

# بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم



HOSSAM MAGHRABY



# شبكة المعلومات الجامعية التوثيق الالكتروني والميكرو فيلم



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# جامعة عين شمس

## التوثيق الإلكتروني والميكروفيلم

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# بعض الوثائق الأصلية تالفة



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بالرسالة صفحات

لم ترد بالأصل



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***SUPRA - REALISTIC ELEMENTS IN  
SELECTED***

B1 2929

***PLAYS OF BRIAN FRIEL***

A Ph.D. Dissertation Presented to  
The Faculty of Arts, Tanta University

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**بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ**

**رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً**

**وَهَيِّئْ لَنَا مِنْ أَمْرِنَا رَشَدًا**

*This work is dedicated*

*to*

*my husband, Ahmed.*

*Thank you for everything*



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## Preface

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the dramatic contribution of Brian Friel to the contemporary Irish drama from a technical perspective and to carry out a study of his bold experimental ventures in nine of his plays. Although realism clearly stamps the majority of his drama, Friel has a recurrent tendency to liberate himself from the fetters of traditional dramaturgy. Friel's supra-realism relies on two elements that may seem paradoxical: classical Greek drama and the experiments of modern dramatists. The study at hand will attempt to answer why he keeps on resorting to supra-realism shifting from one form to another, adopting the selective attitude of the post modernist. It will also furnish the reader with the variety of methods and techniques that influenced Friel's drama. These include expressionism, Brecht's epic theatre, the absurd theatre, the "teatro grotesco" of Pirandello as well as the art of T.S. Eliot, Wagner and Tennessee Williams. A study of the themes will also be indispensable for Friel's drama where form and content are inseparable. The four main chapters will trace the development of Friel's supra-realistic technique throughout his dramatic career beginning from the 1960s up to 1990s.

Brian Friel (1929\_ ) is an Irish playwright who is unanimously regarded as Ireland's first living dramatist. His plays have won an international acclaim in world theatres. He began his life as a teacher in primary and intermediate schools in Derry. His writing career started in 1952 when he began to write short stories for the *New Yorker*. However, he decided to abandon the short story form for playwriting and his dramatic career was launched in 1958 when the BBC produced his two radio plays: *A Sort of Freedom* and *To This Hard House*. In 1962 the Abbey Theatre produced his first stage play, *The Enemy Within*. However, his highly



successful *Philadelphia Here I Come!* (1964) with its original device of the split identity of the protagonist, was the first sign that an innovative, world-wide Irish dramatist is at hand. It was followed by *The Loves Of Cass McGuire* (1966) and *Lovers* (1967) whose untraditional forms affirmed a rising tendency in Friel towards experimentation. Thus, his early drama in the sixties is marked by a nascent but strong and promising tendency towards a renewal of forms and techniques.

The 1970s witnessed for Friel a stage of full maturity and mastery of both realistic and supra-realistic techniques, with each realistic play followed by a supra-realistic one. In 1971 he presented *The Gentle Island* in realistic form, to be followed by *The Freedom Of The City* (1973) in a highly expressionistic form. In *Volunteers* (1975) he returned to realism only to follow it two years later by *Living Quarters* with an unusually inside-out structure and rehearsal form. His realistic play *Aristocrats* was produced in 1979 and in the same year, *Faith Healer*, Friel's most experimental play came to crown the 1970s. Friel's constantly shifting movement from realism to supra-realism testifies to a perpetual quest for the most suitable form for his thoughts.

The 1980s witnessed a promotion in Friel's status as a public and a social persona and a relevant eclipse in his writing abilities, particularly the supra-realistic output. In 1980 he cofounded the Field Day Theatre Company whose first production was his own *Translations* (1980) which is arguably his best and which won the Ewart – Biggs Peace Prize in 1981. In 1982 Friel was elected a member of Aosdana, the National treasury of Irish Artists and in 1983 he was awarded honorary D. Lit. by the National University of Ireland. Then, in 1987 he was appointed to the Irish Senate.

After *Translations*, he wrote only two plays: *The Communication Cord* (1982) and *Making History* (1988) as well as two adaptations, all in realistic form.

However, the 1990s introduced an unexpected revival in Friel's dramatic talent, particularly his supra-realistic powers. His *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990) proved his ever reviving dramatic talent. It won the New York Tony Award for the best play of 1992. In 1993, he introduced his *Wonderful Tennessee*, a new venture in the spiritual, ritualistic realm of myths. *Molly Sweeney* followed it in 1994 in a monologue form that makes it similar to his strange *Faith Healer*. His recent production, *Give me Your Answer. Do!* (1997) is still unpublished and is excluded from the two recent collections of his plays: *Brian Friel. Plays 1* (1996) and *Brian Friel. Plays 2* (1999) which include seven of the nine plays that form the material of the present study.

Chapter I, "Brian Friel: Supra-Realism and the Irish Drama" presents an artistic background about Friel as an Irish playwright and sheds light on his concept of dramatic art in relation to contemporary Irish drama. Friel came on the head of a new group of aspiring young dramatists to end the state of decline that befell the Irish theatre during the 1930s. The work of this new group that included Friel, Thomas Murphy, Hugh Leonard and John Keane formed what critics always regarded as the second renaissance of modern Irish drama. The second part of the chapter clarifies the concept of supra-realism as a tendency to go beyond the traditional forms of realistic drama. Thus a variety of dramatic genres and avantgarde techniques that influenced Friel, are discussed. These include

expressionism, the absurd theatre, and the theatres of Brecht, Pirandello and others.

Chapter II, "The 1960s: Promising Seeds in the Early Drama" handles Friel's supra-realistic plays in the 1960s: *Philadelphia Here I Come!*, *The loves Cass Mc Guire* and *Lovers*. In the first play, Friel invented the device of the split identity of the protagonist, which is also a modern variation on the classical mask in Greek drama. In *The Loves of Cass Mc Gurie*, Friel's use of the theatre as an expressive medium is evident in the celebrations, rhapsodies and music that dramatize the dreams of the three central characters. Wagner's effect is clear in the play's theatrical tableaux. *Lovers* is predominated by the dream atmosphere, memories and flashbacks in a new form that marks the two parts of the play: "Winners" and "Losers". The influence of Brecht is evident in the use of two commentators.

Chapter III, "The 1970s: Years of Flourishing Maturity" shows how Friel's supra-realistic ventures came to the fore during the 1970s. This is apparent in his boldly experimental three plays: *The Freedom of the City*, *Living Quarters* and *Faith Healer*. Expressionism prevails over *The Freedom of the City* through the episodic structure, flashbacks, disconnected scenes, the unusual time scheme and the nightmare atmosphere. In *Living Quarters* the influence of Pirandello is evident in the inside-out structure of the play that takes the form of a theatrical rehearsal in which the characters are allowed to stop the flow of events to comment on action and criticize characters' behavior. Critics regard *Faith Healer* as the boldest experimental Friel play, owing to its unfamiliar structure that is composed of four long monologues recited by three characters who directly



address the audience. The chapter is concluded by implying that the 1980s have been a period of relative decline in Friel's writing career and that this decade witnessed no supra-realistic ventures.

Chapter IV, "The 1990s: The Plentiful Harvest" handles Brian Friel's dramatic output during the 1990s that reassured a surprising shift in Friel's dramatic talent that yielded unprecedented supra-realistic ventures. This is most evident in *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Wonderful Tennessee* and *Molly Sweeney*. The first two reveal how Friel deftly uses music, dance and ritual as non-verbal devices to explore the sub-conscience of his characters to express their spiritual tremors and hidden desire. The dream atmosphere predominates over the two plays through the effective use of lights, music, silences and melting scenes. *Molly Sweeney* shares with *Faith Healer* the undramatic form and structure, being composed of disconnected monologues by three characters addressing the audience and narrating the past.

Finally, the "Assessment" presents a comprehensive survey of Friel's supra-realistic output and his contribution to modern Irish drama. The study comes to the conclusion that if Friel keeps on deviating from realism, he is by no means an anti-realist. In almost all of his plays he bears the burdens and grieves of the Irish nation, regardless of the form that he chooses for each play. Thus, he advocates a particular post-modernist attitude toward realism. Although he keeps on changing forms and borrowing from a variety of genres, all his subjects remain deeply rooted in the Irish reality.