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History, Truth and Mythmaking in Thomas Kilroy's *The O'neill* and Brian Friel's *Making History*

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Abstract: *In a programme note to his play Making History, Friel said that 'history and fiction are related and comparable forms of discourse and that an historical text is a kind of literary artifact .' Approached in this context, two plays focusing on a significant date of Irish history, the sixteenth century Anglo Irish relations revolving around Hugh O ' Neill, the Earl of Tyrone offer two different versions of the same historical period. The O'Neill written by Thomas Kilroy and Making History by his contemporary playwright Brian Friel. Both playwrights drew upon Sean O'Faolain's biography, The O 'Neill (1942). Kilroy focuses on O'Neill's dilemma between his loyalty to his traditional Gaelic heritage and his commitment to the new modern order. In Friel's play, O'Neill is portrayed as a leader who is aware that he is making history. Discussing history openly with Lombard, the historian who is recording the moment, O'Neill reads history differently from him and suggests to Lombard to put Mabel, his wife, at the centre of his history of O'Neill. However, in the historical myth, Lombard is creating she remains peripheral and O'Neill becomes a hero of counter-reformation. It is Friel in his own re-making of history who will reinstate her in the centre about four hundred years later. This re-making has, in its turn, 'metabiologically' created an atmosphere leading to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. The paper will focus on this multiple fictive and real functions of history as truth and mythmaking in the plays mentioned above.*

Keywords: *history, truth, myth, O'Neill, Mabel, Anglo-Irish relations, 16th century*

Thomas Kilroy'un The O'neill ve Brian Friel'in Making History Oyunlarında Tarih, Gerçeklik ve Tarihi Mitleştirmek

Öz: *Making History adlı oyununda Brian Friel tarih ile kurgunun bağlantılı olduğunu, birbirleriyle kıyaslanabilir söylem biçimleri olarak bir tür edebî sanat eseri olduğunu ileri sürmüştür. Bu bakış açısıyla incelendiğinde hem Thomas Kilroy'un The O'Neill adlı oyunu, hem de çağdaşı oyun yazarı Brian Friel'ın Making History adlı oyunu İrlanda tarihinin dönüm noktası sayılan Yellowford İsyanı ve Kinsale Yenilgisi çerçevesinde Hugh O'Neill'ın İngilizlere karşı başkaldırışını ele alır. Sean O'Faolain'in 1942 yılında yayınlanan ünlü yaşamöyküsü The O'Neill'i temel alan her iki oyunda da tarih yeniden şekillendirilerek O'Neill'in klan başı olduğu İrlanda'nın eski gelenekleri ile eğitimini gördüğü modern İngiltere arasındaki ikilemi eksen alınır. Friel'ın oyununda O'Neill tarih yazdığının farkında olan bir lider olarak yansıtılır. O dönemin tarihini kayda geçiren Lombard ile tartışan O'Neill tarihi farklı şekilde okur ve ve Lombard'a karısı Mabel'i O'Neill'in tarihinin*

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merkezine yerleştirmesini önerir. Ancak, Lombard'ın oluşturduğu tarihi efsanede Mabel geçici olarak yer almaktadır ve O'Neill karşı devrimin bir kahramanı olur. Dört yüzyıl sonrası için olayın odak noktasını O'Neill oluşturur. Bu şekilde 1988 yılındaki Good Friday Agreement şekillendirilir. Bu makale yukarıda söz edilen oyunlarda tarih ve efsanenin çoklu kurgusal ve gerçek işlevleri üzerine kuruludur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *tarih, gerçek, mit, O'Neill, Mabel, İngiliz-Irlanda Bağlantısı, 16. Yüzyıl*

To give an accurate description of what has never happened is not merely the proper occupation of the historian, but the inalienable privilege of any man of arts and culture.
Oscar Wilde, The Critic as Artist

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I. Introduction

The O'Neill and *Making History* by two contemporary Irish playwrights, Thomas Kilroy and Brian Friel are about a crucial historical moment for Irish history, the rebellion of the Irish chieftains against the English and their ultimate failure at The Battle of Kinsale that resulted with The Flight of The Earls and the 'planting' of their confiscated properties with the English during the reign of Elizabeth I and then the Scots during the reign of King James VI, written from different perspectives.

The O'Neill was first produced at the Peacock Theatre on 30 May1969 and Making History about twenty years later by Field Day Theatre Company in the Guildhall, Derry on 20 September 1988. Both playwrights were influenced by Sean O'Faolein's book *The Great O'Neill* which was published in 1942. In fact, Sean O'Faloein suggested the theme Brian Friel was to focus on in his play: 'If anyone wished to make a study of the manner in which historical myths are created he might well take O'Neill as an example… a talented dramatist might write an informative, entertaining, ironical play on the theme of the living man helplessly watching his translation into a yıldız in the face of all the facts that had reduced him to poverty, exile, and defeat.'(Coult, 2003:100). Ironically, the book that influenced Kilroy and Friel was itself, as later revisionist historians showed, partly fictive because in fact Hugh O'Neill was not raised by Sir Henry Sidney in Penthurst England but by the Hoveden Family in the Pale (Fogarty, 2002:22) . Sir Henry Sidney supported him later on in Ireland.

Questioning "the whole basis of the historian's calling" (Coult, 2003:101) , Brian Friel shows how history is constructed ideologically by the historian Lombard who shapes Hugh O'Neill as an Irish hero serving the interests of the Roman Catholic Church against Protestant Reformism. (Coult, 2003:101). In fact Lombard did not write such a hagiographical biography but "a tract, *De Regno Hiberniae sanctorum insula commentarius* in 1598-1599 while a university student in Rome for papal support ("Peter Lombard (c.1555-1625)").

Act I of Kilroy's play starts with the colonialistic definition of the Irish as 'uncivilized'. It is the imperialistic outlook that Marx otherwise expressed in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Napoleon Bonaparte concerning the farmers: They cannot represent themselves. They must be represented. Edward Said's *Orientalism* opens with this quote by Marx. In the 1934 Moscow translation we have:

> Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language. Thus Luther put on the mask of the Apostle Paul, the Revolution of 1789-1814 draped itself alternately in the guise of the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire, and the Revolution of 1848 knew nothing better to do than to parody, now 1789, now the revolutionary tradition of 1793-95. In like manner, the beginner who has learned a new language always translates it back into his mother tongue, but he assimilates the spirit of the new language and expresses himself freely in it only when he moves in it without recalling the old and when he forgets his native tongue (Marx, 1995, 1999)

Both Thomas Kilroy and Brian Friel deal with this problem of representation implicated by the prevalent power relationships in the shaping of private and communal identities and the making and representation of history:

> CECIL: …You see an Irishman's blood is not like ours, my lord. It is fat with unnatural substances which break out like boils in fierce passion and anger…(p.14).
>
> CECIL: Your people are no more fit for self-government than the black savages of hot countries. You will find that they will betray you behind your back (p.14).

The bloody Tudor conquest mirrors the 'civilized' outlook on those conquered in the words of the famous poet of Elizabethan England, the writer of *The Faerie Queene.* As secretary to Sir Arthur Grey, 14th Baron Grey de Winton , the ruthless Lord Deputy of Ireland, appointed by Queen Elizabeth, Edmund Spenser defended this brutal lord who, against his promise, infamously massacred the Irish, Italian and Spanish troops who surrendered in The Siege of Smerwick. After the supression of the Second Desmond Rebellion, Edmund Spenser, obviously taking pride in the accomplishment of his task,

described the situation as follows *in A View of the Present Situation of Ireland* which he wrote in 1596 in the form of a dialogue between Eoduxus and Irenius :

> Out of everye corner of the woode and glenns they came creepinge forth upon theire handes, for theire legges could not beare them; they looked Anatomies [of] death, they spake like ghostes, crying out of theire graves; they did eate of the carrions, happye wheare they could find them, yea, and one another soone after, in soe much as the verye carcasses they spared not to scrape out of theire graves; and if they found a plott of water-cresses or shamrockes, theyr they flocked as to a feast… in a shorte space there were none almost left, and a most populous and plentyfull countrye suddenly lefte voyde of man or beast: yett sure in all that warr, there perished not manye by the sworde, but all by the extreamytie of famine ... they themselves had wrought (Spenser)

In *The O'Neill*, this racist outlook that is an integral part of the colonialist mentality is conveyed through "William Cecil, later Lord Burghley, who served Queen Elizabeth I for 40 years (1558–98), first as principal secretary, later as lord high treasurer and throughout as an active member of her privy council" (Maginn, 2012).

The Desmond Rebellion referred to by Mountfort in the play was undertaken by feudal lords against the interference of central government with their rule. In *The O'Neill* this conflict between what the English saw as progress and civilization via their altering the traditional Gaelic society and the fight of the Irish clans for the preservation of the Gaelic way of life is worded in the dialogue between Cecil and O'Neill when the play opens:

> CECIL: …Watch it. This man has learned our ways. He has brought back with him into the mists and slush of Irish forests a germ of the greatest civilization since the Ceasars. (Kilroy, 1995:13)
>
> …
>
> CECIL: (*Angrily*) I repeat. This man is dangerous only in so far as he has imposed our ideas on his savage race. (Kilroy, 1995:13)
>
> O'NEILL: (*With a great roar*): We fight for the cause of unity, unity of all Irıshmen under a common Gaelic culture, language and law. Unity of Eyrope under Rome. The resurrection of Christendom. The healing of the wound made by the wolf Luther. (Kilroy, 1995:13)
>
> CECIL (To Mountjoy) Religion has something to do with it, of course. It always has, with those Irish. But it is essentially a problem of development. The old decayed world of the Irish must be replaced by the new order. It is a rule of nature that the weak must give way to the strong. (Kilroy, 1995:13)

This clash between the 'old' and the 'new' is reverberated by the clansmen who oppose O'Neill's involvement with the English and are vehemently against his marriage to Mabel Bagenal, The Queen's Marshal Sir Henry Bagenal's sister considered to be one

of the 'Upstarts'. O'Neill supports the changes brought by the English. He is now "Earl of Tyrone" under the Great Seal of England" (Kilroy, 1995:18) which the other clans will not like:

> CLANSMAN 2: They won't like this in Killetra and Brassilough.
>
> O'NEILL: They'll learn O'Quinn. Times are changing. And we have to change too. We must live with the rest of the world.
>
> CLANSMAN 1: Remember, Hugh O'Neill, the course of your grandfather, Con Bacach, on all those who'd learn English, sow corn or build houses. It's against the nature of the Irish to do any of those things.(Kilroy, 1995: 18)

The religious conflict, in which the rebels claimed that they were upholding Catholicism against a Protestant queen whom Pope had proclaimed a heretic by the papal bull *Regnans Excelsis* in 1570 continues in O'Neill's retort to Cecil above.

This historical framework is conveyed in The *O'Neill* in two acts. The time of Act I is set as The Battle of Yellowford in and the years before and Act II as the the Battle of Yellowford and the years after. As Anne Fogarty comments , "Although the play, in effect, traces the experiences of O'Neill from the Battle of the Yellow Ford in 1598 to the Treaty of Mellifont in 1603, it utilizes a series of flashbacks, repetitions and digressions to complicate this narrative" (Kilroy, 1995: 23).

The class based nature of the rebellions is expressed clearly at the beginning of the play when Mountfort reads out the claims of O'Neill victorious over the English at Yellowford. Although he will later on put his position realistically as not ready to take the whole of Ulster yet (Kilroy, 1995: 19), here, O'Neill claims to be speaking in the name of all Ireland:

O'NEILL: Read out our claims now, Master Mountfort, so that everyone may know what Ireland demands.

The third claim read out by Master Mountfort is the one that will cause O'Neill to have an opportunistic relationship with the English until the ultimate failure and The Flight of the Earls, fighting and asking for pardon whenever it is convenient for him to do so: "That O'Neill and O'Donnell with all their partakers may peaceably enjoy all lands and privileges that did appertain to their predecessors two hundred years ago" (Kilroy, 1995:11). At the end of the play, O'Neill's concern after his defeat will be his lands again. Although the Queen has died, this knowledge is hidden from him by Cecil who wants O'Neill to succumb completely. For Mountjoy now "O'Neill is a beggarman on his knees" (Kilroy, 1995:70).

> MOUNTJOY: Look here, O'Neill, for the first time in history every acre of this island is properly under the control of the Crown. Don't you know what this means?

> O'NEILL: I'll go to London! I'll speak before the throne itself. I know my word will be believed. Haven't I done good service in the past? Didn't I fight Maguire for the Queen in '93? You don't understand the nature of this rebellion. But the Queen- the Queen, she'll understand.
>
> *The way of O'Neill is barred by men.*
>
> MOUNTJOY: You will stay here until you submit.
>
> O'NEILL: Alright. So! What an I promised on the strength of this submission, Lord Deputy?
>
> MOUNTJOY: A pardon in the name of the Queen. Your restoration to the title Earl of Tyrone. That is all.
>
> O'Neill: Do you think Her Majesty will leave us O'Neills our lands? (Kilroy, 1995:71)

The end of the play shows us an O'Neill who disdains power and talks of responsibility for his people.

> MOUNTJOY: I understand that any power in this land other yhan the Queen's power is outrageous and a threat to law and order.
>
> O'NEILL: Power? Who's talking about power? I want no power, believe me. I've had my bellyful of that. And of the flood of madness which it lets loose. I have a simple responsibility as of-father to son. Just like that. These are simple people. Why must they suffer? They are only the old men, women and the children.
>
> MOUNTJOY: They are the O'Neills, aren't they? (Kilroy, 1995:72).

The three spies have been analysed as representative of fluid identities that question an ethnically stable Irish identity (Fogarty, 2002:24) and as fulfilling the function of the chorus (Dubost, 2007:11) but their role as members of the lower classes have been overlooked. In contrast to the landed feudal lords and their demands Mahon speaks on behalf of the 'poor' giving a Marxist outlook on history:

> MAHON: It's hard to know who's up and who's down. One day it's the Irish, the next day it's the English. It's the poor people that suffers the end of it all. (Kilroy, 1995:50)

Into the world of warring clans and wars with the colonialist English invaders, O'Neill introduces, of all women, Mabel Bagenal, The Queen's Marshal Sir Henry Bagenal's sister, one of the New English 'the Upstarts' as they are degradingly called by the Irish. She comes to another world from her own, Newry, in fact from only fifty miles away from Dungannon. Bored with having to live in "a garrison town" that she " hated" with "all those awful wives sitting all day worrying about Government pay and pensions, complaining about Irish servants and Irish wars" Mabel finds her new life "wonderful" (Kilroy, 1995:26)

> MABEL: …I'd give anything for such a life. I'd gather nuts and berries form my husband. I'd have him skin deer and dye pelts for our bed.
>
> O'NEILL: You haven't even begun to understand.
>
> MABEL: We'd eat wild honey and salmon and dring Spanish wine.
>
> O'NEILL: Spanish wine is not for loyalists like you and me, Mabel.
>
> MABEL: (*Near to tears*) Oh why are you always trying to depress me?
>
> O'NEILL: Because you're talking dream talk, girl. That's why. You haven't an earthly notion of what it's like to be in Dungannon (Kilroy, 1995:26).

Mabel's high esteem of her own culture finds expression in the following dialogue against which O'Neill warns her although he also wishes to have change:

> MABEL: But you said you'd welcome civility and good manners at Dungannon. I'm not a good housewife, Hugh, but I can learn. I'd give anything, anything to attend on you, to teach your womenfolk the comforts of living.
>
> O'NEILL: Huh! They'd quarter you within a week.
>
> MABEL: And who are *they*, might I ask?
>
> O'NEILL: They are the women of the clan. They are the hereditary whores of the O'Neills who carry daggers as other women carry pins. (Kilroy, 1995:26)

The feudal, patriarchal outlook on women is conveyed not only through Mabel but "the whore" Roisin, O'Neill's "kept woman" (Kilroy, 1995:30) whose foul defiance of Mabel and Hugh O'Neill in front of the clansmen at the banquet is met with disapproval by the O'Neill, not because of Mabel's humiliation but because he finds the way she talks in the presence of Mountfort, the Papal emissary, inappropriate. (Kilroy, 1995:39) Mabel's 'dream talk' of a romantic Ireland is shattered by the brutal facticity of Irish life. In contrast to her romantic announcement that she fell in love with this man who has "a loving, strong, braveheart" (Kilroy, 1995:24) Roisin vulgarly talks about sex but she also listens to his nightmares and consoles him like a friend. As in Nora of *A Doll's House* and Jimmy's "squirrel" Alison Porter of *Look Back In Anger*, Mabel is O'Neill's "little robin" (Kilroy, 1995:27) whereas Roisin accepts her role as "kept woman" and takes pride in being so: (Kilroy, 1995:30). Feeling the burden of his split personality, O'Neill asks Roisin:

> O'NEILL: Am I to be the first of the Irish with the English britches and an English tongue? Or the last of the O'Neills? Answer met hat. Or am I just something torn apart at the crotch between the two? What in God's name am I at all? (Kilroy, 1995:30)

From within the patriarchal way of life Roisin answers, defining Hugh O'Neill as a descendant of a patriarchal lineage:

> ROISIN: (*Half kneeling on the bed. A low monotone*) You are Hugh, son of Con Bacach, son of Con, son of Henry, son of Owen- (Kilroy, 1995:30).

'Whore' and 'lady' alike, it is women who bring civilized ways to men in the Irish clans as in The Epic of Gılgamesh. The Poet's blessing of the newly wed couple O'Neill and Mabel Bagenal also ends on a patriarchal vein: "May they make men " (Kilroy, 1995:32).

Queen Elizabeth has her share of patriarchal insults as well. Although Mountfort is English, his religious allegiance as a Catholic makes him call for unity in Ireland as part of a Catholic Europe.

> MOUNTFORT: … Lord O'Neill, we are in a great movement of unity, unity of state and faith, where Pope and Prince may encompass our total existence. We are trying to establish the fixed poles of our universe, Church and State. This is harmony, order and the true end of our politics.
> O'NEILL: I'm afraid, Master Mountford, our people too are split. They are seldom one on anything.
> MOUNTFORT: It is our mission to make them one, Lord O'Neill.(*Quite carried away*) Brother and brother, clan and clan, colonist and native, all in Ireland must melt into a common purpose. (Kilroy, 1995:44)

In his answer to Mountfort to the effect that they "will go out now and show the Protestants how to fight…" (Kilroy, 1995:44), O'Neill's brother Art refers to another woman, St. Brigid; calling for her help together with St. Patrick's "And with the help of God and our own St. Patrick and St. Brigid we'll drive the buggers into the Irish say(sea) (Kilroy, 1995:44).

Women, if not revered as real women, are revered as saints in feudal Ireland based on the myths that have been created around their names in another sort of story-telling:

> Not alone was St. Bridget a patroness of students, but she also founded a school of art, including metal work and illumination, over which St. Conleth presided. From the Kildare scriptorium came the wondrous book of the Gospels, which elicited unbounded praise from Giraldus Cambrensis , but which has disappeared since the Reformation. According to this twelfth- century ecclesiastic, nothing that he had ever seen was at all comparable to the "Book of Kildare", every page of which was gorgeously illuminated, and he concludes a most laudatory notice by saying that the interlaced work and the harmony of the colours left the impression that "all this is the work of angelic, and not human skill". Small wonder that Gerald Barry assumed the book to have been written night after night as St. Bridget prayed, "an angel furnishing the designs, the scribe copying". Even allowing for the exaggerated stories told of St. Brigid by her numerous biographers, it is certain that she ranks as one of the most remarkable Irishwomen of the fifth century and as

> the Patroness of Ireland. She is lovingly called the "Queen of the South: the Mary of the Gael" by a writer in the "Leabhar Breac". St. Brigid died leaving a cathedral city and school that became famous all over Europe. In her honour St. Ultan wrote a hymn commencing:
>
> Christus in nostra insula
> Que vocatur Hivernia
> Ostensus est hominibus
> Maximis mirabilibus
> Que perfecit per felicem
> Celestis vite virginem
> Precellentem pro merito
> Magno in numdi circulo.
>
> (In our island of Hibernia Christ was made known to man by the very great miracles which he performed through the happy virgin of celestial life, famous for her merits through the whole world.) (Grattan-Flood, 1907)

St. Brigid, "whose happy virgin celestial life" lighted the world, is contrasted to Queen Elizabeth who is, according to Mountfort, "an usurper" (Kilroy, 1995:45).

> CLANSMEN: Ah, wouldn't it be better off to have religion out of it altogether.
>
> *There are murmurs of agreement.*
>
> Asking them not to listen to "self-styled theologians " who " will "tell [them] that it is [their] God-given duty to obey [their] lawful monarch" (45), Mountfort goes on to address the clansmen as follows:
>
> MOUNTFORT:They will say that from the seat of the Government flows the order of society, justice, decorum and the rule of law. This in itself is true. But listen to me, men of Ireland. We are not dealing here with our lawful Prince. We are confronted with the usurper, Elizabeth. This she-serpent, Elizabeth put out the light of Christendom. Satan now reigns in the guise of a female. This Jezabel has come out of darkness, armed and must be cut down with the sword of righteousness.
>
> *He produces a scroll.*
>
> In the very words of His Holiness Pope Pius V in the sacred bull, *Regnans in Excelsis*, it is proclaimed that Elizabeth be deposed from her throne and cast out in excommunication from the One, True and Roman Churh and that her subjects are thereby relieved of all allegiance…
>
> I say to you that when a government seks to undermine our Faith it is a grave, moral duty on all of us to take up arms against that government. Christians of Ireland, that is your crusade and this (taking the banner) is

> your standard. Look at it. It has already been stained by the blood of martyrs. It was carried by. Fitzmaurice in the Holy War of Munster when the tyrant Elizabeth caused the men of Munster to die in torture she left us this relic lest we forget, and we will not forget. Our prayer must be the prayer of valorous Judith in the Bible who would not allow the foreigner, the unbeliever to ravish her. In this way too we pray as the raging enemy seeks to lay hands on the fair limbs or our virgin land. (Kilroy, 1995:45-46)

Thus, Irish history is politically manouvred by Mountfort for the Catholic cause. Queen Elizabeth is likened to the Satan of Eden who is gendered as "she" (45) and to Jezabel who persecuted and slayed prophets (I Kings 18,4) and "brought about the death of Nabuth in order to confiscate a vineyard which he had refused to sell to Achab (I Kings 21). After Jezabel whose story is considered as deuteronomical by Catholics but an apocryphical story by the Protestants, another Biblical reference is to Judith who saved Israel by slaying Holofernes, the general of Nebuchadnezzar. Queen Elizabeth is hence likened to Holofernes who must be beheaded by the Catholics who are in the position of Judith. (Judith 10)

The 'Virgin Queen' is openly called " a whore" by O' Flannigan, one of the spies who has now changed sides and appears to be on the side of O'Neill: "Down with the whore Elizabeth" (Kilroy, 1995:50). The epithet "virgin" is shiftingly used in the play for the land and the Irish Catholic Saint Bridgid and by its opposite, "whore", for the Virgin Queen Elizabeth.

Making History is a rewriting of Hugh O'Neill's life in two acts before and after The Battle of Kinsale that was a determining date in Irish history as stated above.

In the Programme Note for *Making History* in 1988, Brian Friel expressed his idea of rewriting history openly:

> Making History is a dramatic fiction that uses some actual and some imagined events in the life of Hugh O'Neill to make a story. I have tried to be objective and faithful- after my artistic fashion- to the empirical method. But when there was tension between historical 'fact and the imperative of the fiction. I'm glad to say I kept faith with the narrative. For example, even though Mabel, Hugh's wife, died in 1591, it suited my story to keep her alive for another ten years. Part of me regrets taking these occasional liberties. But then I remind myself that history and fiction are related and comparable forms of discourse and that an historical text is a kind of literary artifact. And then I am grateful that these regrets were never inhibiting. (Murray, 1999:135).

History, as Brian Friel has Peter Lombard contemplate, is not a matter of 'truth' or ' falsity'. (Friel, 1999:257). It is a kind of " story telling". The stories Hugh O'Neill and Lombard want to have told are different. O'Neill pleads: "Don't embalm me in pieties" (Friel, 1999:330). He wants his private life-story told with his failures as well as his triumphs with Mabel holding the central place in it (Friel, 1999:333) ; Lombard intends

to offer " Gaelic Ireland two things.. this narrative that has the elements of myth. And… Hugh O'Neill as a national hero. A hero and the story of a hero"(Friel, 1999:335). As Anne Fogarty reiterates Paul Ricoeur, "history constantly faces the contradiction that the objectivity to which it aspires cannot work unless it also gives us an insight into subjectivity" (2002:32). As Lombard says, when writing the 'story' of Harry Hoveden, for instance, there are many "truths" (Friel, 1999:335) and the historian has to choose what he calls "minor details" (Friel, 1999:337). O 'Neill who insists that Mabel is given a central role in the Lombard is writing asks vehemently: "How- will – Mabel- be-portrayed? (Friel, 1999:336). In the "broad but very specific sweep" (Friel, 1999:336) of Hugh O'Neill's 'story', however, according to Lombard not only Mabel but no other woman has a place because "they didn't reroute the the course of history" (Friel, 1999:336). They didn't contribute to in Mabel's words the "the overall thing" (Friel, 1999:299).

> LOMBARD: If you're asking me will my story be as accurate as possible- of course it will. But are truth and falsity the poper criteria? I don't know. Maybe when the time comes, imagination will be as important as information (Friel, 1999:257).

Hugh O'Donnell's reaction to O'Neill's marriage is a striking comment reflecting woman's position and treatment in feudal Ireland:

> O'DONNELL: Keep her for a month Hugh - like that Mc Donald woman – that's the very job – keep her for a month and then kick her out. Amn't I right Harry? (*to O'Neill*). She won't mind, Hugh, honest to God. That's what she'll expect. Those New English are all half tramps. Give her some clothes and a few shillings and kick her back to Stradfordshire.
>
> O'NEILL: Her home is Newry.
>
> O'DONNELL: Wherever she is from.(to Harry) That's all she'll expect. I'm telling you. (Friel, 1999:264).

This is a world where The Irish and the English alike are atrociously brutal towards women and children:

> HARRY: …The Devlins and the Quinns are at each other's throats again. The Quinns raided The Quinns raided the Devlins' land three times last week; killed five women and two children; stole cattle and and horses and burned every hayfield in sight (Friel, 1999:250).
>
> O'DONNELL: Do you know where the Butcher Bagenal was last week? In the Finn valley, raiding and plundering with a new troop of soldiers from Chester- the way you'd blood greyhounds! Slaughtered and beheaded fifteen families that were out saving hay along the river bank, men, women and children. With the result that there are over a hundred refugees in my mother's place in Donegal town (Friel, 1999:266).

Massacres of women and children and refugees who stay alive on flight from their homes is, as stated throughout this article, the framework within which Mabel struggles to bring the 'civility' of a woman who is against wars and fighting and reproaches O'Neill for "fighting to preserve a fighting community"(Friel, 1999:300). In the play this peaceful insight of Mabel and her announcement of her pregnancy is juxtaposed by O'Neill's determination to keep his mistresses at home against Mabel's wish (Friel, 1999:300).

Her sister Mary's description of their drying the bog land in Newry and cultivating it is the struggle to civilize a place which resists it with tradition and the old Gaelic way of life:

> MARY: We sold about four thousand pounds of honey last year. To the army mostly. They would buy all he can produce but they don't always pay him. (*Pause)* And do you remember that bog land away to the left of the pond? Well, you wouldn't recognize that area now. We drained it and ploughed it and fenced it; and then planted a thousand trees there in four separate areas: apple and plum and damson and pear. Henry had them sent over from Kent. They are doing beautifully. (Friel, 1999:274)

Although they own the land, the colonist 'planters' who have settled in Ireland will not be able to feel completely at home just as Mabel will not be able to feel at home at Dungannon because as O'Neill reminds Mabel in Kilroy's play *The O'Neill* it is "the weight of time" that is the determining factor in the shaping of personal, cultural and national identity:

> MABEL: I hate that word, colonist. Loyalist, maybe. But not colonist. It implies no rights.
>
> O'NEILL: (*drily*) You are Irish. I am Irish. Madam, we are only separated by time, blood, religion. These are small things. History will not be able to tell the difference between us.
>
> MABEL: I should certainly hope not. If people have sense.
>
> O'NEILL: On the other hand you will never be Irish because you do not have the weight of time on your back.
>
> MABEL: Stop patronising me! (Kilroy, 1995: .23)

This dialogue, together with Roisin's praise of O'Neill's second wife Siobhan who was Irish and hence was used to Irish tradition (Kilroy, 1995:26) is also in a sense a precursor of Mary's metaphorical warning in Brian Friel's later play, *Making History*:

> MARY: … Don't plant the fennel near the dill or the two will cross-fertilize.
>
> MABEL: Is that bad?
>
> MARY: You'll end up with a seed that's neither one thing or the other. (Friel, 1999:275).

Mabel is portrayed as an intelligent woman who has insight into the political events and who gives advice to O'Neill although he does not pay heed. When Lombard comes with the news that Spain has promised to enter war against England, she tells him that the Spanish are using him and if he enters war he is bound to lose because " This is a war that England must win because her very survival is at stake" (Friel,1999:298). Like a political analyst she comments that "And you're taking on a nation state that is united and determined and powerful and led by a very resolute woman" (Friel. 1999:297). Accusing her of not sympathising with Gaelic culture, O'Neill says that he has to fight in order to save that civilization:

> MABEL: So go and fight. That's what you're best at. Fighting to preserve a fighting society.I don't care any more
>
> O'NEILL: Because you're not quite sure which side you're on ?
>
> MABEL: Why do you keep rejecting me; Hugh?
>
> O'NEILL: I can see it wouldn't break your heart to see the Gaelic order wiped out. But let's look at what the alternative is: the buccaneering, vulgar, material code of the new colonials-
>
> MABEL: (*leaving*) Excuse me.
>
> O'NEILL: The new 'civility' approved, we're told, by God Himself. Isn't that your coagulant-God? No. Better stil, God and trade. Now there's a combination. (Friel, 1999:300)

The new order of the English does not only entail the Anglicizing of the population and the lands but as O'Neill is proclaiming here, it is embarking on an enormous change from feudalism to the age of trade. O'Neill as well as Mabel are both split in their allegiances to both orders. O'Neill is ,on the one hand, trying to preserve the old traditions and the Gaelic way of life, while at the same time endeavouring to introduce the 'civility' he criticizes in some respects. Mabel isn't really at home with Hugh O'Neill's mistresses and wars, yet, she defends the mistresses to her sister Mary as part of Hugh's culture (Friel, 1999:279) and the 'pastoral farming' and cattle raising in Ireland against the cultivation of land, the 'taming' (Friel,1999:276) that the English brought to Ireland.

In *Making History* Mabel's story ends with the tragically moving account of Mabel's death at childbirth. (Friel, 1999: 316-317). O'Neill marries Catriona, his fourth wife, with whom he goes to Rome. She is, as Hugh O'Neill describes her, is often "..in the arms of some sweaty Roman with a thick neck and bushy stomach … "Enormously popular" with her "over-ripeness and vulgar Scottish accent" which he says the Romans find charming (O'Dowd, 2014:319).

II.Conclusion

Although two female monarchs ruled England and Ireland between 1553 and 1602, and many women including Edward Fitzgerald's own mother, Henry VIII's cousin, Lady Elizabeth Grey, were politically influential, the anecdote about the attitude of the Lieutenant of the Gentlemen Pensioners towards women is revealing of the patriarchal prejudice against women. Sent on a royal mission to Ireland in 1574, Edward Fitzgerald was ordered by the Queen to write reports about his negotiations with the Earl of Desmond to his wife or sister who would in turn report it to her. "Edward Fitzgerald preferred, however, to write to the queen's secretary, Lord Burghley, because 'In my opinion it is too weighty a matter for woman to deal with the queen in' Fitzgerald's comments reveal the gender dilemma of Tudor politics" (O'Dowd, 2014:9). In reality family relations were important and "…the political potential of noblewomen as prospective marriage partners was crucial for the balance of power in early sixteenth century Ireland" (O'Dowd, 2014:11). Hugh O'Neill's marriages allowed him to establish relationships with the eminent families "in Ulster: the O'Donnells, Maguires and MacMahons" as well as with families in East Ulster and Pale.The most famous of these marriages was his marriage to Mabel Bagenal (O'Dowd, 2014:12). The Bagenals had influential connections with the pricipal Pale families and the Dublin administration. Sir Patrick Barnewall married to Mabel's sister Margaret was also a leading member of the Pale community. Mabel eloped with Hugh O'Neill from their house. Later, when O'Neill was the leader of the clans fighting against the English he married his daughters into prominent families of the Pale as well. (O'Dowd, 2014,13) This history is reflected in the plays although they are on the surface based on the love affair between Hugh O'Neill and Mabel Bagenal who was twenty years younger than himself.

Mabel's fantasy about the fairies in the woods of Ireland in *The O'Neill* (Kilroy, 1995:25) and comments on the cultivation of land, which the Clansman in Kilroy's *The O'Neill* said was against the Gaelic way, as quoted above, and the description of it at length in *Making History* as the ' women want to bring to Ireland civilization' bring to mind the first Agricultural Revolution of tilling the soil and settling down in human history that dates back to more than ten thousand years ago and takes us back to the matriarchal society where goddesses such as Mother Earth, Demeter and Aine of Knockaine, "the Celtic Goddess of love and fertility, later known as the fairy queen, Goddess related to the moon, crops and farms or cattle" were revered long before the hero-worship period of feudal society. As O'Donnell comments after the defeat at Kinsale, "Anyhow the chieftain isn't all that important-isn't that what our bards tell us? The land is the goddess that every ruler in turn is married to. We come and we go but she stays the same" (Friel, 1999:308). It is a subtle comment by both playwrights on the prevailing 'truth' of the period, literary and historical.

The patriarchal turn of history continued into the capitalistic structure of soceity well into the twenty-first century. It is ironical to note that the enormous undertaking of The Field Day Project, *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, with its "role as a definer and evolver of Irish literary culture (Coult, 2003: 103) and Brian Friel and Thomas Kilroy

on the board, left out women writers and women writing completely and compensated for this 'neglect', upon much criticism by the feminists, in a separate later volume.

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