acknowledgement of her position of incongruence, and the challenge to dominant ideals represented by her, are portrayed on a symbolic level by her self-imposed exclusion from the village as seen in her admission to Mick that 'I'm afraid I don't be in the village very often' (Keane,

1966, p. 8). Similarly, Maggie appears in only three scenes in the text, a sparse showing for someone whose land is the main dramatic force behind the play.

Maggie first appears as ‘a poor widow woman’, in Mick’s bar instructing him in the sale of the land; ‘I want the best price I can get. They say you’re an honest man to get the last halfpenny for a person’ (Keane, 1966, p. 9). She continues by insisting on a reserve of £800 on it as ‘It’s worth every penny of it. It’s good land and it’s well situated’ to which Mick agrees ‘True for you! You’ll get the last brown copper for it. I’ll make sure of that’ (Keane, 1966, p. 11). Maggie is uninfluenced by Mick’s assertion that McCabe may have rights to the field as he has been renting it for grazing from her. She replies to this in a cool and logical manner, acting solely in her own interests, being poor and possessing nothing more ‘apart from my widow’s pension and I can’t live on that’ (Keane, 1966, p. 11), despite her self interest being in direct opposition to the unwritten code of tradition in Carraigthomond; ‘Tis all the one to me. Whoever pays the most gets the field’ (Keane, 1966, p. 10). Thus, from her opening interactions with Mick, local auctioneer and proprietor of the public house, where most of the action of the play takes place, Maggie is marked as somewhat of an alien presence to the village, through her rarely visiting it, her being a childless widow, and her disregard for the traditional customs that appear to govern it.

Maggie’s second appearance in the play comes on the day of the auction where William Dee attempts to outbid McCabe. In this scene Maggie’s exteriority to the Carraigthomond of McCabe is mirrored by that of William Dee’s. As discussed in chapter four, Dee’s exteriority is represented at the auction through his dress, language, politeness, and his logical rationality. Maggie is also located in a position of exteriority through Mick’s attempts to physically remove Maggie ‘upstairs with Maimie for a cup

of tea' (Keane, 1966, p. 34), an act that may be seen as removing femininity from the bar, and one that marks Maggie's exteriority further, denying her a presence at the auction of her property. It is only through her fellow outsider Dee's logical demand 'that the owner should be present' (Keane, 1966, p. 35) that Maggie returns to witness the auction. On the return of Maggie to the bar, and undoubtedly for her benefit, Mick then begins to speak in a quasi-professional manner, quoting the 'Conditions of Sale' (Keane, 1966, p. 35), all the while being met with derision from the Bull McCabe, further demarcating Maggie's irrelevance to the Carraigthomond of McCabe. Maggie and Dee's shared exteriority is further linked at the end of the scene as she subscribes to the logical viewpoint represented by Dee. She tells him rationally that he 'can see my field any time', thus allying herself further to the logical outsider. Furthermore, in her next line of dialogue she repudiates the commonly held perception of McCabe's right to ownership of the field through his working of it by informing him, somewhat coolly, 'You've no claim' (Keane, 1966, p. 38). This leads to McCabe's threatening the old widow Butler, an act darkly prophetic of the treatment of those who do not submit to the unwritten rules of Carraigthomond, and one that foreshadows Maggie's fellow outsider, Dee's demise.

Towards the end of the play Maggie is in a far more resigned position, receiving payment of £350 from McCabe, despite her having a reserve on it of £800. Her acceptance of her subordinate position within Carraigthomond, and her repression of any sense of injustice, is marked by her opening line of the scene: 'I have the money taken now and there's no more to be said' (Keane, 1966, p. 61). Her submission to the dominant order of Carraigthomond is marked by her adherence to silence while being questioned by the Sergeant and Fr. Murphy regarding the murder of Dee, claiming that

she has 'no memory at all' (Keane, 1966, p. 65). The motivation behind her cooperation with McCabe is fear, and like Maimie, her submission may be seen as an act of survival, as revealed in her line to the Sergeant and Fr. Murphy 'Tis me that needs the help, God help me' (Keane, 1966, p. 65). She emphasises her position of exteriority and vulnerability in her interview with the Sergeant and Fr. Murphy, stating 'I'm a lone widow, living on the side of the road, with no one to look after me' (Keane, 1966, p. 66). This is a point she reiterates when the Sergeant suggests that he will deal with whoever is frightening her; 'Oh no... no... you mustn't... you mustn't... You can't [...] I'm an old woman, living alone, and I do be worryin' nights. I have no one with me' (Keane, 1966, p. 66). Thus, having entered the realm of Carraigthomond as a poor, heirless, widow, attempting to provide for her future through the traditional means of selling property belonging to her, Maggie and her noble intentions, are rejected by the insular, parochial, and patriarchal society that she meets there.

Maggie challenges the essence of the stereotypical rural Irish woman, being both childless and without a husband, thereby unable to occupy the traditional female space of wife/ mother. Moreover, she represents a challenge to the dominant ideology of her surroundings through her resistance of it in her own self-interest. She neither has, nor seeks, a traditional male provider and therefore insists on getting as much money as possible from the sale of the field. She also challenges the stereotypical concept of the passive woman through her identification with fellow outsider William Dee.

Ultimately, both outsiders' fates are bleak. In Maggie's case she must submit to tradition in order to survive, similar to Maimie. However, it may be argued that Maimie, who occupies the traditional role of mother and wife, and is in a prominent position socially as Mick's wife, may continue to offer some form of resistance in a way

that Maggie, being alone and vulnerable, cannot. Thus Keane portrays, through Maggie certain gender anxieties regarding position within society, particularly those of a lone woman and her ability to survive in an insular, male-dominated world. By doing so Keane is also raising issues what becomes of woman in a traditional patriarchal world when she no longer occupies the position of wife or mother, an issue also seen to come to a grim conclusion in his treatment of Mame Fadden explored earlier.

Following on from this, having previously discussed Maimie's position as subordinate wife and protective mother, and addressed Maggie's position as being neither a wife nor a mother, focus will now turn to other representations of the traditional female role of wife as presented in the work. To begin with, the only remaining female character represented on stage will be examined, the wife of Dandy McCabe. Dandy and his wife, the anonymous Mrs McCabe, form something of a comedic foil to McCabe's dark request of an alibi in second scene of the second act of the play. Mrs McCabe is only afforded one line of dialogue in the scene, asking her husband for 'a tint of peppermint' to drink (Keane, 1966, p. 41), but she fills the scene with uproarious laughter at Dandy's bestowing of comic compliments upon her. Dandy begins by referring to her beauty, stating publicly that 'she could be married to the Aly Khan if she liked' (Keane, 1966, p. 42). He continues by comically informing all in the bar that he has brought her into the village to buy an aeroplane for her (Keane, 1966, p. 42), and a comic veil is drawn over the real reason for their presence in the bar. Dandy then goes on to present a comic blazon of Mrs McCabe in a form of mock auction, portraying her as having 'two medals for making toast and four for making pancakes [...] a gold cup for drinking sour milk and a certificate for snoring' (Keane, 1966, p. 43). Throughout this speech, Mrs McCabe is laughing uncontrollably at the antics of

her husband and there is a genuine sense of love and affection between them. This is in stark contrast to the relationship between Maimie and Mick as outlined previously, and exhibits the possibility of harmonious male and female union.

It may be argued that Mrs McCabe occupies a subordinated space, with her husband voicing her consent to the Bull McCabe's plan, perhaps in an effort to protect her from interacting with his heinous cousin. However, the joy expressed by her throughout the scene may indicate her serene acceptance of the situation, or perhaps a genuine happiness in a loving equal relationship. The mood of the scene contrasts the sheer expression of pure joy as seen in Dandy's lyrical frolicking and his wife's uncontrollable mirth, against a dark and inevitable sense of foreboding that accompanies the Bull McCabe's arrival. Through this, it may be argued that Keane is hinting at the possibility of a revised, more equal form of gender relations, and the impossibility of their survival in a world in denial of inevitable change as symbolized by Carraigthomond.

There is a similar subversion of traditional patriarchal gender relations in Keane's representation of the relationship between the outsider, William Dee, and his absent wife. In an inversion of the marital relations displayed elsewhere in Carraigthomond, Dee is acting on his wife's behalf, whose nerves haven't been well following their last baby and 'she wants to come back to Ireland' (Keane, 1966, p. 31). Dee's concern for his wife and his working for her benefit is outlined by his remark to Mick that: 'All I know is that my wife isn't well. If I don't get her back here quick, she'll crack up' (Keane, 1966, p. 32). Dee may be seen to be operating in a selfless manner. His altruism is further outlined by his own admission that despite his preference to remain in England; 'If I had my way, that's where I'd want to live'

(Keane, 1966, p. 29), he is willing to relocate on account of his wife. Thus, a further possible re-invention of marital relations is presented on stage, a vision of equality at odds with Mick's treatment of Maimie in the text. Such divergence from the social norms of Carraigthomond suffers a similar fate to that of Dandy and Mrs McCabe's short-lived happiness, and is not afforded the space to exist in Carraigthomond, and Dee, acting on his wife's behalf is murdered along with the challenge to traditional patriarchal marital values that he represents through his progressive approach to marriage. Once again Keane here is highlighting the injustices of the status quo, while also presenting differing interpretations of matrimonial expectations on stage, thereby encouraging debate on traditional gender roles, both within marriage and in society itself amongst his audiences.

Dee's relationship with his absent wife may be directly contrasted to that of the Bull McCabe and his unnamed wife. In the text, McCabe's wife is never named whereas Dee's wife, though absent, is named as a Connolly from 'a place called Tubber' (Keane, 1966, p. 29) and even the relatively minor character of Dandy's wife is given the title of Mrs McCabe. Reference to her is only made through McCabe and his son Tadhg, and the realities of their failed marriage is revealed by McCabe following questioning by his son as they lay in wait to attack Dee. As discussed in a previous chapter it is 'Eighteen years since' McCabe 'slept with her or spoke to her' (Keane, 1966, p. 48) due to his physical abuse of her, his having 'walloped her more than I meant' for her permitting a tinker's pony to graze on his land (Keane, 1966, p. 49). Thus, McCabe's relationship with his wife bears far more similarity to that of Mick's relationship with Maimie, rather than having any semblance to the far more progressive attitude of Dee in relation to his marriage. McCabe's wife offers resistance against her

treatment by McCabe, mirroring Maimie and Maggie Polpin's use of their bodies as form of protest, however, instead of exhibiting promiscuous tendencies as Maimie does; she denies McCabe any contact, physical or otherwise. There are reflections of Maggie Polpin's life before the death of her husband in McCabe's wife's situation, being trapped in a loveless marriage and attempting to exercise authority through her sexuality, rebelling against her position through her only form of agency while reluctantly accepting her subordinate position within the patriarchal realm.

Thus, marriage and the role of wife are presented in multiple differing forms within the text. Ultimately, all must subscribe to the Bull McCabe's interpretation of the world, a patriarchal world where women are continually referred to in animalistic terms, or else meet the consequences, as the character of Dee does. As seen in the analysis of the character of Maimie and her ambivalence, in Maggie Butler's exteriority, and in the dominant social model remaining in Carraighthomond at the end of the play, gender, traditional stereotypical gender roles, and anxieties of gender are all explored through the text. Female characters such as Maimie, Maggie Butler and the Bull McCabe's wife find themselves in a position of uncertainty regarding their position within society. These characters offer resistance against their imposed subordination, but ultimately submit to it in order to survive within their relative social contexts, and universal issues related to the timeless conflict between the performance of gender, its social expectations, and its private realities, are raised. Characters such as Dandy's wife, the anonymously titled Mrs McCabe, and Dee's absent wife present a more progressive interpretation of gender roles based on equality. It is in the spaces between these two sets of female characters that female gender roles are examined in the piece, and perhaps may be where resonance in terms of gender may be located.

5.4 – Conclusion.

In conclusion, this chapter has attempted to offer an insight into Keane's representation of femininity in his work, through the criteria of traditional gender stereotype, gender performance, and societal constructions and expectations of gender. Through an exploration of Keane's treatment of the gendered female, and an illustration of his subversion of traditional constructs of gendered identity, further possible resonant elements in the work have been suggested. To begin with some of Keane's major female characters outside of *The Field* were analysed in order to establish a literary context through which his female characters of *The Field* may be viewed.

Firstly, the characters of Mena and the eponymous Sive were looked at in terms of their relative adherence, or lack of, to traditional gender norms. In Sive's performance of her interpretation of gender she challenges traditional gender stereotyping and defies societal gendered expectation through her intellect and her desire to be educated as opposed to being married off as per tradition. Mena, on the other hand, subscribes to traditional gender roles and imposes them on the young Sive. However, Mena was also seen to be a product of her gendered environment, and her actions merely a reflection of her imprisonment within the confines of traditional gender roles. Similarly, the character of Maggie Polpin was also shown to be an individual previously imprisoned by her gender, and her actions on the death of her husband, and her subsequent liberation from a pre-defined social role, challenge traditional concepts regarding femininity and its performance. There is also an ambivalence at the core of her character as, similarly to Mena Glavin, she both rejects and subscribes to traditional gender related societal expectations. The character of Mame in *The Change in Mame Fadden*, presents us with an alternative viewpoint. She is a character representative of

the perils of simplistic gender identification and the performance of one's gender in strict adherence with traditional societal expectations of that gender. Ultimately, Mame is unable to reconcile her current existence with her skewed sense of gendered identity, and tragically commits the ultimate rejection of the world and her place in it. Through the character of Mame, Keane is again challenging traditional concepts of gender, and opening a discourse on the adherence to simplistic traditional gender roles within society at large.

The character of Maimie in *The Field* was then explored in terms of her position within Carraigthomond. Like Maggie Polpin, Maimie may be seen as being somewhat imprisoned by her gender, suffering domestic violence at the hands of her husband, and enslaved to annual pregnancies by the Church's myopic views on contraception and the sanctity of family life. She also occupies a somewhat ambivalent space regarding her performance of traditional gender roles, resisting it through her suggested promiscuity and her non-adherence to McCabe's demands, but also submitting to it in order to survive. Therefore, Maimie's performance of her socially expected gender role is both subversive, in her voicing a challenge to the status quo in Carraigthomond, and submissive, in an act of both survival and protection of her children, at the same time. Through Maimie, and the representation of femininity by her character, Keane, as seen in the three plays mentioned earlier, opens a discourse on traditional gender roles and the inequalities inherent to them. Maimie's rebellion against, and ultimate submission to, traditional patriarchal societal expectations is mirrored in the character of Maggie Butler. Maggie is the title-holder to the piece of land at the heart of the play and therefore should, in an equal society, occupy a position of some authority. However, she is denied any such position by the dominant patriarchs

of Carraigthomond, and must accept her position of subordination to survive there. Maggie also challenges the traditional stereotype of femininity, being neither a wife, nor a mother, and through her Keane may be opening an enquiry into the fate of the elderly in a society such as Carraigthomond when traditional gender roles, such as wife or mother, no longer apply. The traditional feminine role of wife was then examined within the text, and two opposing treatments of that role revealed. Through such juxtaposition Keane is once more challenging traditional stereotypically patriarchal marital roles, and offering a glimpse of a harmonious future that may be possible if traditional gender roles, and the ideologies supporting them, are destabilized.

Through the analysis of Keane's female characters, his subversion of socially constructed gender roles through them is apparent throughout. Keane, in his female characters, presents on stage the dramatization of female gender anxieties that occur when the private reality of experience refutes the ideologically loaded public ideal. Through characters such as Sive, Mena Glavin, Maggie Polpin, Mame Fadden, Maimie, and Maggie Butler, Keane offers a commentary on the universal problematic of personal gender identification set against social expectations of gender. It is in this discourse on the nature and essence of gender by Keane, a discourse that is still relevant and continuing in the present-day, that further possible resonant elements of his work may be found.

One aspect of Keane's representation of femininity that would be worthy of further investigation is the gendering of the field at the centre of the play as feminine. It could be argued that it is the field itself that is representative of femininity within the text, however it is only feminine in the eyes of the male characters. Maggie Butler's field becomes a form of love-object for McCabe, assuming the role of a repository for

his displaced sexual frustration, as outlined in chapter three of this dissertation, but also becomes a symbol of progeny for him, a female offspring that he must nurture and protect from the masculine threat of Dee and the changed world that he represents. Through an analysis of this, which would draw on postcolonial theory in terms of the gendering of space as feminine, thereby justifying occupation and sterilizing any opposition to that occupation, further resonant elements of the play may be suggested in terms of gender-identification and the rekindling of a collective unconscious colonial past, something that was touched upon in chapter four of this dissertation. However, due to constraints on length, this is a subject that was only addressed briefly in this dissertation but it is topic that may form part of a future research project.

Having examined Keane's representations of femininity, and identified his subversive nature in relation to social constructions of gender, the same approach will now be used in analysing representations of masculinity in his work, which will prove equally as challenging and subversive.

Chapter Six: Representations of Gender, Part Two –

Masculinity.

6.1 – Introduction.

Similar to the beginning of the last chapter, this one will begin by briefly addressing traditional male gender-roles, and the changes that they have been subject to in recent times. The traditional role of the male in society has undergone massive transformation since the time of writing of *The Field*. As has been argued in chapter two, *The Field* documents a moment of massive change within rural Ireland, as national focus shifted from a somewhat insular agricultural society to a more progressive, outward looking, industry driven one. Thus, rural male identity of the 1960s, one that was rooted in agriculture and the traditional patriarchal order, was challenged and asked to adapt to a newer, more metropolitan form of masculinity. This conflict may be seen on stage in the space occupied between the opposing versions of masculinity as represented by the characters of the Bull McCabe and his rival William Dee, and is something that will be addressed later in this chapter.

Masculinity in the present day has also been a source of conflict and anxiety, particularly in the aftermath of the Celtic Tiger and the massive decline of the construction industry. Increasingly the male, traditionally the breadwinner, having become unemployed due to economic downturn, found himself in a position of domesticity, looking after the children, as the female of the household became the source of income. This is a point supported by a two recent ESRI reports, published in tandem on the 14th May 2014, titled: ‘Gender and the Quality of Work: From Boom to Recession and Winners and Losers?’ and ‘The Equality Impact of the Great Recession

in Ireland' respectively. Both reports point to men being harder hit by unemployment than women. The first report states 'Men's participation rates [in employment] fell more steeply [than women's] bringing the gender gap in participation to an all-time low of 14 percentage points in 2012. This compares with a gap of 21 percentage points in 2003 and a gap of 40 percentage points in 1990' (The Economic and Social Research Institute, 2014). The second report echoes these findings, stating: 'men were harder hit by unemployment than women' and 'Employment rates fell more for men than women, so the employment gap between men and women narrowed between 2007 and 2012, even after accounting for education and other differences' (The Economic and Social Research Institute, 2014). Thus, it may be argued that traditional gender roles were somewhat reversed in the years following the economic downturn. The effect of such a reversal could be said to undermine a male's sense of masculinity, as measured by his ability to provide for his family. Interestingly, as the number of males over the age of twenty five on the live register increased so did the suicide rates of that particular demographic, a fact documented in a research report conducted and published by the Institute of Public Health, which states that the rates of male suicide show:

a sharp increase in suicide rates for over 25s towards the end of 2009: at the same time as numbers of men in this age group joining the live register increased. Suicide was three times more common amongst men (17 per 100,000 population over 14 years of age) than women (5 per 100,000 population over 14 years of age) (The Institute of Public Health in Ireland, 2011, p. 8).

The report concludes that 'Strong causal links exist between unemployment, recession and deteriorating economic circumstances and the health and wellbeing of men.' and that 'evidence, from Ireland and internationally, points to the mental health of men being most adversely affected in these circumstances' (The Institute of Public Health in Ireland, 2011, p. 15). Thus, one may surmise that the change in traditional gender roles

in post-Celtic Tiger Ireland has necessitated their re-examination and re-definition, and has resulted in an underlying masculine anxiety as exemplified in the research above.

When one couples the statistics presented above with current literature referring to the ‘crisis in masculinity’ a much broader image of masculine anxiety comes into focus. Tony Jefferson describes Susan Faludi’s work *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the Modern Man* as ‘a feminist-inspired investigation into the widely shared notion of a contemporary “crisis of masculinity”’ (Jefferson, 2002, p. 64). Tony Jefferson goes on to quote Faludi and offers a brief summary of her argument:

In essence, she conceptualizes the crisis as a ‘betrayal’ characterized by the replacement of a culture of useful production with an ‘ornamental culture... [C]onstructed around celebrity and image, glamour and entertainment, marketing and consumerism’, a culture in which there are ‘almost no functional public roles’ and hence no ‘model of masculinity’ showing ‘men how to be part of a larger social system’. In such a culture, men are effectively rudderless: ‘In an age of celebrity, the father has no body of knowledge or authority to transmit to the son. Each son must father his own image, create his own Adam (Jefferson, 2002, p. 64).

Thus, modern man appears lost, undefined, and without any ‘model of masculinity’ to aid in his own self-definition. The reversal of gender roles described earlier, and the emasculation of the Irish male as a result of unemployment, along with this ‘crisis in masculinity’ all point towards a present day masculine anxiety, an anxiety perhaps even stronger today than in the 1950s- 1960s of *The Field*. Turning attention back to *The Field*, it may be posited that it is this ‘replacement of a culture of useful production’ that McCabe is rallying against in an attempt to preserve his own ‘model of masculinity’, and further attention to McCabe’s masculinity, and to the reflection of masculine anxiety within the play, will be paid in a later section of this chapter.

This chapter will begin by addressing Keane’s representations of masculinity within *The Man from Clare* and *The Year of the Hiker*, and will examine the characters of Padraic, Morisheen, and Daigan in *The Man from Clare* and the Hiker Lacey in *The*

Year of the Hiker. Such analysis will illustrate the presence of insecurity in Keane's men, prophetically signifying gender related anxieties and a form of masculinity in crisis, and will provide a literary context through which the role of the male in *The Field* may be scrutinized

Attention will then be paid to the roles played by the male characters in *The Field* and representations of masculinity contained within the play. The Bull McCabe, a character who on the surface appears to embody a primordial hypermasculinity¹⁴, will be examined in the context of gender performance, tradition and social expectation, and the underlying masculine anxieties at the heart of his projected hypermasculine self will be explored. The character of William Dee will then be looked at, as he appears to represent a new form of masculinity, one at odds with the insular patriarchy of Carraigthomond, and is the antithesis of McCabe's interpretation of masculine performance. Finally the character of Leamy, who is caught in the middle of two opposing interpretations of masculinity, will be analysed in terms of his traditional masculinity, or lack thereof, and possible changes in terms of masculine gender identification represented by him will be examined. Such analysis as outlined above will unveil further possible resonant factors within the play for both the audiences of the late 1960s, as masculine identity was challenged by the nation's change from a traditional agricultural society to a more progressive industrial one, and those of the present day, as masculinity has become a site of reinvention and, at times, anxiety.

¹⁴ Throughout this work the term is used as it is defined in the realm of social sciences: 'The term *hypermasculinity* is believed to have been established by Ashis Nandy in her writings on colonialism and gender in the 1980s. The term is widely used in the social sciences and has evolved in meaning, but no standard definition exists. At its core, hypermasculinity is an adoption of extreme machismo in males. According to Matt Zaitchik and Donald Mosher, it is an exaggerated form of masculinity, virility, and physicality, as well as a tendency to ward disrespecting women. Furthermore, any embrace and exhibition of emotions is feminized as inherently weak.' (Taylor Greene and Gabbidon, 2009, p. 366).

6.2 – Keane’s Men: Hypermasculine Performance and its Subversion.

Having looked at Keane’s female characters, both in *The Field* and in some of his other works in the previous chapter, some common tropes present in his treatment of women in his plays were identified, and their presence in *The Field* commented upon. The same approach will now be taken towards his representations of masculinity. Firstly, Keane’s representations of masculinity in some of his works other than *The Field* will be examined in order to establish a context that will aid in interpretation of his treatment of masculinity in *The Field*. Keane’s dramatization of gender anxieties in relation to his male characters will be explored, particularly, as with the analysis of his female characters in the preceding chapter, in terms of gender performance, gender stereotype and the social expectations of gender. The two plays to be examined, *The Man from Clare* and *The Year of the Hiker*, have already been briefly generally analysed in chapter one of this dissertation, therefore plot summary is not deemed necessary in this instance, and the reader is directed back to that chapter for further detail. To begin with *The Man from Clare*, first performed at Fr. Matthew Hall, Cork in 1962, will be addressed in these terms.

Masculinity and performance are linked in a very literal manner in *The Man from Clare*, specifically through the medium of Gaelic football. The nature of masculinity, its definition on both personal and societal terms, and fading masculine agency in its socially constructed form, are all addressed in the play. Initially, the protagonist Padraic is presented as a representation of stereotypical, alpha male masculinity. He is captain of the football team, ‘the best man in Clare’, ‘afraid of nothin’’, who ‘no one will challenge’ (Keane, 1962, p. 15), and is seen counselling a nervous younger teammate who has come to him for advice before the game. The

unwritten rules of masculinity, as defined socially, punctuate the text, beginning with Padraic's statement to Jim that 'If 'tis a fair fight, you'll be on your own, but if a man is outnumbered or kicked when he's down, I'll be there ... fair enough?' (Keane, 1962, p. 16). The masculinity represented by the footballers is also a form of hypermasculinity as illustrated in the trainer, Daigan's, anxiety about the nervous Jim and how he hates 'fellows that have to work up their courage' (Keane, 1962, p. 18). This exaggerated form of masculinity, and its admiration in society, is encapsulated in an exchange between Morisheen and Daigan. Morisheen describes 'another fella from Lisdoonvarna' who 'attacked the Sergeant of the Guards in Carrigaholt one night an' broke two plate-glass windows before they rounded him up' (Keane, 1962, p. 28). Daigan responds by naming the individual and speaking of him in reverential terms: 'Casey! Thady Casey! A great man to field a greasy ball' (Keane, 1962, p. 28), thereby illustrating social expectations of masculinity and its performance in the world inhabited by Morisheen and Daigan.¹⁵

However, on a literal level through his ageing physicality on the football pitch, Padraic is unable to conform to social masculine expectations. Furthermore, on a symbolic level, through his lack of desire to retaliate against an attack on his position as dominant male by the youthful Jim, Padraic also rejects the hypermasculine social norm within which he has been embedded. Padraic's rejection of the stereotypical gender role expected of him, through refusing to fight his challenger, is highlighted to him by his trainer, and uncle, Daigan; 'I never thought I'd live to see the day Padraic O' Dea was

¹⁵ The concept of exaggerated physical masculinity is further expanded upon in the Ben Barnes 1992 revision of the text through Morisheen's description of the last footballer to stay in the house, 'the mighty Elbows Magennis', who, despite 'having an elbow like a jackhammer', and blackening 'more eyes and more noses than Jack Johnson', is still held in high esteem and considered to be 'A nice fellow' (Keane, 1992, p. 19).

cowarded. I didn't think there was a man in the Globe could walk up to you an' call you yellow' (Keane, 1962, p. 55). Ultimately, Padraic acknowledges the social context within which he is situated, and the expectations contained therein, and submits to the dominant order. He tells Daigan that he will fight Jim 'Because I want room for my boat when I pull into the pier at Cuas [...] otherwise I'd be pushed out an' that'd be the end o' me' (Keane, 1962, p. 58). Thus, similarly to Maimie and Maggie in *The Field*, Padraic must accede to traditional gender roles in order to survive, and fights the young challenger as per the dominant social code. Padraic is badly beaten by Jim, and is therefore removed from his position as head of the masculine tribe, an act described by Morisheen as 'crowning a new king' (Keane, 1962, p. 69). Following his beating, Padraic suffers a crisis of identity, as he is no longer defined by his dominant masculinity. He takes to the water, dipping his head in it until he 'nearly suffocated' (Keane, 1962, p. 71), before stripping and walking into the water, saying to himself 'I can walk across now to Clare [...] and before I'm gone a hundred feet my worries in this world will be over' (Keane, 1962, p. 72). Thus, having lost his gendered social identity through his failing socially constructed sense of masculinity, Padraic considers suicide as his only means of release from the jailhouse of the gendered stereotype. However, Padraic then realises that he is now liberated from the role of expected masculine performance, and returns to the Brick household to ask Nellie to marry him. In this exchange Padraic's words are of emotion, 'the real feelings of his heart' (Keane, 1962, p. 74), thereby illustrating further his removal from the impassive realm of hypermasculinity where 'any embrace and exhibition of emotions is feminized as inherently weak.' (Taylor Greene and Gabbidon, 2009, p. 366).

The characters of Daigan and Morisheen are also of interest in terms of

masculine representation. Both of them are older men; therefore they have already suffered the ordeal met by Padraic, that is, the ageing process and the fading of the hypermasculinity of youth. However, this lost masculine agency is displaced in both of their cases. In Daigan's case it is displaced into his living vicariously through Padraic, and in Morisheen's, his desire to re-marry and father a son is an assertion of masculine intent. Daigan's failed masculinity, and his subsequent displacement of it onto Padraic is addressed directly by Morisheen; 'You want him to be all the things you never were. You failed at football yourself and you tried to turn Padraic into the greatest ball player of all time' (Keane, 1962, p. 61). Daigan, unlike Padraic, still subscribes to the hypermasculine world of Cuas. He, somewhat selfishly, urges Padraic to fight Jim and submit to the dominant model of masculinity, so 'I'll [Daigan] be able to keep my head high when I go back to Cuas' (Keane, 1962, p. 56). Thus, the performance, and social expectations of masculinity remain dominant forces for Daigan. In contrast to Daigan, who exists in a womanless realm, never even having a woman as a housekeeper in the house (Keane, 1962, p. 29), Morisheen shares his home with his daughter Nellie, and on occasion, Bríd. Morisheen is a very likeable, humorous character, but he also displaces his grief at a failing masculine agency, seeking to father a son and further his masculine legacy. He tells Padraic 'I've a strong notion [...] that I'd like to have a son ... I never had a son ... two daughters ... Nellie's an angel, but 'tis a son I'd like to have' (Keane, 1962, p. 38). Thus, masculine anxieties regarding legacy are further represented in the text. Daigan's anxiety over his failed legacy is displaced onto his nephew through his living vicariously through him. Morisheen's anxiety over not having a male heir to inherit his 'roguery an' humour' (Keane, 1962, p. 38), which may be seen as an assertion of masculinity in the face of old age, is also a direct reference to masculine

legacy. Padraic also suffers from an anxiety regarding the legacy of his masculine reputation. Interestingly, Padraic is the only one of the three who overcomes this masculine anxiety, and he does so through his challenging and his rejection of socially engineered constructs of masculinity, thereby it may be argued that the text offers a critique and a subversion of traditional concepts of masculine identity.

Thus, from a reading of *The Man from Clare*, and a brief analysis of the characters of Padraic, Morisheen, and Daigan, Keane's representations of masculinity and his dramatizations of masculine anxiety have been outlined. Socially constructed traditional masculine stereotypes are both presented and subverted in the work, and the anxieties of masculine performance create much of the drama of the piece. The interrogation of masculinity by the work warrants much consideration, particularly in terms of the varying concepts, interpretations, and representations of masculinity challenged by it; thereby the work may resonate in terms of traditional male gender roles, and the anxieties contained therein. This discourse on the nature and definition of masculinity is also relevant to the next work that will be briefly looked at, *The Year of the Hiker*.

The Year of the Hiker, first performed at Father Matthew Hall, Cork in 1963, centres on the Lacey family and the return of the Hiker Lacey, man of the house, after an unexplained twenty-year absence. The character of the Hiker may be seen as an interrogation of the essence of man and masculinity itself. Having been emasculated within his own home by the lingering presence of his wife's sister Freda, the Hiker reclaims his sense of self and takes to the road unannounced. The Hiker describes his sense of emasculation at the hands of Freda through his inability to 'make her [Kate] into a woman with you around' (Keane, 1963, p. 31). He continues by asserting that

‘there was no peace or fulfilment’ in their lovemaking (Keane, 1963, p. 31) ‘with a woman who thought loving was some kind of sin and you [...] with your Novenas and Rosaries’ (Keane, 1963, p. 33). Thus, the sexual essence of the Hiker’s masculinity is challenged through the lingering presence of his overly religious sister-in-law resulting in his living within an over-feminized domestic space.

Unable to continue living in a feminized, emasculating space, the Hiker left the household without a word to anyone, in what may be perceived as an attempt to reclaim some form of masculine agency. On the road, the Hiker met ‘a few fellows like myself’ with whom he would discuss ‘Where we’d find a day’s work; where was good campin’ places or people that wouldn’t turn a hungry man way from the door’ (Keane, 1963, p. 50). The realm of emotion is notably absent from the Hiker’s interactions with his fellow travelling men; therefore it may be argued that on his travels the Hiker entered into a form of hypermasculinity, similar to that seen in the footballers from Cuas in *The Man from Clare*. This point is reinforced by the Hiker’s insistence that on his travels he ‘never bothered with women’ (Keane, 1963, p. 49), thereby existing on a solely masculine plane. The Hiker continues by justifying his actions as merely a form of masculine essence within him and other men. He argues:

Never a day dawned that I didn’t feel the pull of the road. [...] Men will be doing what I did always [...] There’s men like me that get the urge for wandering and there’s no power in earth or heaven that will pull us back once the callin’ cries come after us and the whisperin’ from beyond the fields and the hills and the rivers [...] I cursed this awful weakness that drove me away from all I ever loved (Keane, 1963, p. 43).

Despite expressing his regret at what happened, through this analogy the Hiker is channelling a primordial sense of masculinity, equating his actions with the natural world, and diminishing his own sense of personal responsibility for them.

It is only after the Hiker has to confront his own mortality that he re-examines

his own masculinity, defers from his hypermasculine position, swallows his masculine pride, and returns home to die. The Hiker attempts to explain the reasons behind his actions in an effort to reconcile his differences with his wife. He remonstrates with Freda 'You wouldn't let our marriage alone [...] this goddamned house was too much for me [...] I'd be ashamed to tell my friends that there were two women in my house who wouldn't play their parts' (Keane, 1963, pp. 79-80). Having abandoned his hypermasculine position, emotion now comes to the surface for the Hiker and he expresses his biggest regret, his 'most awful crime', that of deserting his son Joe, killing 'his wondering innocence when he needed me the most' (Keane, 1963, p. 80). Thus, through the character of the Hiker, Keane offers an exploration of masculinity in multiple forms. Firstly, a masculinity under threat of emasculation is presented in the Hiker's location in a feminized space. Secondly, a form of hypermasculinity born of gender insecurity is presented in the Hiker's going missing and in his stubbornness in not returning to his wife and children. Finally, there is a synthesis of both ends of the masculine spectrum, as the Hiker examines his masculinity in the face of mortality, discards his adopted position of hypermasculinity and attempts to re-occupy the feminized space he had abandoned. Therefore, the definition of masculinity itself is under scrutiny in the work through the Hiker's representation of multiple interpretations of its essence. Ultimately, the Hiker makes his peace with the world having rejected both absolute ends of the masculine spectrum, suggesting that simplistic, polarizing definitions of gender serve only to further isolation, not only from the opposite gender, but also from the self.

Further significant issues raised within the play in terms of the representation of masculinity are the challenges presented to the traditional masculine roles of husband

and father, and the rejection of gendered social expectations of those roles, through the Hiker's abandoning his wife and his children. The roles played by the sons, Simey and Joe, in the play, and their performance of masculinity is also of note, as is their similarity, or lack thereof, to their father. Joe, in the absence of his father, has assumed the traditional masculine role of provider vacated by the Hiker. He has ensured that the farm is in 'good order and the best of stock', and worked hard on the farm instead of being 'out enjoying yourself like other young men' as he should be according to Freda (Keane, 1963, p. 23). Thus, it may be argued that Joe represents an opposing interpretation and performance of masculinity to that of the absconding Hiker. Joe admits his adoration of his father when he was a young child, with the Hiker being 'God and man rolled into one' back then (Keane, 1963, p. 85). The Hiker's leaving forced Joe, at a young age, to re-evaluate his masculine identification, as the father he had adored abandoned him. He tells his father 'I became a sober old man at seven years of age. I grew up overnight. [...] You took the heart out of me altogether [...] the hatred built up inside of me' (Keane, 1963, pp. 85-86), thus revealing both his heartbreak at being abandoned by his idol, and his maturing into the form of masculinity his father could not be, perhaps as much through defiance as responsibility.

Simey, on the other hand, is said to resemble his father. In the first scene of the play, following Simey's attempt to charm an extra pound from his mother on his sister's wedding day, Freda declares 'There's a lot of his father in that fellow' (Keane, 1963, p. 12). This is mirrored in the final scene of the play in a piece of dialogue between Joe and the Hiker. Joe advises the Hiker that he 'wouldn't want to take much notice of Simey. He's selfish. He only thinks about Simey' (Keane, 1963, p. 87). Therefore, as the Hiker's abandonment of his family may be seen as a fundamentally egocentric act,

Simey and the Hiker are further linked through selfishness. However, at the end of the play it is Joe that reconciles his differences with his father, not Simey, and is perhaps suggestive of the necessity of tolerance when dealing with multiple interpretations and performances of masculinity, particularly when such performances reject traditional socially expected masculine roles.

The role of masculine legacy is another filter through which one could view the work, as the play is bookmarked with reference to the Hiker's legacy within a world populated by men who confer legendary status on him, and speak with high regard of his passing, using his travels as a marker of time. Thus, a socially constructed myth of masculinity is presented in the realm of men who appropriate the figure of the Hiker as an immutable presence in masculine consciousness. However, this myth of masculinity is in stark contrast with lived reality as seen in the Lacey household, with its broken children and heartbroken wife. Through this juxtaposition Keane is once again challenging and subverting traditional concepts of gender, and encouraging the re-examination of such constructs. These issues of masculine representation in *The Year of the Hiker* have been briefly addressed here, and as stated in the previous chapter, further examination of Keane's treatment of gender would form a worthy project, and may well do so in the future.

In conclusion, through an analysis of the characters of Padraic, Daigan, and Morisheen in *The Man from Clare*, and through an examination of the Hiker Lacey in *The Year of the Hiker*, some examples of Keane's representation of masculinity have been analysed. Through this analysis Keane's challenging of traditional stereotypical concepts of masculinity has been highlighted, and his dramatization of the inherent complexities of masculinity scrutinized. Issues of masculine agency raised in the works

have been viewed through the contexts of gender performance, gender stereotype, and the social construction and expectations of gender, in an effort to demonstrate Keane's ability to examine humanity and its constricting classifications. Having established some common areas worthy of inspection in terms of masculinity in Keane's work, attention will now turn to Keane's representations of masculinity as seen in *The Field*.

6.3 – Differing Performances and Interpretations of Masculinity in *The Field*.

Having examined representations of masculinity in two of Keane's male titled plays, *The Man from Clare* and *The Year of the Hiker*, and explored such representations in terms of gender performance, gender stereotype, and gender related social expectations, attention will now turn to some of the male characters in *The Field*. Differing interpretations of masculinity will be examined through their representation in the character of the Bull McCabe at one end of the masculine spectrum, and William Dee at the other. The character of Leamy will then be discussed as he occupies a somewhat ambivalent space between the two representations of masculinity and, as he is a child, may offer some commentary on the fate of masculinity as it is defined in Carraigthomond. Through this analysis, Keane's exploration of the gendered male in terms of performance, stereotype and social expectation will be outlined, and his portrayal of masculine anxiety addressed. The relevance of Keane's representation of the complexities of masculinity to both the audience of the late 1960's, a time when society and by extension, masculinity itself, had to undergo a form of necessary re-invention, and to that of the present day, where a certain nostalgia and gender anxiety may be seen to be in operation, will then be discussed following the analysis outlined above. To begin with, the iconic character of the Bull McCabe will be examined in this context.

From the outset of the play McCabe is positioned in the space of the dominant male of Carraigthomond. In only his second line of dialogue he asserts his superiority by asking the Bird O' Donnell 'Who gave you the right to call me Bull, you pratey-snappin' son-of-a-bitch' (Keane, 1966, p. 14). His moniker of 'Bull' is also of interest in that it channels the ultra masculine characteristics of strength, potency, aggression, and ferocity, while also suggesting his Machiavellian nature and his ability to intimidate and bully those that present any challenge to his position. His embrace of a primordial, animalistic masculinity, his traditional patriarchal values, and his position in the environment of Carraigthomond are illustrated in his comic assertion that, having asked Maimie to get her husband, 'There's nothing like a bull to move a heifer, hah!' (Keane, 1966, p. 17). McCabe's perpetuation of traditional patriarchal values may also be seen in his constant referral to women in animalistic terms, and his instilling of those same values in his son Tadhg, discussing a potential wife for him in terms of her ability to handle pigs and calves, her being 'a bit red in the legs', and the fact that her being 'pampered and headstrong' will be 'knocked out of her' (Keane, 1966, p. 50). Thus, McCabe may be seen to be representing an elemental, primordial, and baser form of the hypermasculinity seen in *The Man from Clare*. For the majority of the play McCabe exists in a dominant, emotionless position, exhibiting extreme machismo and belittling women. Any challenge to his position as alpha male is met with aggression both psychological, as seen in his threats to Maimie and Maggie Butler outlined in the previous chapter, and physical, as seen in the fate of William Dee. His interpretation and performance of masculinity appears to be an archaic form of masculinity, defined by dominance and realised through aggression. Susan Faludi, writing of perceptions of masculinity in nineteenth century America, may just as easily have been describing the

character of the Bull McCabe:

To be a man increasingly meant being ever on the rise, and the only way to know for sure you were rising was to claim, control, and crush everyone and everything in your way. “American manhood became less and less about an inner sense of self, and more about a possession that needed to be acquired,” Michael Kimmel has observed in *Manhood in America* (Faludi, 2000, p. 11).

McCabe’s performance of masculinity, on a superficial level, appears to conform to this primal aggressivity, attempting to control and crush all that stand in his way of assuming ownership of that ‘possession that needed to be acquired’, in his case, Maggie Butler’s field. Thus, McCabe may be seen to be operating in the role of the stereotypical ultra masculine alpha male, and conforming to social expectations of that traditional interpretation of masculinity through his words and his actions. McCabe’s position in society is illustrated by the Bird’s first line to Mick, following Maggie Butler’s leaving the bar, having instructed Mick in the sale. He tells Mick simply ‘You’ve a nice tricky job facing you now’ (Keane, 1966, p. 12), suggesting both resistance from McCabe to the sale of the land, and the difficulty in Mick representing Maggie’s selling of the land to the highest bidder to McCabe, an act that challenges McCabe’s authoritative position within the community. The social expectations of McCabe’s form of elemental masculinity are exemplified by the Sergeant in a darkly prophetic line at the end of Act One: ‘There’s nothing in your heads but pigs and cows and pitiful patches of land. You laugh when you hear that an old jackass was beaten to death, but a man might be beaten to death here for all you’d give a damn’ (Keane, 1966, p. 25). Social expectations of McCabe are further illustrated by Mick as he attempts to warn William Dee away from the auction, telling him ‘there’s a boycott on outside bidders [...] There’s a boycott alright and there could be trouble ... serious trouble’ (Keane, 1966, p. 32). By his use the term ‘boycott’ Mick is also positioning McCabe’s

desires as being representative of the entire community, a point furthered by Mick's informing Dee that, should he bid for the field, 'The village would hold it against you' (Keane, 1966, p. 32), thereby indicating McCabe's position of masculine dominance in the community, and highlighting resultant societal expectations of that position.

For the most part, McCabe, through his aggressive deeds and words, perpetuates the gender stereotype through his performance of it, however there is also the presence of an ambivalence within his character that elevates him from the position of base, primitive, aggressive masculinity. As discussed in chapter three of this dissertation McCabe may also be seen to be operating from a locus of insecurity, and his perceived hypermasculine performance merely a reflection of his own gender anxiety. Denied psychological, physical, and sexual agency at home by his wife, McCabe may be seen to be suffering from a crisis of gendered identity relating to his denied domestic masculine authority, which has become displaced onto Maggie Butler's field. On a more practical note McCabe needs that field for survival, as without it he has 'nineteen acres and no passage to water' (Keane, 1966, p. 20), thereby his means of living is intrinsically linked to the field.

There is also a sense that McCabe is acting from an anxiety that is related to his denied masculine agency at home, and that is the issue of his legacy. As discussed in chapter three, McCabe's unquestioning son Tadhg may be seen as being of somewhat limited intelligence, thus McCabe's desire for the field may be interpreted as his attempting to provide for his son, as described in McCabe's vision of the future to the Sergeant and Fr. Murphy: 'When you'll be gone, Father, to be a Canon somewhere, and the Sergeant gets a wallet of notes and is going to be a Superintendent, Tadhg's children will be milkin' cows and keepin' donkeys away from our ditches' (Keane, 1966, p. 76).

Thus, on a simplistic level, McCabe may be seen to be acting in the traditional role masculine provider. However, in his vision of the future, McCabe reduces his son to the role of continuing on the lifestyle paternally imposed upon him, thereby attempting to ensure the legacy of his interpretation of masculinity and the mode of living defined by it. McCabe reiterates this primal link between working the land and masculinity, and voices his anxiety regarding his masculine legacy in this regard at the end of the play, stating ‘if there’s no grass, there’s the end of me and mine’ (Keane, 1966, p. 76), suggesting that his form of masculinity is an inherited and static one, and one he wishes to perpetuate through his son. McCabe in this sense, is reflective of Roger Horrocks’ study of violent men who finds that frequently:

such [violent] men have deep feelings of inadequacy, impotence, and unwantedness. The violent male often secretly fears he is not a man, and sees no other way of proving he is than the method demonstrated to him by his society – violence and oppression (Horrocks, 1994, p. 31).

Thus, it may be argued that McCabe may be seen as a tragic figure, compensating for his perceived inadequacies, impotence, and unwantedness, performing the only form of masculinity known to him while simultaneously condemning his own son to the same fate. McCabe’s final line of the play, which is also the line at which the curtain falls in the original version of *The Field*, also hints at his ambivalent masculinity. Instead of remaining an emotionless, aggressive representation of hypermasculinity, the workings of conscience are alluded to when McCabe describes how the man he murdered, William Dee, will be ‘forgot by all except me!’ (Keane, 1966, p. 76).

Thus perhaps Keane is suggesting, through the representation of masculinity as seen in the Bull McCabe, that such hypermasculine performance merely serves as a mask to conceal deep-seated insecurities of the self. McCabe’s masculinity is an inherited one; therefore traditional, long-standing concepts of masculinity are

questioned by Keane's representation of them in McCabe. The ambivalence at the heart of McCabe's masculinity is that his harsh actions and deeds arise from a form of genuine concern, concern for his survival, concern for his offspring and concern regarding a changing world that is alien to him. In many ways it may be argued that McCabe's ferocity mirrors Maggie Polpin's coldness in that it too is 'a hardness of concern' (Keane, 1969, p. 81). McCabe, knowing no other form of masculine performance other than what he has learned to do in order to survive, submits to the gender stereotype and, for the most part, lives up to the social expectations of that stereotype. It is only through occasional glimpses behind McCabe's masculine mask, as seen in his conscience over Dee's murder, his lack of agency at home, his genuine affection for nature, to list a few, that the constructed nature of his masculinity, on societal and personal levels, is revealed. McCabe's performance of masculinity, on a societal level, may be seen as his being a product of his environment and the traditions of masculinity contained within it, but it is also perpetuated on a personal level in order to survive in his social context. Ultimately, as with Maggie Polpin, McCabe's actions are harsh, but Keane also illuminates the imperfect humanity from which they arise. In terms of masculinity, through McCabe, Keane may be questioning simplistic self-identification according to one's gender, and perhaps highlighting the insufficiency of gender, and traditional inherited concepts of it, to be a defining element of one's character. Hypermasculinity is represented through the character of McCabe, but the underlying insecurities and anxieties that helped to create it are also given attention. Therefore through Keane's further challenging traditional gender roles, gender stereotypes, and gender performance, as exemplified in his representation of McCabe, Keane's subversion of simplistic definition in terms of gender, on both personal and

societal levels, is advanced.

Having looked at the character of the Bull McCabe, and the primordial form of hypermasculinity represented by him, attention will now briefly turn to a character that represents the very antithesis of the masculinity represented by McCabe, namely McCabe's rival in the play, William Dee. McCabe's archaic interpretation of masculinity is in stark contrast the masculinity represented by Dee. As discussed in chapter four of this dissertation, from our first introduction to Dee he is marked as an outsider, through his diction, manners, and clothing. He is representative of a modernizing world with his 'hair oil and tiepin' (Keane, 1966, p. 34), and his plans to use the field for industrial purposes as opposed to traditional agricultural ones reinforce this perception. He serves as McCabe's opposite throughout the piece and the representation of masculinity portrayed by his character is no exception to his dichotomic presence.

As seen earlier, McCabe represents a masculinity replete with aggression, tradition, domestic violence in the name of patriarchy, and emotional stoicism, whereas the masculinity represented by Dee is one of logic, rationality, legitimacy, equality between the sexes, and progress. Dee's logic, rationality, and belief in the legal process may be seen in his incredulity at the parochial workings of Carraigthomond that attempt to exclude him from bidding for the field. Dee appeals to the logic and rationality of the villagers on multiple occasions. For example, he identifies Maggie Butler as the lawful owner of the field (Keane, 1966, p. 35), asserts his right to bid at what is a public auction (Keane, 1966, p. 32), and expresses his legal right to look at the property he is bidding for (Keane, 1966, p. 38). Each time Dee is ignored by the masses as they reject his interpretation of social operation, instead subscribing to the insular ideology

portrayed by McCabe. Dee's representation of a masculinity based on equality between the sexes is apparent in the fact that he is only bidding on the field 'principally because of my [Dee's] wife' who is unwell (Keane, 1966, p. 31) and given the choice he would prefer to remain in England. Dee's treatment of Maimie is also in stark contrast to that of the patriarchal community. He rebuffs the Bird O' Donnel's quip about her being a 'regular flier' and places more import on her merely being 'a nice friendly woman' (Keane, 1966, p. 31), thereby rejecting the dominant mode of masculine thinking in the community regarding women, in a piece of dialogue entirely opposed in essence to McCabe's jibe referring to her as heifer being moved by the Bull. Dee's presence marks a departure from traditional interpretations of masculinity seen in Carraigthomond, representing a new form of masculinity unintelligible to the resident patriarchs who subsequently exclude and eradicate such a threatening form. Dee's progressive attitude in relation to the purpose of land also indicates a challenge to traditional values.

Through such positioning it could be argued that Dee may be seen as a prototype for what has now been termed the 'New Man' who Rowena Chapman describes:

He is everywhere. In the street, holding babies, pushing prams, collecting children, shopping with the progeny, panting in the ante-natal classes, shuffling sweaty-palmed in maternity rooms, grinning in the Mothercare catalogue ... The new man is a rebel and an outlaw from hard-line masculinity, from the shirt-busting antics of the Incredible Hulk to the jaw-busting antics of John Wayne. He is an about-face from that whole fraternity of the Right Stuff from Eastwood to Stallone, with their staccato utterances and their castellated emotions (quoted in Green and LeBihan, 1996, p. 259).

Dee's rebellion against the 'hard-line masculinity' represented by the ashplant-wielding McCabe, may also be seen in his rejection of violence, a central force in the ultra masculine world. Having been insulted and threatened by McCabe and his son Tadhg

on the day of the auction, Dee is then physically challenged by Tadhg who, according to the stage directions, adopts a '*Fighting pose*' and dares him to enter into a barroom brawl akin to the 'jaw busting antics of John Wayne', goading him that 'If you fancy yourself, you can have it here' (Keane, 1966, p. 35). Dee's response is cool, logical, mature, and the very antithesis of the desired reaction of the primal McCabes, telling Tadhg 'For God's sake, be your age!' (Keane, 1966, p. 35). Thus, for Dee, the primitive aggressive masculinity displayed by the McCabe's is one of immaturity and regression, particularly when consideration is given to the relatively evolved interpretation of masculinity embodied by him. Dee's rejection, and rebellion against, the 'hard-line masculinity' personified by McCabe in favour of his own progressive interpretation of it is also apparent in the fight scene that ultimately leads to his demise. When challenged by McCabe, Dee appeals to legality, logic and legitimacy. He asserts the legitimacy of his having 'as much of a right to be here' as McCabe (Keane, 1966, p. 52). He continues by quoting the law, and McCabe's transgression of it in what he is doing, stating 'I hope you realise you're breakin' the law. I'm legally entitled to look at this field' and he threatens to report McCabe to the Civic Guards (Keane, 1966, p. 53). He then appeals to logic, telling McCabe, who is swinging his ashplant; 'Hey, that's dangerous! Put away that stick or someone is going to get hurt' (Keane, 1966, p. 53). He rebuffs McCabe's 'hard-line masculinity' and appeals to rationality to diffuse the situation, telling him 'You won't goad me into assaulting you. A good night's sleep and you might see things a little clearer. I'll come back in the morning with the Civic Guard' (Keane, 1966, p. 53). Significantly it is only after Dee's outright rejection of McCabe's interpretation of masculinity, and the unwritten laws that govern it, in favour of his own progressive version based on logic, rationality, non-violence, and legality,

that the assault on Dee begins, as Tadhg ‘jumps on him from behind, hits him on back of head and knocks him to ground’ (Keane, 1966, p. 63). However, the fact that Dee is attacked from behind, and is outnumbered by his assailants, suggests the presence of a form of unmasculine cowardice in the McCabe’s actions, something that is at variance with traditional concepts of ‘hard-line masculinity’, thereby suggesting further that such simplistic definitions of gender are at odds with the realities that they purport to represent.

Thus, two interpretations of masculinity collide ideologically and physically, and Dee’s representation of a threat to the dominant mode of it in Carraighthomond is eradicated through brute force. Therefore, it may be argued that, following the murder of Dee and the community’s silence in the face of investigation into the killing, Carraighthomond remains tragically locked into traditional concepts regarding masculinity and its performance. McCabe’s final words to the dead Dee, before whispering an Act of Contrition into his ear, are words of pity, perhaps due to his own recognition of Carraighthomond’s inability to change, and his own role in perpetuating masculine stasis in the community. In a piece of dialogue that informs us more about the Bull McCabe and the world he inhabits, than any part of the now dead Dee’s character, he begs of him ‘Why couldn’t you stay away, you foolish boy? Look at the trouble you drew on yourself, you headstrong, foolish boy, with your wife and family depending on you...’ (Keane, 1966, p. 54). The implication here is that Carraighthomond, and McCabe’s socially constructed performance of masculinity, is unready for change, with such changing interpretations of masculinity being ‘foolish’, ‘headstrong’, and drawing trouble, thus creating a sense of inevitability regarding Dee’s death, and furthering the hegemonic construct of masculinity in the community.

However, the future of Carraigthomond and its traditional gender roles may be explored through the only young child presented on stage, the character of Leamy Flanagan.

Leamy, the son of the patriarchal Mick Flanagan and, the somewhat resistant to traditional stereotypical gender roles, Maimie Flanagan, occupies an ambivalent gender space throughout the play. In the opening scene of the play Leamy is to be found in a traditional masculine role, behind the bar discussing trade with, and serving drinks to, the Bird O' Donnell. This is swiftly followed by the arrival of Leamy's father, proprietor of the bar Mick, who, upon discovering that certain duties have not been performed by Leamy, wastes no time in highlighting the ambivalent nature of his son's gender role. Leamy admits that he has only cleaned out half of the store, as he 'had to look after the kids while my mother was feeding the baby' (Keane, 1966, p. 7). Mick response is one that underlines Leamy's ambivalent gender role. He tells him "'Tis too fond you are of hanging about with women and children. 'Tis a daughter you should have been, not a son' (Keane, 1966, p. 7), in a statement that is reflective of both Leamy's ambivalence and Mick's gender prejudices. Thus, from the very opening of the play, the representation of masculinity portrayed by Leamy suggests that, through his character, traditional gender roles of the present, and as he is a child, those of the future may be explored.

Leamy's interpretation of masculinity may also be seen through the identifications he makes with those around him. Leamy appears to have a very strong bond and close relationship with his mother Maimie, and seems to identify with her to a much greater extent than he does with his father Mick. This may merely be symptomatic of the patriarchal world in which he is being brought up, one where the dominant model is one of 'the father who is emotionally distant [...] and the mother

who is emotionally powerful' (Horrocks, 1994, p. 27), but may also be illustrative of Leamy's non-performance of the gender roles expected of him. Leamy exhibits his identification with his mother in a tender scene at the opening of the second scene of Act Two. The scene opens with just Maimie and Leamy together in the bar, and in the first two lines of dialogue contrasting gender identifications are played against each other. Maimie asks her son 'It's quiet, Leamy. You could have gone out with the boys' to which Leamy replies: 'I'd rather be here with you, Muddy' (Keane, 1966, p. 40), thereby illustrating Leamy's choice of location in terms of gender identification, should he have that agency.

Another example of Leamy's challenge to traditional gender roles, stereotype, and performance comes in his story about Mr Broderick and the Blezzop brothers. Leamy begins to relate this tale by asking his mother 'why are The Bull McCabe and Tadhg and my father and the Sergeant such bullies?' (Keane, 1966, p. 55), thereby rejecting the dominant position of the masculine figures of authority in the play. He continues by telling the story of how the Blezzop brothers, with the cooperation of his father, the Civic Guards and the Sergeant, almost beat a man to death. Leamy identifies with the victim of the assault, Mr Broderick, describing him as 'a brave man' as opposed to the Guards branding him 'an awkward man' and one that 'they'd watch out for' in the future (Keane, 1966, p. 56). Similarly to Leamy, Mr Broderick represents a challenge to the dominant mode of masculinity in Carraigthomond. Physically, he is described by Leamy as 'a small man' (Keane, 1966, p. 55), and therefore is in contradiction of stereotypical hypermasculine ideals through his stature, and also through his actions of challenging the Blezzop brothers, ordering them to 'Get out of my way. I won't drink in the same house as the likes of you' (Keane, 1966, p. 55).

Leamy's identification with him therefore may be seen to be total rejection of the hypermasculine tradition of Carraigthomond, a tradition displayed by McCabe in his words and actions, and, to a lesser extent, in his father's treatment of his mother in the home. Leamy's ambivalent position, and perhaps the dawning of a newer interpretation of masculinity, is revealed in Leamy's rejection of the traditional stereotype as seen in McCabe, Tadhg, the Sergeant, the Civic Guards, and the Blezzop brothers, in his plea to his mother that he simply wants 'to be different from *them*' (Keane, 1966. p, 56).

Thus, the character of Leamy may be seen as a somewhat liminal presence in the text, neither reflecting the masculine traditions of his surroundings, nor fully able to adopt the alternative as represented by William Dee. Ultimately, in the original version of the play, Leamy is removed from the community for his own protection, as the threat posed by his rejection of traditional gender roles, and his defiance of that hegemonic order, mirrors that of the murdered Dee. Similarly to Dee, Leamy is removed from a Carraigthomond that is not ready for such a challenge to stereotypical, dominant accepted gender roles. However, it must be stated that in the original version of the play, some distant hope that things may change remains, as we are left with the possibility of Leamy's return at some possible future date. Such possible optimism regarding the future is notably absent in the Ben Barnes revision of the play, which ends with Leamy overhearing McCabe's guilt over Dee's murder and entering into '*the grip of torturous indecision*' before he finally '*turns reluctantly to the table and begins clearing the drinks away*' (Keane, 1990, p. 167). Thus, through Leamy resuming his duties in beaten acceptance, the Ben Barnes ending of the play is far bleaker in its prognosis of Carraigthomond, and removes any ambiguity regarding the future of Leamy's position within it.

Having looked at the characters of the Bull McCabe, William Dee, and Leamy, and the representations of masculinity portrayed by them, the question of gender anxiety as a resonant factor in the piece must now be briefly addressed. Keane in his early years was undoubtedly perceived as a rural writer, writing about rural affairs, a perception reinforced by his success on the amateur dramatic circuit long before any urban critical acclaim. His creation, the Bull McCabe, and the form of masculinity represented by him would have been a figure all too familiar to such rural, traditionally patriarchal, audiences. As seen in the second chapter of this dissertation, the time of writing, and of first production of the play, was a period of massive upheaval in Irish society, and particularly in rural Ireland, as a new industrial national directive challenged traditional agricultural modes of living. Concomitant with these changes came multiple anxieties, as identity became both a national and a local concern. Nationally the country was turning away from the idyllic pastoralism of de Valera in favour of the more progressive, industrial, and outward looking notion of national identity prescribed by Lemass and T.K. Whitaker. On a local level, modes of living and concepts of identity passed down from generation to generation came under challenge, gender identity included.

Traditionally, in rural Ireland, masculinity took the form of working the land and providing for the family, therefore once this mode of living is challenged so too is the concept of gender identification, and this is the very conflict played out between the characters of McCabe and Dee in the piece. McCabe may be seen as representing the essence of masculinity enshrined in traditional patriarchal agricultural living, whereas Dee may be interpreted as presenting a more progressive, open-minded form of masculinity denoted by his treatment of his wife, his success in England, and his plans

to use the field for industrial purposes. Thus, through the characters of McCabe and Dee, and their performances of opposing masculinities, there is an exploration of gender anxieties that are rooted in a society attempting to change from a rural to urban one, and from an agricultural nation to one of industry. There is also a discussion on the question of gender in terms of traditional patriarchal values as represented by McCabe, and a masculinity based on equality between the sexes as seen in Dee. Ultimately, gender identification, and the performance of that identification is scrutinized through the juxtaposing of the stasis of McCabe and his Carraigthomond with the concept of progress embodied by Dee. For rural audiences, despite his heinous actions, McCabe, through his resistance to change, and his reflection and perpetuation of the parochial parish-pump, may have been seen as a form of agricultural anti-hero, representing those disenfranchised, and somewhat emasculated, by an incomprehensible changing world. Conversely, urban audiences may have seen Dee, and the fate suffered by him, as a burning indictment of the past, and a justification of the necessity of change in many realms, gender identification being just one.

In terms of the play's present-day resonance in relation to masculine anxiety, it may be argued that there is a certain nostalgia in operation, particularly in terms of the Bull McCabe. The character of McCabe has become one of the giants of the Irish stage, transcending the confines of genre and residing in common cultural consciousness¹⁶.

Susan Faludi in *Stiffed – The Betrayal of Modern Man* writes of how changing economic and social contexts influence concepts of masculinity, and how the transition from manual, utilitarian labour to a more service-industry led society in America has

¹⁶ How much of this is due to Richard Harris' portrayal of McCabe in Jim Sheridan's 1990 film adaptation is difficult to quantify. However, though the film contains multiple differences to the original play, and though this dissertation is focusing exclusively on the original text, its treatment of masculinity, as represented by McCabe, is similar in essence.

resulted in masculine anxiety and crisis there. As we are now living in an increasingly globalized world, it may be argued that her argument is equally applicable to the Irish situation. She describes this transition and its effects:

Where we once lived in a society in which men in particular participated by being useful in public life, we are now surrounded by a culture that encourages people to play almost no functional public roles, only decorative or consumer ones. The old model of masculinity showed men how to be part of a larger social system; it gave them a context and it promised them that their social contributions were the price of admission to the realm of adult manhood. That kind of manhood required a society in order to prove itself. All of the traditional domains in which men pursued authority and power – politics, religion, the military, the community, and the household – were societal.

Ornamental culture has no such counterparts. Constructed around celebrity and image, glamour and entertainment, marketing and consumerism, it is a ceremonial gateway to nowhere. Its essence is not just the selling act but the act of selling the self, and in this quest every man is essentially on his own [...] In an age of celebrity, the father has no body of knowledge or authority to transmit to the son. Each son must father his own image, create his own Adam. (Faludi, 2000, pp. 34–35).

In this context the reception of the Bull McCabe's masculinity may be seen as a form of masculine repossession of past authority, as the male audience temporarily create their 'own Adam' and escape from an emasculating 'ornamental culture', ironically through one of the markers of that culture, entertainment. Perhaps this may also explain his popularity within male cultural consciousness, as despite his actions the character is often spoken of in exclusively masculine terms, and, it may be argued, is nostalgically held up as a paradigm of masculinity that has since departed¹⁷. Thus, in a society that is increasingly attempting to operate on gender-neutral terms and one where 'Ornamental forms of Irishness' had been 'not only the preferred self-images of the Celtic Tiger' but also underpinned 'the brand "Irishness"' (Merriman, 2011, p. 210), the character of

¹⁷ An example of this may be seen in a 2014 video (BillyQuilter, 2014), with over 270,000 views on YouTube, made in protest against the implementation of water charges. Without veering into the realm of the political, the clip is still of sociological significance. The clip overdubs the political narrative onto footage of McCabe from Sheridan's film. In the clip, the character of McCabe is used as a voice for the disenfranchised, embodying masculine aggression, rebellion, and authority, and provides a hypermasculine resistance against what may be perceived, in terms of masculine agency, as a symbolically castrating force.

McCabe is an anachronism that reflects a less sophisticated time in terms of gender identification. Therefore it may be posited that it is precisely in this reflection of a relatively simplistic masculinity that modern day male finds a representation of masculinity with which he may, however temporarily, identify.

Thus, having discussed Keane's representations of masculinity in *The Field*, and highlighted conflicting interpretations of gender through an analysis of the Bull McCabe, William Dee, and Leamy, further possible resonant elements of the play have been identified. McCabe's hypermasculinity has been discussed, and the possible insecurities behind his performance of masculinity explored, thereby revealing, in McCabe, a tragic figure that, like many of Keane's characters, is a product of a harsh environment. The representation of a more modernized concept of masculinity in the work was then discussed through the character of William Dee, a character whose performance of masculinity hinges on a far more progressive interpretation of it than McCabe. The character of Leamy was then looked at as perhaps representative of the future of Carraighomond and its prescribed gender roles. Leamy's ambivalence in terms of traditional gender stereotype, and his troublesome location between two opposing masculinities, identifying with the ideals of Dee while also needing to survive in McCabe's realm, represent gendered traditions of the past contrasted with possible changing future interpretations of gender. Masculine resonance was then briefly explored in terms of the changing landscape of 1960s Ireland, and the concomitant vicissitudes of masculine identity contained within such changes. Finally, possible present day resonant factors in terms of masculine representation in the work was looked at, drawing from Susan Faludi, and her analysis of current masculine anxieties. Through all of the above, masculinity remains a constant discursive force in *The Field*,

and the discourse on the subject of masculinity, as seen in the text, rejects any polarization. McCabe's hyper-masculinity, Leamy's gender ambivalence, and Dee's softer, in comparison to McCabe, interpretation of masculinity are all made understandable by Keane, in a work that questions the very essence of not only what masculinity is in terms of tradition and stereotype, but also how it is performed through interpretation.

6.4 – Conclusion.

In conclusion, this chapter has focused on Keane's men, and the representation of masculinity in his work. Traditional gender-roles of the 1960s were identified, and the changes in rural Ireland, and the effect those changes had on traditional concepts of masculinity were explored. The role of the present-day male, and further challenges to traditional gender-roles was then discussed, and masculine anxiety and its contemporary roots were debated. In terms of Keane's literary works, the characters of Padraic, Morisheen, and Daigan in *The Man from Clare* were examined in a play that explores hypermasculinity, fading masculine agency, and masculinity as performance, quite literally, through the medium of Gaelic football. The dramatic momentum of the piece is rooted in a dialogue on the nature, definition, and essence of masculinity, and its socially constructed form.

The Hiker Lacey in *The Year of the Hiker* was then briefly addressed in terms of the variants of masculinity represented by him. Similarly to *The Man from Clare*, fading masculine agency is a central theme in the work. In essence the play was seen to form an interrogation of absolutes, with neither the emasculated Hiker of old, nor the newly formed hyper-masculine Hiker, finding peace until such polarizing positioning is abandoned, thereby it may be argued that the work offers further investigation into the

definition of masculinity, and the necessity to interrogate one's masculine positioning.

Representations of masculinity in *The Field* were then addressed beginning with the character of the Bull McCabe. McCabe is seen to occupy a primal hypermasculine space in the work, however Keane also gives an insight into the gender anxieties that aided the creation of such a position, thereby allowing him to also be read as a product of his harsh environment. McCabe, who, if judged solely on his words and deeds, would appear to be a monster, is humanized by Keane and may be seen as a victim of circumstance and, to paraphrase Jeff Hearn, is very much formed and broken by his own power (Horrocks, 1994, p. 25)¹⁸.

McCabe's rival William Dee was then examined as a contrasting representation of masculinity in the play. Dee may be seen to represent a far more progressive definition of manhood to McCabe, one based on logic, legitimacy and equality between the sexes. The main dramatic force of the play comes from the conflict between these two opposing interpretations of masculinity, with McCabe removing the threat presented by Dee through brutal and murderous force. Thus, Keane enters into a further discourse on the essence of masculinity as he dramatizes two opposing interpretations of masculinity vying for supremacy.

The future of Carraighthomond was then explored through the character of Leamy, who occupies an ambivalent gender space throughout the play. Through the character of Leamy, Keane may be seen to be interrogating traditional stereotypical gender roles, and Leamy may be seen as the personification of gender anxiety resulting

¹⁸ Roger Horrocks cites Jeff Hearn's assertion in *The Gender of Oppression* 'We men are formed and broken by our own power' as exemplifying masculine anxiety in the modern world. Horrocks maintains that 'patriarchal masculinity cripples men. Manhood as we know it in our society requires such a self-destructive identity, a deeply masochistic self-denial, a shrinkage of the self, a turning away from whole areas of life, that the man who obeys the demands of masculinity has become only half-human' (Horrocks, 1994, p. 25).

from negotiating the chasm between lived experience and socially prescribed gender expectations.

Finally, *The Field*, and the representations of masculinity contained within it, was looked at in terms of possible gender resonance, both in the 1960s and in the present day. Masculine anxieties that were a direct result of a shifting identity, both nationally and locally, as Irish society underwent massive change in the 1960s were highlighted and their reflection in *The Field* commented upon. Furthermore, present-day masculine anxieties as documented by Susan Faludi were briefly examined and the representations of masculinity in *The Field*, particularly the character of the Bull McCabe, were seen to operate in a somewhat nostalgic form of reclaimed masculine identification.

Thus, through an analysis of Keane's representations of gender in both this chapter and in the previous one, his subversion of static gender stereotypes, both male and female has been posited, and possible points of resonance contained within his work, in terms of gender, were identified. In his representations of gender Keane highlights the dangers of adopting absolute, polarizing positions, and at all times offers a glimpse at the humanity that lies behind even the most vile of gender constructions. Many of his characters are victims themselves of their socially constructed gender role, and are products of their gendered environment. Thus, as gender remains a site of unending contestation, the discourses entered into through Keane's representations of gender are still of great relevance today. The surroundings may have changed but the issues of gender stereotype, gender performance, societal construction and expectations of gender remain the same. It is in this space of gender anxiety as presented in his work, and as exemplified in the analysis contained within the last two chapters, that

resonance may be found in terms of gender within Keane's work.

Conclusion.

This dissertation set out with the aim of interrogating the work of John B. Keane, particularly *The Field*, and through that examination, it endeavoured to identify possible resonant factors, and concomitant identificatory processes, at play within his work. As has been stated previously, Keane remains a popular playwright and *The Field* is his most well known play. Such popularity speaks to the presence of resonance within his work. Therefore an enquiry into such unseen, intangible forces at work within the text is both justified and, when the relatively sparsely populated academic field on Keane is recognized, necessary. By identifying possible resonant elements at work within *The Field*, and the identificatory processes that are inherent to them, this project has undertaken to illustrate what the play reflects back to the audience of themselves, both in 1960s Ireland, and that of the present-day. This has been achieved through a close textual approach to the work in conjunction with a multi-layered theoretical perspective. Without putting forward a mere summary of the arguments contained in the project, the following paragraphs will offer a synthesis of what has been achieved in the six separate but interwoven chapters that have made up the body of this dissertation.

Firstly a brief biographical detail of Keane's early years was offered in an attempt to identify some possible early influences on him, and some common tropes within his work that may have resulted from these influences were identified. His time, as a youth, spent in the Stack's Mountains was documented, and may be seen to be representative of Keane's ability to inhabit two distinct worlds, one being the rural world of mythology and storytelling, and the other a relatively modernizing urban environment of Listowel. This interaction of two distinct but co-existing worlds, and Keane's ability to negotiate between the two, may be seen throughout his work, from

Mena Glavin's aspiration to the modern nuclear family through the traditional medium of matchmaking in *Sive*, to Maggie Polpin's existence in the space between a crippling traditional past and a potentially liberating future, and much of the drama in the two plays come from Mena and Maggie's negotiation of the two realms. Similarly, the Bull McCabe's violent rejection of modernization in *The Field* is representative of the collision of two distinct but contemporaneous worlds, and the play was shown to illustrate symbolically a nation in transition between two visions of itself, representing national anxiety in a time of change. Attention was also paid to Keane's schooldays, and his involvement with the Language Freedom Movement, which illustrated his ability to renounce the ideal when the realities presented by its implementation refute it. This juxtaposing of lived reality against abstract ideal is another trope common to Keane's work, as was illustrated in the second half of the chapter, which offered a brief analysis of Keane's dramatic works up to the publication of *The Field*. In terms of assisting an exploration of resonance in Keane's work, this chapter identified certain possible influences on Keane, the reflection of these influences in his early work was then discussed, and Keane's ability to cast a critical eye on surrounding social circumstances and challenge the perceived injustices inherent in them was demonstrated.

The second chapter began by looking at the real-life murder that provided the inspiration for *The Field*. Thus, it may be argued that the work is rooted in a certain time and a certain place and, as it was based loosely on real-life events, it may be seen to operate on an already resonant plane. The play's journey from the notebook to the stage in Russia was then documented and illustrated the oxymoronic position of the play occupying both a space that is temporally and spatially clearly defined, and also one that

is globally relevant, being ‘dark and mythological and pagan’ and ‘in a sense is of no time at all’ (O’Toole in Fitzmaurice, 2004, p. 52). Once again, this points to resonance within the piece, and Keane’s ability to transcribe the local and the particular into the realm of the universal illustrates his ability to penetrate his audiences through his exploration of the human condition in all its glories and failings. The changing economic, political, and social contexts of the time of writing were then documented, as Ireland, and national identity itself, underwent huge change in that period. The reflection of such a changing landscape, nationally and locally, in *The Field* was then discussed, and Keane’s work was seen to operate in a resonant fashion by giving a voice to those disaffected by such massive upheaval. It was also argued that Ireland in the present-day is situated at a similar crossroads, having moved from the heady Celtic Tiger era into a more austere period, and thus Keane’s work still holds resonant value in terms of the exploration of national identity in transition represented by the piece.

The following chapter adopted a psychoanalytical approach in an effort to identify unconscious motivations behind Keane’s characters actions, and to suggest possible unconscious identifications made by audiences with *The Field*. Firstly, Carraigthomond was looked at in terms of its constituting a site of collective neurosis due to the excess of repressive social structures contained within it. The village of Carraigthomond, when seen as a site of neurosis, may be another resonant element at play within the work, recreating on stage a society subject to subordination at the hands of the dominant order, thus reflecting the operation of ideological hegemony, a universal concept, and one encountered socially by Keane’s audiences, both rural and urban. The unconscious motivations at work behind the Bull McCabe’s actions were then explored through a Freudian approach to his character. In the course of this

analysis, McCabe was seen to be a character ultimately frustrated in many interpretations of love, and his actions deemed to be representative of a deeper crisis of potency at work within him. Through this analysis, McCabe's anxieties regarding his sexuality, his legacy, and his self-definition in relation to the land he works upon, were revealed, and, as these are common masculine anxieties, further resonant elements at work within the text were posited. In terms of audience reception, the play was looked at through a Lacanian lens, particularly utilizing Jacques Lacan's theories of 'the mirror stage', and possible identifications made by audiences, through misrecognition, were outlined. Thus, what audiences choose to identify with within the work, through the operation of Lacanian *méconnaissance*, is examined, and further possible resonant elements in the work identified.

Chapter four then adopted a postcolonial approach in an attempt to identify further possible resonant factors within the piece. Firstly, the qualification of Ireland and Irish literature to be considered as postcolonial was debated, and, as *The Field* is essentially a drama regarding land and the rights to its ownership, it was illustrated that a postcolonial approach to the text is wholly appropriate. The role of oppositions within the text was then explored, with particular reference to Edward Said's theories contained in his work *Orientalism*. Keane's depiction of such oppositions, and his ultimate subversion of the polarizing thought that gives rise to them, was documented, and his ability to channel a collective colonial history while also challenging such simplistic monolithic narratives discussed. In terms of resonance, through Keane's representation, and subversion, of polarizing oppositions within the piece, audiences face an identificatory dilemma, and are thus forced to re-examine their own subjective positioning. Such identificatory confusion was further expanded upon by utilizing the

theories of Homi K. Bhabha, particularly those of hybridity, mimicry, and the Third Space of enunciation, to explore the role of ambivalence in the text. The character of William Dee was explored as a hybrid entity, being a returning Irish emigrant, and, through his interaction with McCabe, two conflicting representations of nationhood are seen within the text, thus forcing audiences into a re-evaluation of their own positions once more. Keane's representation of conflicting interpretations of nation and national identity was then expanded upon in the final section of this chapter, which looked at representations of nationalism in the text, with further reference to the theories of Lacan. Through this, Keane's subversive and challenging nature once more comes to light as monolithic, dyadic, essentialist, and ultimately imaginary narratives as represented by McCabe, are challenged by Dee, who may be seen to represent a rejection of McCabe's imaginary order and an intrusion, in Lacanian terms, of the symbolic order. Thus, further possible resonant elements within the work were identified, as static notions of identity are challenged by it, and the perpetually fluid concepts of nationhood and national identity are mirrored within it, again encouraging audiences to reconsider their own positions of identity on national and personal levels..

The final two chapters of this project looked at Keane's representations of gender as possible resonant factors in his work, beginning, in chapter five, by analysing female representation in his work. Firstly, the contexts of gendered positioning in society, both in the 1960s and in the present-day, were explored in an attempt to identify the presence of female gender anxieties within society. Having demonstrated that issues of gender, in terms of womanhood, remain constant within society, Keane's treatment of women in some of his female titled plays was then explored. The characters of Sive and Mena from *Sive*, Maggie Polpin from *Big Maggie*, and Mame from *The Change in*

Mame Fadden, were focused on in terms of gender performance, gender stereotype, societal constructions and expectations of gender, and Keane's representation of gender anxiety being located in the space between gendered positioning by society and one's performance of it, was highlighted. Through this analysis, Keane's strategy to destabilise traditional gender stereotypes, and his voicing a challenge to hegemonic interpretations of gender, was foregrounded in anticipation of the analysis of his female characters in *The Field* that followed. In *The Field*, the character of Maimie was given considerable attention, as, similarly to Mena Glavin and Maggie Polpin, she represents something of an ambivalent force in the text, challenging her gendered position within Carraigthomond, but ultimately submitting to the dominant order. In terms of resonance, Maimie may be seen to embody gender anxiety in relation to woman's position within society and is reflective of Keane's giving voice to those disenfranchised by society. The character of Maggie Butler was also looked at, and her impotency within Carraigthomond, despite her being the title-holder to the land at the core of the play, further highlights gender inequality, an issue that is still of relevance today. Finally, three representations of the role of wife in the text were analysed, looking at McCabe's unnamed and absent wife, William Dee's named but absent wife, and Dandy McCabe's unnamed but present wife, and the interpretations of the role of wife represented by them and their treatment within the text. Through all of the above analysis Keane writes to problematic expectations of socially constructed stereotypes of gender, highlighting the issues of gender representation, which, it may be posited, are further resonant elements at play in his work.

The focus of the final chapter of this project turned its attention to the other side of the gender binary, that is, it examined Keane's representation of masculinity in his

work. This chapter adopted a similar structure to the previous one, and began by examining masculine anxieties, both in 1960s Ireland and in the present-day. The changing landscape of the 1960s was documented, and the resultant changes in masculine self-definition, and the anxieties contained therein, were discussed. In terms of present-day masculine anxieties, inherited concepts of masculinity were also shown to be in a state of transition as Ireland has moved from economic boom to bust. Keane's representations of masculinity in two of his male-titled plays, *The Man from Clare* and *The Year of the Hiker*, were then discussed in terms of masculine performance, hypermasculinity, masculine stereotype, and masculine anxiety, in an analysis that paved the way for the examination of masculine representation in *The Field* that followed. In *The Field*, the character of the Bull McCabe was given considerable attention, and the unseen masculine anxieties that lie beneath his projected hypermasculine image were exposed. An interpretation of masculinity at odds with, and opposed to, McCabe's performance of it, was then discussed through the character of William Dee, who presents a challenge to the stereotypical hypermasculine dominance represented by McCabe. The character of Leamy was then addressed, as through Leamy, and his occupation of an ambivalent gender space, Keane further problematizes traditional constructs of masculinity. In terms of resonance, Keane's representation of masculine anxieties, his challenging of traditional masculine stereotype, and his exploration of the socially constructed nature of masculinity, were seen to operate in an interrogative and significant manner, voicing masculine social anxieties while also challenging the constructs that create them. Masculine resonance within Keane's work was also looked at in terms of contemporary literature regarding masculine crisis that has resulted from man becoming further removed from the fruits of his labour, and the

character Bull McCabe was suggested to resonate with male audiences in a somewhat nostalgic manner.

Thus, Keane's work, and *The Field* in particular, has been interrogated in a number of ways, and possible sources of resonance within his work have been identified. Keane's ability to represent, and negotiate between, two opposing worlds posited in the opening chapter speaks to his capability to represent social anxieties of an audience similarly caught between two opposing viewpoints. Keane's capacity to challenge the noble ideal when the lived reality refutes it was also documented as a trope common in his work, and further reflects Keane's ability to connect with an audience disillusioned by experience. Keane's dramatization of a real-life murder in Reamore, and his ability to transcribe the local and the particular into the realm of the globally relevant, was then documented, and illustrated the presence in his work of universal thematic resonance, as he presents the human condition in both its brilliance and its shortcomings. The reflection of a changing social landscape in *The Field* also hints at further resonant factors at play within the piece, as Keane dramatized interior conflict set against external social pressure, and by doing so, he made public social anxieties that were encountered privately. Similarly, by offering a psychoanalytical reading of *The Field*, further possible resonant factors at play within the piece were posited, such as Keane's representation of private crises of identity, hegemonic impotency, legacy, tradition, and sexuality on the public stage. In terms of national identity, through a postcolonial reading of *The Field*, Keane's interrogation of nationalist narratives was highlighted, and the re-appraisal of national identity contained within the text revealed, thereby suggesting another possible source of resonance, as identity, on both personal and national levels, is questioned by the work. Finally

Keane's representation of gender, both male and female, was seen to operate in a resonant manner, revealing the social constructions of gender, questioning gender stereotype and, ultimately, voicing gender anxieties through his characters.

Through a close textual analysis, coupled with a multi-faceted theoretical approach, resonance in Keane's work has been explored, and possible reasons behind his enduring popularity as a playwright have been uncovered. As stated from the outset of this project, resonance is a difficult entity to quantify but the enquiry into it, as presented here, is still of merit as it opens up a discourse on Keane, suggests further possible methods of approaching his work, and, it is hoped, will aid in the re-examination of Keane, an often overlooked playwright. The analyses teased out in this project will hopefully encourage the re-positioning of Keane's *The Field* as a piece of 'significant theatre', defined by Victor Merriman as being 'as much about the reinterpretation of existing work as it is about the creation of the new' [Merriman, 1999(b), p. 315]. Further areas of research into his work that may prove worthy of consideration are suggested by this project, and this author would aspire to address some of them at a future date. Firstly, Keane's representation of gender was addressed briefly in this work, with reference to *The Field* and just five other plays. As Keane was quite a prolific writer in the fields of drama, prose, and occasionally, poetry, further exploration of this line of inquiry would prove a fruitful exercise indeed. Similarly, in a postcolonial context, an examination of Keane's portrayal of land as a feminine entity was only briefly addressed in this dissertation and would prove equally interesting in terms of gendered positioning within society. As Keane's work are predominantly set in rural Ireland, and the relationship between his characters and their surrounding environment is foregrounded in much of his work, another approach to Keane's work

that may prove of value would be to look at his work through the lens of ecocriticism with *The Field* being no exception. Another area worthy of investigation is that of Keane's use of humour, and his subversive nature in hiding harsh social commentary behind the laughs, a point put more succinctly Cheryl Temple Herr, who speaks of Keane's ability to apply 'a comic salve to the hurts that he has probed' (Temple-Herr, 2002, p. 8).

In essence, Keane reflects back to his audiences the operations of society, both positive and negative. His approach is never didactic, but instead he animates social anxieties through his characters, and presents them before an audience to be examined. As related by Gabriel Fitzmaurice, in a personal interview, 'John B.'s characters are very, very powerful characters but they're realist. They've been hurt, they've been wounded by their culture' [Devaney, 2012(b), Appendix Two]. Even in his most villainous of characters, the Bull McCabe, there is an undercurrent of raw humanity motivating his actions, thus any potential simplistic binary reading of his character is discouraged. Instead, Keane presents flawed humanity on stage, set against the challenges presented by society and its constructs. The audience is left to make up their own minds regarding what they have seen, and are thereby encouraged to perform a closer examination of their own surroundings, and any inconsistencies that may lie within them. In terms of resonance, it is hoped that this project has contributed to an understanding of Keane's dramatization of the struggles of the individual against a society that continually seeks to define them in terms of tradition, occupation, social position, nationality, and gender. It is precisely in this space between the individual and society at large that resonance is to be found within Keane's work. To close, this dissertation will return to an anecdote borrowed from Gabriel Fitzmaurice, one that is

illustrative of Keane's connection to, and representation of, the people of his surroundings. It came from one one local wit who informed Keane 'John B. you're the smartest of us all, you takes down what we says and you charges us to read it' [Devaney, 2012(b), Appendix Two].

Bibliography.

Works by Keane.

Keane, J.B. (2001), *Three Plays – The Year of the Hiker, The Change in Mame Fadden, The Highest House on the Mountain*, Cork, Mercier Press.

Keane, J.B. (1999), *Three Plays – Many Young Men of Twenty, Moll, The Chastitute*, Cork, Mercier Press.

Keane, J.B. (1992), *The Man from Clare*, Cork, Mercier Press.

Keane, J.B. (1990), *Three Plays – Sive, The Field, Big Maggie*, Cork, Mercier Press.

Keane, J.B. (1969), *Big Maggie*, Cork, Mercier Press.

Keane, J.B. (1968), *Hut 42*, California, Proscenium Press.

Keane, J.B. (1967), *Sharon's Grave*, Dublin, Progress House.

Keane, J.B. (1966), *The Field*, Cork, Mercier Press

Keane, J.B. (1964), *Self Portrait*, Cork, Mercier Press.

Keane, J.B. (1963), *The Year of the Hiker*, Cork, Mercier Press.

Keane, J.B. (1962), *The Man from Clare*, Cork, Mercier Press.

Keane, J.B. (1959), *Sive*, Dublin, Progress House.

Secondary Texts.

Abrams, M.H. (1993), *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 6th ed, Orlando, Harcourt Brace.

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. and Tiffin, H. (1989), *The Empire Writes Back – Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures*, London, Routledge.

Bhabha, H.K. (1994), *The Location of Culture*, London, Routledge.

Bhabha, H.K. (1990), *Nation and Narration*, Oxon, Routledge.

Brown, T. (2004), *Ireland – A Social and Cultural History 1922-2002*, London, Harper

Perennial.

Byrne, A. and Leonard, M. (1997), *Women and Irish Society – A Sociological Reader*, Belfast, Beyond the Pale Publications.

Carroll C. and King P. (eds.) (2003), *Ireland and Postcolonial Theory*, Cork, Cork University Press.

Eagleton, T., Jameson, F., and Said, E. (1990), *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.

Elliott, A. (2002), *Psychoanalytic Theory: An Introduction*, 2nd ed, Durham, Duke University Press.

Epinoux, E. (2007), *Introduction to Irish History and Civilization – Texts and Documents on Ireland*, Limoges, Presses Universitaires de Limoges.

Fallis, R. (1978), *The Irish Renaissance – An Introduction to Anglo-Irish Literature*, Dublin, Gill and Macmillan.

Faludi, S. (2000), *Stiffed – The Betrayal of Modern Man*, London, Vintage.

Feehan, J.M. (ed.) (1979), *John B. Keane – Fifty Years Young*, Cork, Mercier Press.

Fitzmaurice, G. (ed.) (2004), *Come All Good Men and True – Essays from the John B. Keane symposium*, Cork, Mercier Press.

Foster, R.F. (1988), *Modern Ireland 1600 – 1972*, London, Penguin Books.

Freud, S. (2010), *The Interpretation of Dreams*, translated by Strachey, J., New York, Basic Books.

Genet, J. (ed.) (1996), *Rural Ireland, Real Ireland?* Gerrards Cross, Colin Smythe.

Glowinski, H., Zita M., and Murphy, S. (2001), *A Compendium of Lacanian Terms*, London, Free Association Books.

Green, K and LeBihan, J. (1996), *Critical Theory and Practice – A Coursebook*, London, Routledge.

Grene, N. and Lonergan, P. (eds.) (2012), *Irish Drama – Local and Global Perspectives*, Dublin, Carysfort Press.

- Horrocks, R. (1994), *Masculinity in Crisis – Myths, Fantasies and Realities*, New York, St. Martin's Press.
- Jefferson, T. (2002), 'Subordinating Hegemonic Masculinity', *Theoretical Criminology*, Vol. 6, Issue 1, pp. 63-88, London, Sage Publications.
- Jordan, E. (ed.) (2000), *Theatre Stuff: Critical Essays on Contemporary Irish Theatre*, Dublin, Carysfort Press.
- Kealy, M. H. (1993), *Kerry Playwright – Sense of Place in the Plays of John B. Keane*, Selinsgrove, Susquehanna University Press.
- Kennedy, V. (2000), *Edward Said – A Critical Introduction*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Keogh, D. (2005), *Twentieth Century Ireland*, Dublin, Gill & Macmillan.
- Kiberd, D. (1996), *Inventing Ireland – The Literature of the Modern Nation*, London, Vintage Books.
- Lacan J. (2006), *Ecrits*, translated by Fink, B., London, W.W. Norton and Company.
- Lodge, D. and Wood, N. (2008), *Modern Criticism and Theory – A Reader*, Harlow, Pearson.
- Lonergan, P. (2016), *Theatre and Social Media*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lonergan, P. (2010), *Theatre and Globalization – Irish Drama in the Celtic Tiger Era*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Maher, E. and O'Brien, E. (eds.) (2014), *From Prosperity to Austerity – A Socio-Cultural Critique of The Celtic Tiger and its Aftermath*, Manchester, Manchester university Press.
- Maher, E. and O'Brien, E. (eds.) (2011), *Breaking the Mould – Literary Representations of Irish Catholicism*, Bern, Peter Lang.
- Merriman, V. (2011), *Because We Are Poor: Irish Theatre in the 1990s*, Dublin, Carysfort Press.
- North Kerry Literary Trust (2004), *Playwright of the People – A collection of tributes to John B. Keane 1928-2002*, Listowel, North Kerry Literary Trust.

O'Brien, E. (2002), *Examining Irish Nationalism in the Context of Literature, Culture and Religion – A Study of the Epistemological Structure of Nationalism*, Lewiston, The Edwin Meller Press.

O'Connell, E. (ed.) (2013), *Cork Literary Review*, Volume XV, Cork, Bradshaw Books.

Richards, S. (ed.) (2004), *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Irish Drama*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Said, E.W. (1979), *Orientalism*, New York, Vintage Books.

Sharpe, M. and Faulkner, J. (2008), *Understanding Psychoanalysis*, Stocksfield, Acumen Publishing.

Smith, G. and Hickey, D. (2004), *John B.*, Cork, Mercier Press.

Taylor Greene, H. and Gabbidon, S.L. (2009), *Encyclopaedia of Race and Crime*, London, Sage Publications.

Temple Herr, C. (2002), *Ireland Into Film – The Field*, Cork, Cork University Press.

Thurschwell, P. (2000), *Sigmund Freud*, London, Routledge.

Woolf, V. (1929), *A Room of One's Own*, The University of Adelaide [online], available: <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/> [accessed 13th April 2016, 1.38 pm].

Online Articles, Journals, Newspapers, and Other Resources.

Abayawickrema, R. (2012), 'How it was then - 1958, Greed and Envy – Land and Love Behind Dirty Deeds', *Irish Independent*, 3rd March, p. 7.

BillyQuilter (2014), *Irish Water The Bull McCabe* [online], available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XlptOyY57E> [accessed 6th February 2016, 2.37 p.m.]

Blake-Knox, K. (2015), 'Abbey Protestors demand "Respect" as Waking the Feminists takes stage', *The Irish Independent* [online] 13th November, available: <http://www.independent.ie/entertainment/theatre-arts/abbey-protesters-demand-respect-as-waking-the-feminists-takes-stage-34196368.html> [accessed 13th January 2016, 8.27 am].

Byrne, D. J. (2015), 'Gender quotas not the answer for women in politics', *The Irish Times* [online], 9th March, available: <http://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/gender-quotas-not-the-answer-for-women-in-politics-1.2131839> [accessed 10th February 2016, 8.30 am].

Cronin, C. (1965), 'J.B. Keane new play work of near genius' *Irish Press*, 2nd November, p. 11.

Devaney, B. (2012) (a), Unpublished Interview with Mary Keane, Conducted by Brian Devaney, John B. Keane's Public House, 26th June, 2012. See Appendix One of this dissertation for the full transcript.

Devaney, B. (2012) (b), Unpublished Interview with Gabriel Fitzmaurice, Conducted by Brian Devaney, The Listowel Arms Hotel, 26th July, 2012. See Appendix Two of this dissertation for the full transcript.

Falkenstein, L. R. (1997), *Renovating the Kitchen: Irishness, Nationalism, and Form in the Theatre of John B. Keane, Tom Murphy, Hugh Leonard, Brian Friel, and Thomas Kilroy*, Unpublished Thesis (PhD), University of Alberta [online] available: <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk3/ftp05/nq21567.pdf> [accessed 10th November 2014, 3.15pm].

Gonzalez, R. (1992), 'The Unappeasable Hunger for Land in John B. Keane's *The Field*', *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses* 5, pp. 83–90 [online] available: http://rua.ua.es/dspace/bitstream/10045/5449/1/RAEI_05_07.pdf [accessed 12th November 2014, 2.35 pm].

Greely, A. (1994), 'A Religious Revival in Russia?' *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (September, 1994), pp. 253-272, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* [online] available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1386689> [accessed on 1st February 2014, 12.11 pm].

Kealy, M. H. (1999), 'John B. Keane: An Appreciation', *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1/2 (July - December, 1999), pp. 241-246, *Canadian Journal of Irish studies* [online] available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25515272> [accessed 5th May 2012, 08.24 am].

Kealy, M. H. (1989), 'Spirit of Place: A Context for Social Criticism in John B. Keane's *The Field* and *Big Maggie*', *Irish University Review* Vol. 19, No. 2 (Autumn, 1989), pp. 287-301, *Irish University Review* [online] available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25484311> [accessed on 5th May 2012, 08.26 am].

Keane, B. (2012), 'The Field', Greed and Envy – Land and Love Behind Dirty Deeds, *Irish Independent*, 3rd March, pp. 4-7.

Keane, J. (2016), 'John B. Keane's daughter: "Teaching my dad's work has not been weird"', *The Irish Times* [online] 11th January, available: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/john-b-keane-s-daughter-teaching-my-dad-s-work-has-not-been-weird-1.2488415> [accessed 12th January 2016, 4.49 pm].

Kelleher, L. (2007), "'Bull McCabe" was no murderer, says nephew", *Irish Independent* [online] 18th March, available: <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/bull-mccabe-was-no-murderer-says-nephew-26285964.html> [accessed 14th November 2013, 11.15 am].

Kelly, G., Mitchell, C., Ward, T., and Weesies, M. (2003), 'Between the Ghosts of O'Casey and Keane – Irish Theatre, 2002', *New Hibernia Review*, Volume 7, Number 2, Summer 2003, pp. 121-130, University of St. Thomas [online] available: http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/new_hibernia_review/v007/7.2kelly.html [accessed on 5th May 2012, 12.58 pm].

Kohn, S. (2014), 'Stop denying the gender pay gap exists. Even Jennifer Lawrence was Shortchanged', *The Washington Post* [online], 17th December, available: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/12/17/stop-denying-the-gender-pay-gap-exists-even-jennifer-lawrence-was-shortchanged/> [accessed 10th February 2016, 8.27 am].

Madden, A. (1987), 'J.B. is in from the cold' *The Irish Press*, 7th July, p. 17.

McConville, S. (2008), 'The unsolved murder that shook the county', *The Kerryman*, 5th November, p.13.

McConville, S. (1990), 'Tragic end for Moss Moore from Reamore' *The Kerryman*, 21st September, p.7.

Meredith, F. (2014), 'Why is breastfeeding in public such a problem?' *The Irish Times* [online], 20th June, available: <http://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/health-family/why-is-breastfeeding-in-public-such-a-problem-1.1838372> [accessed 10th February 2016, 8.32 am].

Merriman, V. (1999) (a), 'Seeing Sites: Dramatic Images as Representations of the Social World', *Circa*, No. 89, Supplement on Art Education (Autumn, 1999), pp. 15-17, *Circa Art Magazine* [online] available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25563490> [accessed on 17th June 2014, 01.11 am]

Merriman, V. (1999) (b), 'Decolonisation Postponed: The Theatre of Tiger Trash', *Irish University Review*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Autumn – Winter, 1999), pp. 305-317, Edinburgh University Press [online] available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25484817> [accessed 10th June 2016, 02.58 pm].

O'Connor, A. (2007), 'Silence broken on Moore murder', *The Kerryman*, 21st March, 2007, p. 4.

O'Leary, E. (2013), *Teenagers, Everyday Life and Popular Culture in 1950s Ireland*, unpublished thesis (PhD), National University of Ireland, Maynooth [online] available: [http://eprints.maynoothuniversity.ie/5001/1/Eleanor%20O'Leary%20PhD%20Thesis%202013%20Final%20Edited%20Version%20\(1\).pdf](http://eprints.maynoothuniversity.ie/5001/1/Eleanor%20O'Leary%20PhD%20Thesis%202013%20Final%20Edited%20Version%20(1).pdf) [accessed 24th March 2016, 12.37 pm].

Oxford English Dictionary (2016), (online) available: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com>, [accessed 26th July, 2013, 4.04 pm].

Property Registration Authority (2016), 'Easements and Profits a Prendre Acquired by Prescription under Section 49A' [online], available: <http://www.prai.ie/registration-of-easements-and-profits-a-prendre-acquired-by-prescription-under-section-49a/> [accessed 14th April 2016, 6.17 pm].

Referendum Ireland (2015), *Referendum 2015* [online], available: <http://www.referendum.ie/results.php?ref=10> [accessed 10th February 2016, 8.38 am].

RTE Radio 1 (2010), 'Death in Kerry: The story behind The Field by John B. Keane.' *Doc on One*, [online archive] 5th January, available: <http://www.rte.ie/radio1/doconone/field.html> [accessed 13th November 2013, 11.10 am].

Ryder, K.C. (1984), 'The "Senex Amator" in Plautus', *Greece and Rome*, Second Series, Vol. 31, No. 2, pp. 181–189, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press [online] available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/642584> [accessed 28th August 2012, 12.29 pm].

Schmidt-Jones, C. (2016), *Resonance and Musical Instruments*, Rice University, Houston, Texas [online] available: <https://cnx.org/contents/WnAQOkNR@6/Resonance-and-Musical-Instruments> [accessed 26th July 2016, 4.50 pm].

TG4 (2007), 'Background to John B Keane's drama "The Field"', *Fuil agus Dúch* [video online], available: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zRNvAb3XhrY> [accessed

13th November 2013, 12.20 pm].

The Economic and Social Research Institute (2014), *Two New Reports on Equality and Recession* [online] available: <https://www.esri.ie/news/two-new-reports-on-equality-and-recession/> [accessed 13th January 2016, 4.14 pm].

The Institute of Public Health in Ireland (2011), *Facing the Challenge – The Impact of Recession and Unemployment on Men’s Health in Ireland* [online] available: <http://www.publichealth.ie/files/file/Publications/Facing%20the%20challenge.pdf> [accessed 13th January 2016, 5.08 pm].

The Irish Times (2016), ‘The Women’s Podcast’, Episode 20, Podcast, *The Irish Times*, Dublin [online] available: <http://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/people/the-women-s-podcast> [accessed 26th January 2016, 11.30 am].

The Kerryman, (1958) (a), ‘The murder lamp is still missing’ *The Kerryman*, (Author unknown) 6th November, p. 1.

The Kerryman, (1958) (b), ‘Shots fired through window at house in Reamore’ *The Kerryman*, (Author unknown) 7th November, pages 1 and 9.

The Kerryman, (1958) (c), ‘Murder hunt continues at Reamore’ *The Kerryman*, (Author unknown) 29th November, p. 12.

The Kerryman, (1958) (d), ‘Another threat at Reamore’ *The Kerryman*, (Author unknown) 20th December, p. 1.

Sheridan, M. (1987), ‘John B. tills a fertile field’ *The Irish Press*, 24th February, p. 9.

Smith, G. (1965), ‘The awful silence that follows a brutal murder’ *The Sunday Independent*, 7th November, p. 21.

Appendix One - Interview with Mary Keane.

26th June 2012 – John B. Keane’s Bar, Listowel, Co. Kerry.

Brian Devaney (BD): I’m commencing the interview here on the 26th June 2012, at 11.35am in John B. Keane’s pub here in Listowel with Mary Keane. Mary, could I ask you a question to begin with, rural Ireland, could you describe what rural Ireland was like around the time of say, *Sive*, maybe the late 50’s?

Mary Keane (MK): I can of course, such a difference and such a change from now in 2012. I came to live here in 1955, John and myself, he bought this pub and it cost us 1,800 pounds. We could have got in the good times loads and loads of money out of it but we’re back to the old ways again and you’ve no idea how things were. When we came in here the place was kind of falling down, there was only cold water everywhere, no such thing as electric heating or oil or briquettes or coal, just plain turf and the turf had no power in it to make the place hot, because this pub was old and worn out and it was very hard to heat it. But now you can just turn a switch and off it goes and you have all sorts of heat and light and all sorts of conveniences. There was a bath in the bathroom but only cold water, you’d have to be boiling kettles and pots and everything for a bath. Can you imagine now you just turn a switch and off it goes. Our customers all had bicycles, I cant remember any of our customers having a motor car, some had ponies and cars. There was no motorcar owner in 1958. A lot of our customers were farmers and we had a share of townies, because John was a townie and they came as well and I think it was 8 or 9 pence for a pint, and they would argue and look at it for ages before they’d drink it, they thought it was an awful price. We had a neighbour and we had a meeting of all publicans, and everyone said a certain price they’d charge you know, 8 pence I think, go up one penny, it was seven, and our neighbour didn’t go up the penny. Four fellas came in for four pints, John filled them and put them up to them and he charged them the new money, 8 pennies each, oh they said no, the man next door is only 7. I wont tell you what John told them anyway.

BD: ‘twas colourful?

MK: ‘twas ‘twas, I couldn’t be saying it but they watched every penny, *every penny*, and a big brown penny, you know a copper penny, a big old thing and ‘twas the same as a thousand pounds in their books.

BD: Times were tough back then too I suppose.

MK: They were, and they would have one day, the day of the market-day was a big day. They would all come, sons and daughters, everyone in the house would come, a couple of families and they’d sing and talk and dance, they were so happy and it never dawned on them that, you know, the whole week would be tough going and there was no social welfare money, there was a bit of an old age pension alright.

BD: I suppose were people a little bit isolated in the countryside as well were they?

MK: They were not too bad, because they had bicycles and they used visit each other and it was all music and chat, there was no sadness at all in it, a funeral maybe, they’d

celebrate that in their own way as well, all together, and they helped each other out very, very, good. If there was anyone sick or anything they would all congregate and help as much as they could.

BD: And just to go back to *Sive* now, the play. Would matchmaking be a common occurrence?

MK: Yes, there was a lot of it, but it was done very cutely like, you wouldn't spot it. I'd say that John was influenced by people that came in here making a match one day. I was just around, I didn't really know what they were doing until this fella said to John 'Do you know anyone selling wedding rings?' So he took them down to a shop known as Fitzgibbons' and Mrs Fitzgibbons and John were friends and she put three rings out, 5 pounds, 10 pounds, 15 pounds, green pounds that time, and she (the match) liked the 15 pound one, she was a young girl, a nice young girl, he was a bit ancient, but he had a big farm of land.

BD: You could see a bit of *Sive* in that alright.

MK: You could, and she got the 5 pound ring! John never stopped talking about it, all day long. We were together here in the bar saying 'my god that little girl wanted the good ring and he only bought the 5 pound one. You couldn't believe it. He (John B.) had a great knowledge of rural life, even though he was considered a bit of a townie, but he used to go out to his cousins in Lyre for his summer holidays and he learned an awful lot outside there. It was better than going to college, learned about human beings and the way people lived and lived there happy. They were happy.

BD: I suppose he was a great documenter of rural life.

MK: He was. He was, he got it straight away and he got to like the people so much. So much he liked them that he would do anything to help them out. He'd often write their letters for them and do their correspondence for them and lots of things like that. He was a chemists assistant, that was the way to be a chemist long ago, you went into a chemist shop and stayed there for... and did a few exams here and there and then went to Dublin for a couple of months and then you were a chemist. Chemists got very little pay that time, but they would come into him and say 'John when you were in Keane-Stack's (Chemist shop) you often gave me tablets for such and such a thing. Any chance you'd get a couple more for me today?' Sometimes his boss would say 'alright go on give them to them'. But he'd a great boss, he'd come up every day to find out how we were getting on, because we had to borrow 1100 pounds to pay the 1800 pounds for this place. That to me, and to him as well, ... John never knew anything about borrowing money, was a mountain. So he would have entertainment (in the bar). One of the things was cards, playing cards and having a gamble, and a gamble was a house full of people and tables and a deck of cards on every table and maybe a shilling to play. One time, it happened a couple of times, he'd say to me 'God I forgot to buy something for the gamble, a prize, have you any aul thing around the house?' I hadn't much but I had some of my wedding presents, a beautiful tea set, by god we put up the tea set, I don't know who won it. Another time we'd a clock; a schoolteacher from home gave me a clock. I was terrified he'd come in and say 'where'd you put up the clock?' The clock

was gone off in a gamble. Then we got smart and we'd buy a turkey and we'd gamble the turkey, it brought a lot of business and brought a lot of people in, they loved it. It didn't happen in our house but in a private house, your man had a big family, he had no money and wanted a bit of money and he gambled the turkey, and they said 'where's the turkey?' So 'twas a cement floor and he got a bit of chalk and he drew a picture of a turkey. 'Take it away with you now' he said. But there was no ill-will or anything about it.

BD: No, 'twas all good fun

MK: 'twas, 'twas all good fun.

BD: As the matchmaking as you said yourself was done on the cute...

MK: It was done on the cute, I thought anyway. Then Dan Paddy Andy came out in the open and he charged so much per whatever money they would pay to go into the farm, he got a percentage, a small percentage. But Dan always wanted to make a few pounds, to make a living, he was in a very remote area and he'd no work or anything. He said to John one day 'the day I make most of my money is a wet day. I go out and I sit inside a ditch and that's the day I make all my money, I think and figure things out. Out in the open air, the rain coming down and sitting at the ditch that's where I make my money.' No desks or no offices.

BD: And do you think say with the likes of *Sive*, there's a fierce bit of tragedy in it. Do you think John was kind of holding up a mirror perhaps to what was going on and maybe saying that all wasn't as it should be?

MK: Yes, he was very sympathetic to all those things, that lovely little girl; she didn't want to marry him at all. I don't know did she commit suicide or did she fall into a bog-hole in the end. Well, you know, from the real thing that happened he changed it a good bit. He changed everything from real life to suit the stage you know. *The Field* then was based on a murder in Lyre. The real thing and *The Field* were different but there was a fella, 'The Bull', and he had a brother-in-law. But John made him his son 'Tadhg' and he made it a bit different you know.

BD: And I think John got a few threats over that?

MK: Oh he did, he got a good few threats, he did, but we overcame them. And they were all written, never verbal, always written. And they came in letters and we just managed away. But we had a very bad October, November and December in business; there was a slump in trade. And we thought that he would get royalties from *Sive*. But your man closed in on them I think and here we were at Christmas and we were a bit down and out, himself and myself, and we got a letter, an anonymous letter. After that we never read an anonymous letter and we threw it into the bin. It said 'Dear John, How dare you speak about *Sive* committing suicide, taking her own life. Maybe when you have a daughter yourself she will commit suicide and then you'll know what tis like.' And it caught us you know, it spoilt things for us you know. After that then anonymous letters were gone in a shot.

BD: Well I suppose when things are inspired by the local, you know, it's always going to cut a little close to the bone for somebody

MK: 'Tis. You're right. You're right.

BD: What do you think yourself about the character of 'The Bull McCabe'?

MK: Oh I hated the sight of him. When he wrote that play I said 'John, you'll be excommunicated over it, don't give that play to anyone'. And he put it into the drawer of his desk and then this lady, she was Phyllis Ryan, she was one of the leading ladies in the theatre in Dublin. She heard about John and she was talking to Brendan Kennelly one day and Brendan said 'John has a great play below inside in a drawer and he won't take it out for anyone'. And she said 'I'll go down darling', so she landed anyway and I received her here. I had met her at plays in Dublin and I said 'Phyllis, I know you came for a play but don't take a play he has here by the name of *The Field* because there's a horrible person in it, he's the Bull McCabe and he's a wretched person.' I couldn't bear the sight of him. So she replied 'Darling that's the play I came for.' And she got it and took it off with her the next day, she was a lovely lady and she rang then and she said 'Ah I've Ray McAnally got to play the lead.' And he played the lead in it and boy he was tremendous. He got wonderful reviews and everything and they went into the Olympia. That was the first breakthrough John really got in the bigger theatres in the city. I'd say they thought he was a bit of a country boy until then and they were delighted with it. Delighted.

BD: I know he was rejected by The Abbey a couple of times, I'd say that hit him.

MK: That hit him. He'd an awful thing about The Abbey. It was the national theatre and maybe he felt that he belonged there you know, and it being the national theatre subsidised by us the people of Ireland. And he got no recognition at all, and then some few said you know 'this fella Keane can only write one play.' And next he read it and 'oh blast them' so he started writing again and he wrote a play called *Sharon's Grave* and I thought it was great and they returned it and they didn't read it at all, only bits of it, because he only had a few pages tied together he suspected them. And there was a couple of abnormal characters in it you know, and they said that in the rejection, that they couldn't condone these characters at all and putting them on the stage in The Abbey. He wrote back anyway to the artistic director of The Abbey and he said 'there's four people the very eejits in charge of The Abbey and 'tis still open.' That didn't do him any good either. But even to this present day you never see John in The Abbey, they're all there but he's never brought in there. And when 'twas fifty years old Danny Hannon, my great friend, said to me to write to the director MacAnna (Tomas) and tell him its fifty years old and its time to put it back on. Sure he wrote me a scemeiry letter that they had all their plans made for the next year, but I found out afterwards that wasn't the way it was but what harm, we're still here.

BD: Do you think it showed the difference maybe between what was going on in peoples lives in Dublin and what was going on in the west of Ireland?

MK: Yes. Yes. Dublin weren't aware of what we were doing in the west of Ireland at all. They had no concept of the carry-on at all. I often talked to them at different things you know and they'd be miles away from us, miles away. They were in their own little notch above, like each little community; they didn't know what was going on. They

know now.

BD: That's it. I think it showed the urban rural divide I suppose.

MK: And I mean they are great people, the urban people are a great, great people.

BD: Absolutely but I suppose John was rooted in the countryside I suppose.

MK: He was, he was.

BD: Even his use of language I suppose, it was spectacular.

MK: It was, it was, he spoke the same language as all his people around here and he was very anxious to have it recorded and done properly.

BD: Going back to *The Field* again, you have the Bull McCabe who is trying to hold on to his land. Do you think it shows a shift in Ireland that people went from the rural tradition to maybe industrialization?

MK: Maybe, maybe, there's still a great love for land in Ireland.

BD: The idea was the influence of the industrial was just starting to come in maybe?

MK: Yeah it was barely beginning. When that murder occurred 'twas two days or a day anyway before any guard came out. They were in the Tralee district and his son told me that they'd to cycle out. There was no DNA and there was no fingerprints or anything to be taken, too many people had walked around there and everything. They'd to cycle out from Tralee, it must be 12 miles, and that's the way it was done.

BD: And the real event that inspired 'The Field', was the man arrested for it?

MK: No, he was never arrested, but he was questioned several times, questioned very closely.

BD: And similarly enough to *The Field* maybe the community stayed silent?

MK: They stayed silent and I knew some of them and I said to one of them one day 'Why didn't one of ye just tell what ye knew?', 'God blast it' he said 'We have to live there'.

BD: I can see *The Field* in that alright. I know you didn't have much time for the Bull McCabe but on some level in the play you can identify with him a small bit maybe?

MK: You would you know, and like, he wasn't that bad a person at all like.

BD: He kind of believed what he was doing was right maybe?

MK: He did. And it was never proved conclusively that he really did it, they never proved it against him. But I suppose he did do it. 'Twas his brother-in-law that was with him staying in the house and the wife was a lovely lady. John was very impressed when he went up there with a man to have a look around and see the place, and that's definitely where he got the whole idea.

BD: Would you consider John a very political writer? Not as in party politics but as a critique of the state or of society?

MK: Oh he had that yeah he did, and he was never afraid to speak out you know. He was very associated with the teaching of the Irish language and he was in the formation of the Language Freedom Movement and I went to the Limerick meeting with him. It was in a big, big, hall and it was lined with guards. There wasn't a word there but there was in Dublin.

(Doorbell rings – Interview suspended)

(Interview resumes)

BD: I know John was involved in the Language Freedom Movement. I think there was a bit of trouble at one of the meetings, was it up in Dublin?

MK: There was, 'twas very good. Cardinal O Fiaich was a priest that time you know and he was there, but he became a Cardinal after. They had to jump off the stage and run for their lives and Tony Guerin was a detective sergeant in Dublin at the time. He made for John anyway and he said 'follow me'. Only for Tony he (John) was dead. Didn't he take him into a chip-shop, the woman he knew, and she put him in behind the counter. They searched everywhere for him and they didn't get him. He was definitely going to be either maimed or dead, because he was the main speaker. Norris was the man that started the whole thing but what triggered John off I imagine was all the people he knew that emigrated without any bit of schooling at all. A load of them weren't able to write at all, maybe their name, but that was it. And they couldn't read at all and we would get phone calls here, we had no phone in the beginning, but later when we got a telephone we'd get phone calls here from all those boys and girls in England to say 'Will you tell my father and mother that I'm writing next week' or 'Would you ask my father and mother to come down at three o' clock and I'll ring, I'd love to talk to them'. They weren't able to write home and if the father and mother.... There was too much through Irish and they gave extra points and they gave the teachers a few extra shillings and it made it very attractive. It was very unfair on the fella at the back of the class like that wouldn't be that smart or that interested in education. It wouldn't be important either at home for them to learn everything at school. It was more like to bring in a pound and maybe to have a rail of turf to go to the town and sell it to the townsperson. And many's the rail of turf they brought to the townspeople that would be 'spairt'. 'Spairt' is wet turf.

BD: John was a keen Irish speaker himself.

MK: He was a great Irish speaker. He was accused by several of the newspaper people that he knew nothing about Irish and all that kind of thing. Then he wrote a couple of books in Irish, I lost one of them, *Faoiseamh* was the name of it, I don't know where it went to. It was a small little book, a small little play and it was very, very good, a one act play in Irish. And then he did the Dan Paddy Andy book. It was the story of Dan Paddy Andy, he did it in Irish, he was the matchmaker of course, Dan.

BD: I think maybe John wanted people to learn the language for the love of it as opposed to having to

MK: You're right, you're so right. That is it of course, he wanted it for the love of it and he loved it but he didn't want the having to. He thought if they could just learn it themselves for their own entertainment and joy it would be better than to have it rammed down their throat. I remember being in school and the teacher said we're doing cookery now, from now on through Irish, and I had the courage and I stood up and I said 'My people wont be able to read the recipes when I go home with my book if you put them into Irish Miss', and said 'How right you are, we'll do it through English'. She was very reasonable.

BD: That was reasonable alright. The church, I suppose back then the church were a massive influence in the countryside?

MK: Oh sure they were the bosses of everything, of every whole thing, his (John's) father was a schoolteacher and they directed the schoolteachers, and they had to do every church gate collection. Dead or alive they'd have to go down and stand and obey the parish priest and do the church gate collections. I used to have pity for my father-in-law, he'd be frozen, I'd say: 'you'd drink a hot whiskey now after that'. And he was lovely and he would say 'yes' and he would take it. I used to be afraid of them, you know, when John put on *Sive* like, this priest, a young priest, a very young man, came, I was surprised at him, he was very big into drama, he won an all-Ireland drama festival and he said, John was behind the counter, we had the bar but we also had a grocery and you'd meet the grocery when you come in the door, you know, in this place first. The priest met John right there and then and I was fooling around, I'd my eye out, and he had a silver topped walking cane, a young man, 'I was at *Sive*' he said 'two nights ago and I want to speak to about it. I want to make a few changes'. So he went out of the door without making any changes and he never got a say in it.

BD: No, no. But I suppose in *Sive* and in *The Field* as well, the church is involved, you know, in both plays.

MK: They got a great cracking in *The Field*, they did.

BD: It can't have been easy to stand up to the church like that?

MK: Would you believe it the majority of the priests were for him. They were, and they put on the plays and they built presbyteries and schools and places like that...

(Telephone rings, interview suspended)

(Interview resumes)

BD: We were just talking about the church there and Johns standing up to them in a sense.

MK: Yeah, there were only a few of them against him; you could nearly count them on one hand. Because it was a great way for them to get a bit of money in very, very, poor parishes, way away now in west Kerry and places like that. The bishop would tell them saying 'you have to build a school' 'build a presbytery, there's no presbytery here, now Father build a presbytery' the bishop would say. Where would they get money? A lovely priest called into me one day, he said 'would ye ever have a bodhran?' he said, he was a Father Keane, 'I'm going to put on *Sive*' he said 'I was told build a presbytery'. So anyway 'I have one' I said but its not mine, if you return it' I said 'very quickly I'll give it to you tis here, some fella forgot it'. Oh he was about six months and he brought it back perfect 'And we have the school built' he said, 'painted and all!'. Well the fella had come in between for his bodhran, I told him the truth that I gave it Fr. Keane away back in south Kerry. He nearly killed us.

BD: All's well that ends well I suppose. I was chatting with Des Kenny of Kenny's bookshop up in Galway, and I was chatting with him telling him what I was doing about John B. and that and he said the one thing that always amazed him, so I said I'll put it to you now, was when the plays were being written it was a time of very high censorship

and John, he kind of got away with a lot of stuff. How do you think he managed it?

MK: I'd say they were afraid of him. He was a hard man, you wouldn't be crossing John, and I'd say he'd come out very hard against them if they attacked him. He mightn't agree with me now himself but I'd say that. Anyone that crossed John remembered him, even when he was playing football he'd give them an elbow and he'd maim them. They'd be thrown down after him and he was thin but he had this thing and he didn't suffer fools gladly and he'd be the same with the censorship because he felt awful bad about it. He thought it was an awful thing to be doing.

BD: I think as well there's an awful lot of humour in John's work.

MK: There is, there is in the middle of all the sadness there's a laugh.

BD: I think he kind of disguises it a little bit with the humour?

MK: I think he wanted it, he wanted to lift it, people go to be entertained and not to be going home with a lonesome story.

BD: And I think maybe that helped him get away with stuff as well

MK: Maybe, did it? I suppose it did. Yeah, he got away with it anyway!

BD: Just to go back to *Sive* I read somewhere that it was after seeing another play here in town....

MK: That is true. I said to him 'I'm going up to see *All Souls Night* you can come if you want to?' He said 'I'll go with you' and walking down the street he said 'Surely be to God I could do as good as that'. And that very night he pulled out the table we'd a big, big, table in front of the fire put a few more sods on the fire, filled a pint got a big, big, copy book and I gave him a kiss and said I was going to bed and that was the start of *Sive*. He wrote a pile of it in a couple of weeks.

BD: And Big Maggie Polpin, was she inspired by a local individual?

MK: Yirrah there's a bit of Maggie in all of us. And there was a couple of very strong women. One was across the road there and the other one was up the street and there's a bit of them as well. But I was at a *Big Maggie* and his sister was sitting with me and she gave me a nudge, 'That's you' she said. I'd say there's a bit of all of us in there, bits here and there of every woman in it.

BD: I suppose and you have to think of how John was portraying women of that age

MK: From his days in the chemist shop, and his mother was a great woman for mixing with people and they would call in and she would give them the cup of tea. They'd have a chat and he'd be there and he'd be listening and he got a great insight into rural women.

BD: Even with *Big Maggie*, it opens up and she's at the grave, but then she gets the independence....

MK: She gets her own back.

BD: In a way you could see Big Maggie as being cruel to her children and things, you know, but on the other hand you can identify with her.

MK: You would identify with her. I never looked at her as being cruel, she had to, she had to straighten them out and put them out into the world. Because there's nothing as bad as a woman inside with a couple of sons or a couple of daughters ageing and getting

to be auld bachelors and auld maids. She had to push them out, and I know she was cruel but you have to be cruel to be kind. Any mother will tell you that they nearly have to push out the son, because a son has such a love for the mother, an attachment to the mother, 'tis very hard for them to leave home. There's everything at home. Out into the middle of the world with nothing there waiting for them. 'Tis no joke like.

BD: 'tis very true, very true. One last question now, I'll go back to *Sive* for this one. The old way of the land is in the matchmaking that's being done with *Sive*, but she's a girl that's very bright at school. Do you see John showing a conflict there between the old way and the new way?

MK: Oh yes. She's trying to get out from under their feet you know. *Sive* was, and the grandmother could spot it too and she wanted her educated and a better life than herself or her mother ever had. That's what happened. The grandmother was a very nice lady and she went through an awful lot of poverty. But they weren't aware of that awful poverty at all because they always see hens and eggs and potatoes and cabbage and they'd have the pig salted and preserved for the food. They had their own way of living without any income from the state or outside but they wanted her to get away from all that. Sometimes girls that went to England they succeeded and they became nurses and things like that and the grandmother would see them coming back with lovely clothes and a few pounds and I'd say she wanted *Sive* to go. She could see no future for her there. And she had a lovely little fella the carpenter and they were great friends and all, 'twas a cruel thing to do to her, to make a match for her.

BD: And the match kind of represented the old ways.

MK: The old way. It brought about a big change in rural Ireland, the match making had to take second place.

BD: And a lot of the matchmaking was to protect land and things, you know

MK: It was. Big change now. I was at a wedding there with John some years ago and he would have been a big farmer. Everything was lovely, beautiful bride, beautiful everything, and they came down the church together and a fella tipped John from behind into the back. He said 'John, she's half that farm now'.

BD: 'tis true. And it goes back to the Irish relationship with the land, you know, it's very important.

MK: Very important to keep it. People love their land. I know farmers now and they'd often talk to me. One fella said to me 'I could eat that grass'. He was a young man, with a young family. 'I could eat that grass' he said 'I love it so much'.

BD: I think we're done Mary, I think I've covered everything that I wanted to.

MK: You're happy?

BD: I am.

MK: You know where I am if you want me.

BD: I do indeed. And I appreciate it very much Mary, thank you very much.

MK: That's a pleasure.

End of Interview

Appendix Two - Interview with Gabriel Fitzmaurice.

26th July 2012 – The Listowel Arms Hotel, Listowel, Co. Kerry.

Brian Devaney (BD): I'm sitting here in the Listowel Arms Hotel, on Thursday 26th July 2012, at 10.40 a.m. talking to Gabriel Fitzmaurice. Gabriel, How are you?

Gabriel Fitzmaurice (GF): I'm grand thanks Brian.

BD: Good, we'll kick things off. In relation to John B., How much of a mirror do you think John B. held up to rural Ireland or rural Irish life in *Sive*, *The Field* and *Big Maggie*?

GF: *Sive*, *The Field* and *Big Maggie*. He showed Ireland in a light that he grew up in. He depicted that Ireland but he also depicted another Ireland. Fintan O'Toole has written an essay about these culture clashes that make for a kind of a tragedy. Take *Sive* for instance, you have Mena and the husband living in the old Ireland, the Ireland of traditional values, which John B. grew up in, where to be illegitimate was to be shamed. And then *Sive* belongs to a new Ireland, which is education and to move on and get on with it and I suppose the Ireland of Ken Whittaker of the economic expansion of the 1960's. So these two cultures clash and that's what makes a tragedy of *Sive*. The old culture wins, in a sense it destroys the new culture. In *Big Maggie* you have the same sort of clash again, you have Maggie the powerful, and it's interesting when you see John B.'s women. They're his most powerful characters, you know, Maggie is a hugely powerful character. I know the Bull is a powerful character...

BD: Mamie also...

GF: Exactly. So John B. grew up in that Ireland, I think he was born some time in the 1920's. Listowel would have been modernizing as a town but he spent his summers in Lyreacompane, Dan Paddy Andy country. He would have seen the old culture; he would have seen the things he wrote about, not just in his plays, but in his essays as well, and in his letters, you know the *Letters of a Matchmaker*, which is essentially Dan Paddy Andy. So John B. belongs to the two cultures and that's why John B. is still relevant today, because he belonged to the two cultures. Now, the culture, I mean I was born in 1952, I can relate to the old culture that John B. writes about maybe the younger people can't. But they can see two different cultures as well. We always belong to two cultures, we belong to the older culture that we grew up in, no matter what era you grow up in, your childhood and then the new thing. Nowadays John B. is just as valid as he was in 1959 when *Sive* came out.

BD: You mention tragedy there in *Sive*, through it and the darkness of *The Field* and the character of Big Maggie, how much of a critical eye did he cast upon certain aspects of rural Irish life?

GF: You see this is what I like about John B. John B. could be very critical but also you understand that he understands these people. He never stood back from criticizing, he was famous for that. He got the belt of the crosier on a few occasions for criticizing.

But there's a sense that he doesn't send up these people. He on some level empathises with them. Now if I can say this on the record, and I don't like saying it, this I think is where Martin McDonagh falls down. Now Martin McDonagh was a friend of John B.'s and he was an admirer of John B.'s but I see in *The Cripple of Inishmaan* and those plays, I see caricatures. I don't see a man that fully understands the culture of the people. They're good plays, they're ones that do Broadway, they're ones that do the West-End but I think John B. had a deeper understanding. Because he grew up among these people he understood these people and he loved these people, but part of love is to criticise. It's the same in a marriage. You can't keep your mouth shut on all aspects of your partner at all times. Sometimes love has to be tough and John B. knew what tough love was. He does criticise the society hugely. Going back to *Sive*, you see the way he gets the two tinkers to come in and Carthlawn sings the criticisms of the matchmaking culture and the money grabbing culture and all this stuff. But at the same time John B. understands for Thomasheen Seán Rua, that he needs the money, that he had tragedy in his own life and he has been put off romance and all that – 'In the name of God what do we know about love', because that's the kind of life they lived and John B. knew that. I think John B. brings that very powerfully to the stage.

BD: I suppose it was like the difference between an outsider looking in and an insider looking out. We'll come back to that later on, I want to come back to that. I was in conversation with Des Kenny of Kenny's bookshop above in Galway and he had one question, so I want to put it to you now. The time he was writing these plays was a time of high censorship in this country and John B. got away with a lot, under the radar, how do you think he achieved it?

GF: First of all that's a great question. John B. was savvy. He wasn't somebody to go on 'The Late Late Show' and criticise the clergy out of hand. John B. went on 'The Late Late Show' and charmed everybody. His plays were hugely popular you see John B. wasn't a critical success until much later in his life. He was a popular success. I mean The Abbey wouldn't take *Sive* for instance. First of all it was the local drama group that did it and then the Southern Theatre Group under James N. Healy took him on. You know the story, probably Mary told you, about his cousin or her cousin, the priest. He couldn't go to see the early John B. plays because priests were forbidden from seeing all plays. I think there was an understanding. The bishop of Kerry at the time when John B. was writing would have been Denis Moynihan, a notoriously straight-laced man. There is a story told, which I believe is true, that he was passing through Listowel one day and the gates of the convent were opened which they shouldn't have been, it was an enclosed place. And he went in and he remonstrated with the Reverend Mother who more or less told him to take a hike. I think the clergy weren't foolish. We know they did awful things in those times as well but they knew that taking on somebody like John B. that they were on a loser because he was such a popular character. If he was someone like Alan Simpson who had the play closed down in the Pike Theatre, critically acclaimed but no great following. You close down the Pike you get a few lines in *The Irish Press* and that's it, it moves on. The literati and

the cognisenti give out about the clergy as they always do. But there is no thousands of people in parish halls, bingo halls, watching to see John B. I think that's part of it too, his sheer popularity, John B. was a very shrewd man. He had a short temper but he could be very good with people as well. He never actually fell out with the clergy as such. He criticized them in places in some of his characters. For instance in his *Letters of a Parish Priest*, they show a very understanding parish priest. There's one particular thing in it, there's an old conservative type in it giving out about the young teacher cavorting in the sands, obviously in Ballybunion, with a young girl and saying "what's the parish priest going to do about it?" The parish priest did nothing about it; let youth have its fling. So he understands these people and he's fair about them, and the church understood that I think.

BD: Well the church were still a very powerful force in Ireland at the time

GF: Oh huge!

BD: And they did come in for a bit of criticism in his work, they're complicit in the arranged marriage of Sive, and as Mary Keane said to me they got an awful cracking in *The Field*. How difficult would it have been to criticise such a repository of Irish identity at that time?

GF: Very hard. There was a lot of criticism at the time. Various people at various times criticized the church in various ways. With John B. you always got the sense that he understood what was going on. I suppose it's not too big a word to say that John B. loved his people and that included the clergy. In *The Bodhran Makers* he has Canon Peter Pius Tett is the characters name. Obviously Trallock is Listowel and Peter Pius Tett is a bit of an old barge. But John B. has sympathy for the curates who have to live under that regime. At all times there is love and sympathy in John B. and I think that's why he gets away so much criticism, because he's not criticizing all clergy he is criticizing particulars. I think in any form of debate if you stay with particulars you won't start a war. I suppose the particular is also universal in that sense but he is talking about particular people, particular clergy. Brian MacMahon in the same sense. They talk about the awful events of Seán McCarthy's sister. Seán McCarthy, the songwriter, his sister died in childbirth but she wasn't married. The parish priest in Listowel closed the gates on the church and he wouldn't let her in. John B. wrote about that in *The Bodhran Makers*, Brian MacMahon wrote about it in *The Children of the Rainbow*. Because it actually physically happened they can't deny it. So John B., and Brian, who was in an even more compromised situation, Brian was the schoolmaster who was under the thumb of the church directly, and he got away with it. So again if you write about actual facts, actual happenings, and you write about them in a sympathetic way, a critical way but a sympathetic way, that's the way they both got away with it.

BD: I think as well he masked a lot of his criticisms through his use of humour.

GF: Oh he did.

BD: People were going in and they were laughing and the next thing they're looking at themselves asking what are we actually laughing at? It's a very powerful form of criticism.

GF: That is true, it's the most powerful.

BD: How did the rural Ireland of John B.'s writing hold up against the national imaginary of a romantic peasant life?

GF: There are two 'Fields'. There's the film, and there's the play, and the play is where it's at. 'The Field' [film] goes back to 'The Quiet Man', this kind of Hollywood notion of Ireland. John B. didn't write about the Hollywood notion of Ireland. There was a sense when John B. was writing that city Ireland, east coast Ireland, the Pale and beyond didn't really understand these people at all. They wanted to turn their backs on it, this was regressive, these were the bog-hoppers, these were the troglodytes, but John B. shoved their noses in it and said these were real people with real lives, interesting lives. The Ireland that John B. grew up in was changing hugely, emigration was huge first of all, there's a sense that we exported our revolution. There was censorship in Ireland. Strangely John B. was never censored. John McGahern was. Brian was never censored either. They wrote the truth and they wrote rawly and they wrote powerfully about various things in Ireland. When you think of Kate O'Brien, the Limerick novelist got banned for one sentence in a book. Somebody saw her father in "the embrace of love", that was the actual wording and the book was banned. It was a strange old time to write in. John B. was also a publican; he knew how to deal with people. If you're a publican in a small town to make a living you have to make sure you have no enemies. Billy tells a story but Billy actually fabricates it. The real story is that John B. was told sometime in the 1960's by an old customer of his, he said "John B. you're the smartest of us all" he says, "you takes down what we says and you charges us to read it". Now Billy says that that happened after John B.'s funeral but John B. told me that story twenty years ago. John B. represented his people, he represented an Ireland that was sometimes anathema to a different kind of Ireland but that's where the two cultures clashed, and that's what made John B.

BD: Speaking of a clash, if you take the characters of John B.'s plays against the noble peasants of the revivalist movement or the pastoralism of de Valera, there's a massive contrast there.

GF: Oh yeah. Well first of all politically John B. wouldn't have been a de Valera fan at all. No, there's no romance. John B.'s characters are very, very powerful characters but they're realist. They've been hurt. They've been wounded by their culture. Look at *Big Maggie*, look at the final speech there, look at how she treats her family, and she does it out of a kind of tough love. Because she's trying to make sure they're not useless and they can make their way in the world and they wont fall by the wayside because of their silly romantic notions.

BD: There's a bit of Mary in her too I think.

GF: Oh I'd say so yeah. But the story is told that *Big Maggie* is based on the character of a publican in Listowel. I'm certain it is, I cant put a name because I might get it wrong. But it is a publican somewhere up near where John B. was.

BD: Just to go back to the whole notion of John B. being the insider looking out and the outsider looking in. Another guy that subverted revivalist ideals was J.M. Synge.

John B.'s language was very fluid and when compared with the so called 'Syngespeak' of *The Playboy of the Western World* and its peasants which was an attempt at a local dialect which at times appeared a little contrived, a bit like *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* in a way, it doesn't seem real, almost stage-Irish at times. Could you maybe just talk a little about Keane's language?

GF: First of all Synge said he never used a word in his plays that he didn't hear. I'm inclined to believe him. I know its romantic and the language is hugely romantic but I was thinking about "gallas" now for instance. Where in the name of God would you come across a word like that? I was back in Abbeydorney one night doing a Radio Kerry programme and we were singing and we were drinking. This fella came up to me and said "you're Fitzmaurice, you're from Moyvane". I said, "I am." He said, "we used to go to the carnivals there we had many a 'gallas' like that". So the word actually is in the spoken vocabulary of people to this day in Abbeydorney and that part of Kerry. So I'm inclined to believe Synge that he took down these words, he made a singsong out of them then. There was no one dialect that he used; there was no one place that would use all those words. Now another man that comes between Synge and John B. is George Fitzmaurice from Listowel, south Duagh. He used the entire vocabulary of north Kerry. He didn't use an outside word. Howard Key Slaughter edited his works and printed them up in the three volumes of the collected plays of George Fitzmaurice. He wrote another book then, *George Fitzmaurice and his Enchanted Land* talking about the background to George Fitzmaurice, and he has a glossary at the back with all the words, the north Kerry-isms that George Fitzmaurice uses. Which is straight from the Irish. George was Protestant, he flourished in his youth, he fought in the First World War in his twenties then. So he would have come from a time when north Kerry would have had still native Irish speakers. In the 1901 census in Moyvane there are native Irish speakers still. So George Fitzmaurice would have grown up in the surrounding countryside of Abbeyfeale, Listowel, Duagh where there were native Irish speakers and they were transliterating into English. Now he's very, very heavily north Kerry English. Yeats actually promoted George for a while until I think he got a bit jealous and Yeats had his Celtic twilight and all the rest. George Fitzmaurice was the real deal and Yeats shafted him. John B. comes then next in line in using north Kerry language. John B. used the north Kerry language very well, in so far as, most people, Irish people anyway, would understand most of the words he uses. He doesn't use the very strange, difficult, out of the way words that would need explication. He uses them in a very poetic way, not like the poetry of Synge, which is all over the place. Romance, high romance with words. John B. uses them in a very particular poetic way as well. For example when he has the Bull saying: "Listen to the grass grow". Listen, you don't listen to the grass grow but there you are. This is John B. using the words at their most powerful. He uses north Kerry English. There's no word that John B. uses that wouldn't be readily understood by a north Kerry person. But I would say by a Dublin person as well. Mark Twain in *Huckleberry Finn* says that he used several dialects. Its not haphazard use if one person is speaking slightly differently to another person, it's because he is using a

different *patois*. John B. uses the same *patois* for everybody, but just as everybody can understand *Huckleberry Finn* everyone can understand *The Field* or *Big Maggie* or *Sive* as well.

BD: It [*The Field*] even toured as far as Moscow

GF: It did yeah, with Niall Toibin as the Bull.

BD: It was very successful over there too.

GF: Yes it was, yeah. Actually I was talking to Des Kenny up in the Clifden Arts Festival when they took *Big Maggie* over to America. It did well in America but it didn't do quite as well as they had expected and Des said to me: "They should have taken over *The Field*, isn't the image we have from all Westerns is a fella putting his hand in the earth and saying 'I'd kill for this'".

BD: Just to borrow a line from your sonnet- 'In Memoriam, John B. Keane'. "New Ireland holds you were of Ireland past". I want to apply this to a little bit earlier on in John B.'s career and as you mentioned before his rejection by The Abbey. Did that illustrate the gap between rural Ireland and what was going on there and Dublin's imagined perception of what rural Ireland was?

GF: Oh yes. Dublin, now I didn't live in Dublin, you get the impression of two things. There are the Dublin people who don't understand rural Ireland and want to forget about it because some of them are not too far removed from rural Ireland themselves. Their fathers or grandfathers came into Dublin. That's one thing. The other thing is that they have this notion, almost a Hollywood notion of rural Ireland. Either it's idealism or its out and out hatred. Well, hatred is too strong a word, criticism maybe. They call our football bog-ball, culchies and that. The other thing is then of course, you have people who are from the generation who went from the country to Dublin, then coming back and seeing rural Ireland changing and not liking the changes. There are bungalows here in rural Ireland, this is not Celtic-tiger times now this is the 1950's and 1960's. And they want to keep rural Ireland, as it was, backward, and ignorant as they imagined it. John B. was again saying 'ok, we might have a backwardness in our culture, we might have a kind of an ignorance, but we are also real people who are capable of overcoming our problems, who are capable of progress. We are not mired in the past. We are ready and able to progress.' I think Dublin didn't like that either, some people, particularly the rural people up there. And also you get Americans coming back looking for the "real Ireland, where are the lepreeshans (leprechauns)" This kind of stuff.

BD: And he challenged all that. Now I'd like to address the universality of his themes. Human failings etc. and just to link up with the previous line ('In Memoriam- John B. Keane' – G. Fitzmaurice): "Ireland's primal heart, where all true drama's played".

GF: First of all if you look at *Sive*, *Sive* has the oldest theme in the world, the lecherous old man looking to have a young woman in his bed. That theme comes from Greece and earlier. Yes John B.'s themes are universal, the powerful woman, the matriarch. The matriarch in a patriarchal society is in itself a criticism of society. Look at the Bull and his wife in both the play, and the film, the Brenda Fricker character as well as the one in the play. He is very universal. Anyone from any culture can understand his

characters because these prototypical things are common to all cultures that I know of anyway, and you see them in cinemas. That's where we get other cultures mainly if we don't get too much American stuff. In the French cinema, in the Bollywood now of the Indian cinema, and in all this stuff you can see the universal themes. But sure aren't we all human, isn't this it. It's where the primal drama is played out in the human heart and the human imagination and I think John B. understood this very clearly. And this is why John B. is played more so today maybe that he was fifty years ago, because people are beginning to realise that this is very powerful theatre. And you have critics now like Fintan O'Toole who are taking John B. very seriously. Fintan, who would be an out and out Tom Murphy man, taking John B. very seriously. Ben Barnes and the various directors, Garry Hynes, you know, people who are really at the cutting edge of theatre showing aspects of John B. that are always there but they maybe weren't shown in the earlier productions. The Mena that was played in the Garry Hynes production was a woman who had sexual needs, we didn't see that maybe in the earlier productions, but clearly she was. I mean a woman with sexual needs living in a house with a young girl Sive and the old grandmother, wanting a space of her own. What does any woman want in a marriage but a space of her own? This maybe wasn't played up in the earlier productions. She's shown just as a harridan who wants rid of Sive. But there are depths of John B. that have maybe yet to be plumbed.

BD: Even earlier on in his career he wasn't taken seriously he was seen as the country boy, and now I saw Druid doing *Big Maggie* and it was magic and it shows there are levels yet to be plumbed in his work.

GF: Yes, particularly in his women.

BD: Finally, The time of John B.'s writing was a time of change in a rural post-colonial Ireland. As you said yourself emigration, the birth of the idea of a modern family, the role of women in society, the battle between industrialization and agriculture. How do you think John illustrated these themes through those plays?

GF: Well in *The Field* you have a traditional society of 'I've worked this land, morally I'm entitled to it' whereas legally he is not. The guy with the most money who wants to turn the field into something else is. For a farmer like the Bull McCabe who stands for most of rural Ireland, the farming community, to turn an agricultural field that has been made into land, reclaimed by his bare hands by the Bull and his son, into a quarry is a sin against nature. And nature is very big in these people. Sometimes they are Christians but they are also pagans. Nature is huge in their lives, the four seasons, the way they celebrated May eve for instance, going out with the holy water to the four ends of the land and sowing the face of the dead, November, Halloween, all this stuff. These people are as pagan as they are Christian and nature is a huge force in their lives because they are living elementally. There is the Bull and he is met with an irresistible force, a changing Ireland, the guy with the money coming in and destroying him. In the play he is not as defied as he is in the film. But the Bull's ending in the play when he says you know the priest will be transferred, the guard will be transferred, the woman will forget about it, everybody will forget about this man except the Bull.

BD: He battles with his own conscience. He plays the villain but you also can identify with him.

GF: This is John B. like, you can identify with him too. You have the new forces of society coming in also in *Sive*. In so far as you have the convent educated young girl aided and abetted by her grandmother mind you that wants a new life. She wants to go with Liam Scuab, she wants a family of her own, to go with Liam Scuab and set up their own house. Whereas Mena is trapped in the old style with the grandmother there and she sees if Sive marries Seán Dóta that she can be rid of the old lady as well. Then she can have a new life for herself. The whole thing is a clash between the old and the new.

BD: It's the battleground.

GF: Yes.

BD: I think we are done Gabriel. It has been most interesting talking to you.

GF: That was a great interview, thank you very much, I wish you well with it.

End of interview.

Appendix Three – ‘In Memoriam John B. Keane’.

‘In Memoriam John B. Keane’

By Gabriel Fitzmaurice:

New Ireland holds you were of Ireland Past,
An Ireland that was changing as you wrote,
That you didn’t move with Ireland that was fast
Changing from the times we took the boat

To be Paddies in an England where we’d slave
For a bedroom and a few pints down the pub;
Ireland of the navy’s in its grave
We’ve money now where once we used to sub.

‘He didn’t move with Ireland’: let those who
Follow fashion take thought for today;
As Ireland lost its past, a poet, you knew
The timeless things: you wrote them plot and play.

You didn’t move with Ireland. No! You stayed
With the primal heart where all true drama’s played.

(Fitzmaurice, 2004, p. 28).