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**REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE IDENTITY IN ANNE DEVLIN'S  
*OURSELVES ALONE* AND MARIE JONES'S *SOMEWHERE OVER THE  
BALCONY***

**Master's Thesis**

**Sümeyye SÖNMEZYURT**

**Ankara-2024**



**ATILIM UNIVERSITY**  
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**FINANCE MASTER'S PROGRAMME**

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**Ankara-2024**

## ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

This is to certify that this thesis titled “Representation of Female Identity in Anne Devlin’s *Ourselves Alone* and Marie Jones’s *Somewhere Over The Balcony*” and prepared by Sümeyye SÖNMEZYURT meets with the committee’s approval unanimously as Master’s Thesis in the field of English Culture and Literature following the successful defense conducted on 11/11/2024.

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## ETHICAL STATEMENT

I accept and acknowledge that I have prepared this thesis study, prepared in line with the Thesis Writing Guidelines of Atılım University Graduate School of Social Sciences;

- within the framework of academic and ethical rules;
- presented the information, documents, evaluations, and results in a way that meets the rules of scientific ethics and morality,
- I have referenced each work from which I have benefited while preparing my thesis, and that
- I hereby present a unique study.

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Sümeyye SÖNMEZYURT

## ÖZ

SÖNMEZYURT, Sümeyye. Anne Devlin'in *Ourselves Alone* ve Marie Jones'un *Somewhere Over the Balcony* Eserlerinde Kadın Kimliğinin Temsili, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2024.

1980'li yıllarda Kuzey İrlanda tiyatrosu, kadın oyun yazarlarının sınıf ve cinsiyete dayalı tekdüze anlatıları bozan eserleri sayesinde kadınların hem sahnede hem de dramatik edebiyatta daha da görünür hale geldiği büyük bir değişimden geçmiştir. Dönemin eserleri arasında Anne Devlin'in *Ourselves Alone* (1986) ve Marie Jones'un Charabanc Theatre Company (Karavan Tiyatro Kumpanyası) ile yazdığı ortak çalışması *Somewhere Over the Balcony* (1987) öne çıkmıştır. Bu çalışmada amaç, Helen Cixous'nun kadınlar tarafından yazılan eserlerin kadın olmanın anlamını sorgularken erkek egemen sistemi sarsmak için de kullanılabileceği üzerine postmodernist görüşleri ışığında *Ourselves Alone* ve *Somewhere Over the Balcony* oyunlarının kadın ana karakterlerini inceleyerek bu eserlerin kadın kimliğini ne ölçüde yansıttıkları ve yeniden inşa ettiklerini incelemektir. Bu doğrultuda, oyunlardaki karakterlerin betimlenişi detaylı şekilde ele alınarak bu oyunların, İrlanda kadınının geleneksel edebi temsilini bozmaya yönelik sağlam girişimler oldukları sonucuna varılmıştır. Yazarların eserlerinde kadın tecrübesini erkek tecrübesine kıyasla öne çıkarması, Cixous'nun "feminine writing" anlayışına göre incelenerek yazılı metinler ve kadın kimliği arasındaki ilişki, ve Kuzey İrlandalı kadın oyun yazarlarının tiyatroyu, Kuzey İrlandalı kadınların bireyselliklerini keşfetmeleri ve fikirlerini ifade etmeleri için nasıl kullandıkları irdelenmiştir. Sonuç olarak, bu çalışmada, Anne Devlin'in *Ourselves* ve Marie Jones'un *Somewhere* eserlerinin, Kuzey İrlandalı kadınların bireyselliklerini inşa etme ve güçlenme yolculuklarını nasıl aktardıkları incelenerek bu oyunlarda bağımsız kadın kimliği oluşturmanın güçlüğüne vurgulandığı sonucuna varılmıştır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Kuzey İrlanda Draması, Anne Devlin, Marie Jones, Postmodern Feminizm, Kadın Kimliği

## ABSTRACT

SÖNMEZYURT, Sümeyye. Representation of Female Identity in Anne Devlin's *Ourselves Alone* and Marie Jones's *Somewhere Over the Balcony*, Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2024.

In the 1980s, the Northern Irish theatre underwent a significant change in which women became visible both on stage and in dramatic literature thanks to the works of Northern Irish female playwrights that disrupted the unifying narratives of communal identity concerning class and gender. Some examples are Anne Devlin's *Ourselves Alone* (1986) and Marie Jones's *Somewhere Over the Balcony* (1987) written in collaboration with the Charabanc Company. This study aims to explore the extent to which female protagonists in *Ourselves Alone* and *Somewhere Over the Balcony* question and rebuild their feminine identity in the light of Helen Cixous's postmodernist views on how written work by women can be used to undermine the patriarchal hegemony by initiating revival in feminine consciousness. The focus is on the plays' characterisation to conclude that these works are solid attempts to subvert the traditional literary representation of the Irish woman with regard to feminine consciousness. With respect to characterisation, the prioritisation of the female experience over the male one through the female trios at the core of both plays can be related to Cixous's correlation between the writing and feminine identity, and how the Northern Irish female playwrights use writing to help Northern Irish women discover themselves and to convey their opinions. In conclusion, this thesis explores how Anne Devlin's *Ourselves* and Marie Jones's *Somewhere* are structured to represent the Northern Irish women's journey of self-construction and empowerment to underline the complexity of forming an autonomous female identity within the Northern Irish context.

**Keywords:** the Northern Irish Drama, Anne Devlin, Marie Jones, Postmodern Feminism, Female Identity

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims to explore the ways female protagonists in two Northern Irish plays *Ourselves Alone* (1986) and *Somewhere Over the Balcony* (1987) question and rebuild feminine identity. The communicative competence of Anne Devlin's *Somewhere Over the Balcony* and Marie Jones's *Ourselves Alone* with regards to conveying their playwrights' concerns on the Irish woman question is discussed. In the analysis of plays, the study makes use of Hélène Cixous's *The Laugh of the Medusa* and "Sorties: Out and Out," which explore the traditional hierarchical structure of patriarchal societies and the power of 'feminine writing.' This concept asserts that written works by women convey feminine experiences and can, therefore, be used to raise feminine consciousness. It is concluded that both Devlin and Jones use drama as a means to reveal the complexity of the concept of female self-identity for Northern Irish women while at the same time depicting a pessimistic view of Northern Ireland in terms of gender equality.

In this study, an exploration of feminist concerns in the dramatic works of Devlin and Jones will be undertaken, to address several key questions. The research will first examine how both writers employ drama as a medium to convey female perspectives, focusing on the thematic and structural strategies that underscore these concerns. Additionally, the study will explore how Devlin and Jones establish connections between theatre and real-life experiences, considering how their narratives reflect and engage with the social realities of their time. Furthermore, this thesis will analyse the perspectives on gender and sexual politics revealed through their plays, offering critical insights into how these themes are articulated. Finally, a comparative analysis will be conducted to identify both the similarities and differences in the dramatic techniques utilized by the two playwrights, shedding light on their unique approaches to feminist drama. In addition to finding answers to these research questions, the main objective of this study is to explore the role of dramatic methods in these plays to represent feminist issues.

This thesis will contribute to Irish feminist literature as this is a study which brings together Devlin's and Jones's works with a specific focus on politics and gender. Apart from focusing on the sub-genre, this study will also present an opportunity to trace the similarities and differences between the works of Devlin and

Jones since both playwrights are each other's contemporaries. Approaching the plays of Devlin and Jones from a postmodern feminist perspective, particularly through the lens of Hélène Cixous's work, offers a rich and nuanced framework for analysing their treatment of gender and sexual politics. Cixous's concepts in *The Laugh of the Medusa* and *Sorties*, which advocate for écriture féminine and challenge patriarchal structures, align with the subversive and transformative nature of these plays. By incorporating Cixous' ideas, this study can more effectively interrogate how Devlin and Jones resist traditional narratives, deconstruct gender binaries, and create spaces for women's voices and experiences in their dramatic works.

Surely, many significant works engage with the feminist interpretations of these two plays. Maria Kurdi, a professor of Irish Studies, mentions how the relationship between the political discourses and patriarchy is presented in *Ourselves* and *Somewhere* in *Representations of Gender and Female Subjectivity in Contemporary Irish Drama by Women*. In more specific terms, Jeong Yungil elaborates on how space is used in *Ourselves* in a way to reflect the complexity of self-identity in "Staging the Women in Irish Modern Theater" (2014); Maria R. DiCenzo touches upon the violence Northern Irish women are exposed daily along with laughter in *Somewhere* in "Charabanc Theatre Company: Placing Women Center-Stage in Northern Ireland" (1993); Virginie Privas-Bréauté in "Anne Devlin's *Ourselves Alone* (1987) and *After Easter* (1994): autobiographical plays?" (2006), and "The Trinity of a New Age: Three struggling Women in Anne Devlin's *Ourselves Alone* (1986) and *After Easter* (1994)" (2013) focus on the autobiographical aspects found in *Ourselves*; Wei H. Kao's "Awakening, Memory, and Reconciliation in Anne Devlin's *Belfast Trilogy*" (2008) focuses on the novel representation of the Irish woman in *Ourselves*. However, this thesis will broaden the scope of the interpretation of the selected plays and thereby contribute to Irish feminist literature in multiple ways. First of all, considering that Anne Devlin is a Catholic descendant and Marie Jones has a Protestant background, how Northern Irish female playwrights from different religious backgrounds use drama to transcend ongoing religious and political conflicts in Northern Ireland by introducing a gendered perspective is discovered through this study. By doing so under the light of Cixous's concept of "feminine writing", a metatextual dimension is added to the study of these two plays. Moreover, the relationship between politics and patriarchy with reference to the hypocrisy behind

patriarchal discourse is explored in-depth. Finally, the pessimistic vision of Northern Ireland found in the selected plays on the part of the Northern Irish women is thoroughly explained with a specific emphasis on how female autonomy is presented in Irish society as if it is something to be traded for safety.

Ireland has a long and fascinating history. The relationship between Irish and English states had great significance in shaping the course of the country's history, especially after the 1169 Norman Invasion of Ireland and the 1171 Treaty of Windsor signed between the then King of England, Henry II and High King of Ireland Rvaidri la Conchobair (Rory O'Connor), which eventually divided Ireland into two parts each with a different loyalty. By 1300, Normans expanded their control areas to the utmost level so much so that only a few small regions were left for Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking) people. Restricted to a narrow area, the Gaelic people were isolated and marginalized. Over time, subsequent revolts to reclaim the lost land resulted in the restriction of English pressures. One efficient method of suppressing the revolts was English plantation in the lands in question. A significant example is the extensive plantation in Ireland's Munster region following the failed 1534 Geraldine Rebellion since this put-down rebellion drew the English's attention towards the Irish land.

Around the same time, King Henry VIII left the Catholic Church and the already tense relationship between England and Ireland took on a sectarian component. Then King Henry VIII decided to use Anglicanism to uphold order and took critical action. He declared himself the King of Ireland in 1542 and forced Gaelic rebels to acknowledge his superiority by threatening to take away their lands. To be able to retrieve their lands, the Gaelic were expected to renounce their native language, customs and laws as well as to convert to Protestantism. These social and religious changes led to profound conflicts within the Irish people. Some groups had religious grounds and rebelled against religious conversion, while others had ideological foundations and rejected the British hegemony over Irish lands. When elaborated on the historical events, it can be concluded that patriotism and religion are used as instruments to rally crowds. Among outstanding examples of the instrumentalization of the religion as well as the political turmoil of the time is the Desmond Rebellions (1569-1573), which "[...] threatened to engulf the whole island in a 'rebellion' against English rule... Their most inspiring leader, James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald of Desmond, hoped to use the religious issue to fuse the disparate Anglo-Irish and Irish lords into a

united Celtic front against English rule and misgovernment[...]" (Sasso 375). Upon King Henry's pressures, a seemingly endless war was ignited between the Catholic lords and the Protestant English crown.

In 1594, the Irish Catholic leaders revolted against the English because they were unwilling to give up their control over Ulster and their traditional way of life; this incident marked the beginning of a nine-year conflict resulting in the defeat of the Irish (Morgan 3). Irish leaders fled to Europe by leaving their lands behind. Their departure is followed by an intense English plantation in Ulster. Thousands of Protestant settlers arrived in the region and their contact with the natives provided the place with a different character. These settlers comprise the ancestors of the loyalist Protestant section that until this day seek the maintenance of the English Crown's hegemony over the Irish lands. The image of the United Kingdom in the eyes of the Irish was significantly undermined in the Great Irish Famine (1846-52) when a type of fungus destroyed almost all of Ireland's crops (Ó Gráda 1). The famine is understood as primarily the result of British colonialism (Braa 193) since it suggested that "the famine would not have been nearly so lethal had Ireland's dependence on the potato been less" (Ó Gráda 1).

The 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin was the result of resentment at the delay of home rule. Despite being a military loss, this uprising made a new generation of prospective leaders more visible. Irish volunteers and organizers of the uprising surrendered and were tried brutally in illegal trials while others were sentenced to death. Sinn Féin, an Irish political party, founded the Irish Parliament (Dáil Éireann) in 1918 to reaffirm the Declaration of Independence and reforming the Irish Volunteer movement into the Irish Republican Army was their initial course of action. Uniting under a political and military roof, the Irish struggle for independence gained momentum and transformed into the Irish War of Independence. This guerrilla and sectarian struggle, fought between 1919 and 1921, involved Irish republicans, Ulster loyalists, and British government forces. It resulted in the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty that approved the formation of Southern Ireland and Northern Ireland, which is now a part of the United Kingdom. The Irish nationalist desire for independence from Britain and the unionist desire to remain a part of the United Kingdom were reconciled in this effort by the British government.

Accompanying this treaty, the Irish War of Independence ended; Northern Ireland, with its capital in Belfast and the Irish Free State, with its capital in Dublin, was created. Later is now known as the Republic of Ireland as it changed its name by the 1937 constitution. However, such an artificial division was not enough to appease the social conflict and turned into the Irish Civil War (1922-1923) between pro-treaty and anti-treaty parties. Early in 1923, when the anti-treaty troops were depleted of their available supplies, the Civil War came to an end in a truce. Irish Free State, which would eventually become the Republic of Ireland was created after the Civil War; it was a state that was separate from the UK but still a part of the British Empire. By 1923, the border was acknowledged internationally. It is also significant to point out that political ideals are taken into consideration while such borders are drawn; therefore, they are not always in compliance with the socio-cultural reality of the regions in question.

That being said, the period in which Northern Ireland found itself after the Civil War was not unexpected. It is called 'the Troubles' and it is the general name of the conflict-ridden years principally caused by Protestant Loyalists who advocated the maintenance of British rule over Northern Ireland and Catholic Nationalists who sought full independence of the region as well as its unification with the South. Since Northern Ireland's creation, the Unionist population has held clout by targeting the Nationalist-Irish community unfairly in elections, the workplace, housing, and law enforcement. The period was one of the deadliest conflicts in postwar Western Europe because of its sheer size and duration, with 3530 persons murdered (1840 civilians) and 47,500 injured between 1969 and 1998 (Bosi and Fazio 11). This abuse of power gave rise to riots grew in frequency in the late 1960s, as reactions towards ongoing injustice and cruel treatment.

Repercussions of such deep segregation have expectably found a place in the art of the Irish people as well. It is especially possible to draw a parallelism between the Irish theatre and the country's own history since Irish people do not have traditional theatrical conventions and were introduced to the genre by the British. In the late 19th century, the theatre gained popularity and was embraced by the audience in Ireland. Lady Augusta Gregory, a folklorist, playwright and theatre manager, and William Butler Yeats, a poet from Dublin who later became one of the prominent names of Irish literature, decided to make a joint call for Ireland to finally have its own authentic

theatre aiming at “[...] staging Irish plays on Irish themes, in direct opposition to the British colonialist transition” (Murray 2). The primary goals were to create a space where writers could have the freedom to experiment and defy the Stage Irishman caricature created by the playwrights of England (Owens and Radner 3). In that sense, the journey of the Irish theatre to find its own character could be likened to the nation’s journey to establish itself as an agreed socio-political identity.

Yeats believed that “[o]nly if the theatre preserved the right of the artist to create in freedom could it meaningfully contribute to the process of national self-definition,” and later also recognized that “politics are [the Irish’s] national passion” (Murray 4). Subsequent to their call, Ireland’s own theatre company was founded and became known as the Irish National Theatre Society (Felton 7). Despite Yeats’s and Gregory’s belief that drama should be a unifying force that is beyond the political questions that divide the country (qtd. in Felton 7); over the years Irish drama found itself reflecting the socio-cultural segregation within the Irish people and “[the] historical account of Irish drama falls into three main phases: Anglo-Irish, Irish national, and contemporary European” (Owens and Radner 1). Soon, the Irish National Society acquired financial support to establish its theatre in 1904: The Abbey Theatre. Their work was praised by the English reviewers for the naturalistic style of its actors and its simplicity (5). The success of the Irish theatre encouraged other theatres to be established such as the Ulster Literary Theatre founded in Belfast in 1904. Yeats’s plays combined the ancient and modern as they involved characteristics of religious ancient drama and modern absurdism. When the naturalistic peasant and village plays were joined to the Yeatsian verse drama, a unique duality evolved in the Abbey repertoire (Owens and Radner 6). An approximation of a country dialect of Hiberno-English was used in peasant plays.

By 1909, the Abbey Theatre started to lose its popularity due to its lack of financial support and the ongoing arguments with the nationalists over their political demands. The decline in the Abbey’s repertoire resulted in the increasing popularity of Sean O’Casey’s work which portrays the Dublin poor with its humour and sufferings in 1923 (8). Later, O’Casey’s plays were marked by a more strident Marxism (8). During the 1920s, “second generation” playwrights found their way on the Irish stage and many talented names like T.C. Murray, Lennox Robinson and Brinsley McNamara helped to establish domestic realism as the hallmark of the Abbey

Theatre (8). This preference was shared with the Ulster Group Theatre in Belfast in the 1940s. In 1928, Dublin's second theatre, the Gate was founded to bring international theatre to Ireland. During the 1950s, there were three prominent dramatists with different traditions and social sectors: Brendan Behan with his political dramas on Dublin's working class; John B. Keane with his depiction of dichotomies in the city and rural life, and Catholicism and Paganism; and finally, Samuel Beckett with his Anglo-Irish colouration into his dramas of persistence in the face of dissolution and death (Owens and Radner 9).

Over time, there has been a change in the writing preference of the Irish playwrights. It is called the Irish Revival era. It was seen that its early authors focused more on the epic and mythological stories of the Irish past while seeking to find a heroic past that would eventually supersede the political and religious segregation they observed in Ireland at the time. More recent writers, however, gradually shifted towards a broader range of material including medieval satires and legends of the Irish Church (Owens and Radner 10). Therefore, it can be stated that "for a period, [Irish drama] appeared to be overly dependent on revivals and adaptations from other media, [however] that is no longer the case: despite commercial pressure and the counterattractions of television and film, contemporary Irish drama is in a healthier state than at any time since the 1920s" (Owens and Radner 10). Even an annual theatre festival in Dublin started to be held in 1957. Such a festival contributed to the internationalization of the theatrical taste and encouraged the increase in the number of provincial theatrical companies like the Field Day Company in Derry City; the Druid Theatre in Galway; and Charabanc in Belfast.

Since the 1960s, Irish drama has been dominated by five dramatists, that is, Brian Friel who successfully carried the Troubles on the stage with his 1973 play *The Freedom of the City*; Hugh Leonard who also gained an international reputation through his social satires; John B. Keane who was mentioned earlier with his focus on dichotomies; Thomas Murphy who contributed greatly to the Irish theatre through his portrayal of the everyday life and struggles of the Irish with elements of comedy; and Thomas Kilroy whose work focus on the Irish-English identity and mythologizing the past. The Northern conflict also started to find itself a place in the Irish drama after the late 1960s. The theatre was recognized as a gesture of independence in Northern Ireland (Murray 188). Many plays were written to illustrate the violence, class

struggle, religious conflict, and gender inequality under the veil of Northern Ireland's political turmoil.

Moreover, it is also significant to point out the dominance of male playwrights in the Irish Theatre in general as well as the theatre of Northern Ireland in specific. The situation was so grave in Northern Ireland that Irish female playwrights and actresses decided to form an all-women theatre group as a reaction towards the lack of work available to women in theatre as well as the quality of what was available. A survey on "political drama" in Northern Ireland by D.E.S. Maxwell, a former professor of English at York University, prepared a list of plays which dealt specifically with the Troubles written between 1972 and 1988 and only one out of the twelve playwrights listed was a woman (DiCenzo 176). That gives a glimpse of the discriminatory attitude towards women playwrights as it reveals "[t]he academic or disciplinary preference for and promotion of *published* works [...]" and how such a bias resulted in the marginalization of the practices of companies like Charabanc (DiCenzo 176).

A professor of theatre at the University of Reading, in the UK, Anne McMullan sheds light on the situation by stating that the lack of women in the national pantheon of playwrights does not necessarily imply that Irish women do not write, but rather that, historically, Irish women playwrights have not been included in the literary 'canon' because their work conventionally was not deemed worthy and heritage is shared among men (McMullan 34). To challenge that situation, The Charabanc Theatre Company was founded in Belfast in 1983 by a group of female playwrights namely, Marie Jones, Maureen Macaulay, Eleanor Methven, Carol Moore, and Brenda Winter. From its inception until its disbandment in 1995, "[...] the Charabanc continu[ed] to provide work and good roles for women in the theatre and to produce plays about conditions in Northern Ireland that audiences there enjoy, and which also have a broader social and political resonance" (DiCenzo 175). Therefore, it can be stated that their existence contributed to the renegotiation of the boundaries of the Irish drama. Considering that the beginning of the Troubles corresponds to the emergence of the Second Wave feminism, it is possible to expect that women playwrights' awareness was increased and they were encouraged to carry the women's struggle to the stage. Especially when it is taken into account that the Irish women were trying to manage both the political-religious pressure regardless of which party they supported or which

religious sect they believed in, Catholic Nationalists or Protestant Loyalists, and the social pressure resulting from prescribed roles for a woman.

In the 1970s, postmodern feminism, a branch of third-wave feminism, began. This movement sought to undermine the deeply ingrained patriarchal standards. Their emphasis was heavily on recognizing the differing perspectives among women and thus, highlighting the subjectivity of women. They also pointed to 'literature' as a mainly male-dominated area, and this is why they argued that women's act of writing itself could be a challenge towards the patriarchy, and the absence of a female voice results in the female figure being shaped through a narrative from the perspective of male writers. 'Women's writing' was especially encouraged by Helene Cixous, one of the prominent postmodern feminists. Holding the same perspective as Cixous, women in Irish drama and Irish writing in general, acknowledged the strong relation between Northern Irish women's visibility on the stage and the society. A Professor of Irish Literature Rebecca Pelan explains the interdependence between Northern Irish feminine writing and their empowerment as follows:

I remember being at a noisy party in Australia, and an acquaintance asking what I was working on. When I responded "Irish women's writing," he looked surprised and said, "I didn't think they had any." It turned out that, in the noise, he thought I had said "Irish women's rights" but ultimately decided that the same answer applied in both cases. (Pelan *Two Irelands* xii)

This is how, with a sense of mission, many Northern Irish female playwrights started to write about the everyday lives of the women within their society prevailed by political violence and domestic duties. Women's underrepresentation in the profession of playwrighting gradually started to change because women found themselves in search of new self-expression methods. Being conscious of the fact that the existing social structure does not acknowledge female subjectivity and freedom; women playwrights embraced theatre as an instrument of self-expression to challenge the patriarchal structures. They also "[...] have gradually received more attention for their feminist, or sometimes feminine, observations on the Northern Ireland Troubles and its effects on women on the social margins" (Kao 31). In other words, it is seen that over the years, "[...] there is a growing interest in the perspectives on identity, sexuality and the legacies of myth and history which Irish women playwrights have presented" (McMullan 36). Also, in addition to their contribution to the existence of women on the literary scene, while trying to find a voice of their own in drama, these women playwrights developed radically new strategies of empowerment and

resistance to normative regimes (Grassi 4). They “[...] contest[ed] traditional stereotypes of women as a-sexual self-sacrificing mothers, powerless victims, or sexual comforts” by portraying women as individuals who are “[...] centre stage, propelling the action, and forcefully articulating their subjectivity and their sexuality” (McMullan 36).

This thesis consists of an introduction, three main chapters, and a conclusion. The first chapter is divided into two sections. In the first part, the historical background of Northern Ireland is provided with specific references to Northern Irish drama. In the second part, the theoretical background of postmodern feminism is explained in relation to Cixous’s ideas in the specific works in question along with an illustration of postmodern feminism’s relation with postcolonialism and poststructuralism.

The second chapter of this thesis focuses on Anne Devlin’s *Ourselves Alone* and the representation of feminine identity in the play both in terms of textual and metatextual dimensions in the light of Cixous’s postmodern feminist views and the concept of “feminine writing.”

The third chapter elaborates on Marie Jones’s *Somewhere Over the Balcony* and the representation of feminine identity in the play with regard to the textual and metatextual dimensions in the light of Cixous’s postmodern feminist views and the concept of “feminine writing.”

Finally, the conclusion of the thesis presents an assessment of the significance of similarities and differences concerning how drama is used to represent Irish feminine identity in these plays with an emphasis on feminine consciousness and independence.

## CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Walter Benjamin says that it is always possible, by way of response, to politicize art (242). Works of the Northern Irish women playwrights could be pointed out as the most significant examples of politicized art. They maintained a critical stance against the patriarchal structures embedded in politics, religion, society and even in the family by signifying that the ideal woman in the eyes of patriarchy differs from reality. Playwrights like Marie Jones and Anne Devlin helped to establish an image of strong, active and prepotent Irish women through their plays and provided the world with an insight perspective on the Troubles. This is why, it could be stated that their works carry elements of feminist perspective. The beginning of the Troubles corresponds with the advent of second-wave feminism, and circumspectly feminist concerns found themselves a solid ground in the following works of drama, especially after the establishment of the all-female Charabanc Theatre Company in 1983. Subsequently, the publications of *Ourselves* (1986) and *Somewhere* (1987) coincide with the emergence of the Third Wave feminism. This is why, it is possible to explore and discover the influence of the Third Wave feminism, specifically its postmodern branch on these plays. To that end, it is a must to have a deeper understanding of Postmodern feminism/feminist theory. Since postmodern feminist theory and post-structuralism have emerged almost simultaneously and therefore, shaped one other, it is essential to consider the development of both schools of thought.

Without further ado, it is significant to emphasize that ‘feminism’ and ‘feminist’ terms in this thesis are used “[...] to connote the ideas that advocate the emancipation of women, the movements that have attempted to realize it, and the individuals who support these goals” (Offen 45). The term feminism was coined by French thinker Charles Fourier as “féminisme” in the second edition of his posthumously published 1837 book *Théorie de Quatre Mouvements et des destinées générales* (Offen 45). It is vital to trace back the origins of feminist thought in order to have a clear understanding of the aims and concerns of the 1980s’ prevailing movement of postmodern feminism. The belief in women’s equality in politics, economy, and culture dates back to the oldest periods of human civilization. One of its relatively more recent and written examples was given in 1792 by Mary Wollstonecraft, a British philosopher and women’s rights advocate, in *A Vindication*

*of the Rights of Woman: with Structures on Political and Moral Subjects* to contradict 18th-century theorists' view that women should not have rational education. *Vindication* is accepted as one of the earliest feminist works. However, feminism as a distinct school of thought with its fundamental pillars became apparent in the 1850s during the protests supporting the abolishment of slavery. "At the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, abolitionists like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott boldly proclaimed in their now-famous Declaration of Sentiments that 'We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men and women are created equal'" (Jerath 164). Thus, it could be possible to evaluate the connection between the abolishment and slavery by stating that relentless disputes over equality have created a social reaction that ultimately increased the awareness of women and incited them to obtain equal treatment with men. That is to say, such a new consciousness resulted in the claim that human rights are "gender-biased and/or gender-blind" (Guerrina and Zalewski 9). Therefore, it is possible to mark the abolishment period as the beginning of the first wave of feminism. It was primarily a vehement debate over women's rights and freedom. "[Women] realized that in order to establish their identity and individuality they would have to legalize their rights [...]" and "[t]his would bring them a sense of equality to their male counterparts" (Jerath 164).

Embracing a legal perspective as a means to attain equal treatment to the opposite sex, women began their journey of equality by seeking married women's obtainment of independence from their husbands, calling for women's equal access to education, and gaining electoral rights. Feminists' demand for the right to vote is called the suffrage movement and maintained its prevalent position among the heated feminist debates for long years to come ever since its sprouting in the 1850s. Meanwhile, early advocates of feminism showed great efforts to create an impact on society by building a strong community that could represent and support women potently. To achieve these goals, several women's organizations as well as charities were founded to provide them with a solid roof that unites them and thus yields them a chance to raise their voices through a credible channel. From then on, factions also developed under the title of feminism. Groups and individuals with differing views about what feminism was, started to classify themselves and their opponents using the now-familiar technique of exclusionary classification. Many feminisms had already been identified or credited by the turn of the 20th century, including "socialist

feminists,” “integral feminists,” “Christian feminists,” and “familial feminists” (Offen 48). With the rise of feminism in Europe, “women of all classes became increasingly aware of the way in which their sex influenced their life chances and experiences” (Fuchs & Thompson 2005). Consequently, the first “Women’s Day” celebration took place in Chicago on May 3, 1908. On March 19, 1911, this celebration gained international importance after an agreement made by 100 women delegates from 17 countries to promote gender equality. During the World War 1 period (1914-1918), feminism gained acceleration because that school of thought gave women all over the world a voice to express their criticisms towards war. “In its early years, the [Women’s] Day becomes a mechanism to protest World War I” (*UN Women*). Furthermore, as a result of the state-mandated enlistment of men in national military service, women had to undertake unconventional works that had previously been assumed by men. Consequently, women’s existence in the workforce increased remarkably along with the number of employed women. The absence of men created a necessity for women to leave their houses to work and in this way gave the latter a chance to be visible. This could be interpreted as one of the palpable shifts in women’s transition from the domestic sphere to the public sphere. Also, women performing men’s jobs are notable in the sense that it marks women’s empowerment. Women gained economic independence and realized that they could show success in works which traditionally were attributed to men. As their self-awareness increased about their potential, they became stronger both individually and collectively within the umbrella of the women’s movement. In a slower progress, the United Kingdom, including Ireland and the rest of the kingdom, also granted suffrage to women over 30 in 1918, and after Ireland’s separation in 1922, the Irish Free State ensured equal voting rights both for men and women. In the United States, the ratification of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment ensured women to vote in 1920. However, accessing their right to vote all over the world, a great part of the enthusiasm for gender equality started to fade (Søland).

As the world was dragged into a second great war between 1939 and 1945, women revived their anti-war protests. Also, it is possible to say that the “post-war malaise experienced by women who found their political, social and economic aspirations tightly constricted in the 1950s” (Conard 12) prepared the setting for the second wave. Yet, it was not until the publication of French feminist philosopher

Simone de Beauvoir's influential book *The Second Sex* by which she elaborated on the question of what being a woman is, that feminist discussions were fully reignited. *The Second Sex* (1949) dwelled upon women's reproductive roles and created tremendous repercussions. The book argues that motherhood as a social expectation leads women to embrace secondary roles in society. A Yale professor who is specialized in gender, Marcia Inhorn and her colleagues interpret the relationship between motherhood and women in Beauvoir's work by stating that: "[b]ecause of their responsibility for pregnancy, parturition, breastfeeding, and childcare, women are excluded from positions of power within male-dominated patriarchal cultures" (Inhorn et. al 1). Therefore, the existence of reproduction-related roles creates an atmosphere in which women are ascribed motherhood by default. It is expected for women to be the nurturer in society, and consequently, that leaves them restricted to the domestic sphere. While women comply with societal expectations, powerful posts that require public engagements are left to men. It can be stated that men attributed such domestic roles to women and transformed those into tradition so that women's dependent, subordinate status could be continued (Simons 77). Beauvoir's claims caused tremendous debates both in general and within the feminist cycle. One group of feminists supported her ideas and approached motherhood as another oppressive instrument of patriarchy, whereas another group regarded her claims as a degradation of female reproduction and objected to it by arguing that it is something to be held sacred and appraised because reproduction is one of the most distinguishable features of women in comparison to men (Inhorn et. al 1). Though Beauvoir considered herself not a philosopher but a literary writer, her ideas on motherhood and identity helped shape feminist thought remarkably. Especially *The Second Sex* contributed to the ignition of feminist discussions once more and ultimately led to the start of the second wave of feminism in the 1960s. Many branches of feminism have arisen within the second in the 1960s and 70s, including radical feminism and socialist feminism. Radical feminism claims that "women's oppression is of a systemic nature: patriarchy is a system of oppression, found in all societies and at all times" (Cottais 1); whereas socialist feminism believes that the destruction of capitalism is essential to the struggle for the liberation of all women as this is one of the oppressive tools of patriarchy (Kennedy 500). Margaret A. Simons argues that "Beauvoir's text laid the philosophical foundation for radical feminism and defined many of the points differentiating contemporary socialist feminism [...]" (Simons xv). Moreover,

Beauvoir inspired some second-wave feminists to reconsider the maternal mandate, believing that the reproductive essentialization of women, in fact, constituted a fundamental barrier to their advancement. Yet, other second-wave feminists saw reproduction as the paramount source of women's power because that could never be shared by men, the so-called nonreproductive sex (Inhorn et. al 1). The issue of motherhood became so controversial that feminists in the 1960s and 1970s were left obliged to defend their choice of becoming a mother as this was considered a token for their lack of dedication to the fundamentals of radical feminism by many (Simons 75). In addition to continuing the anti-war discourse and fight to acquire equal civil rights, second-wave feminism has put the question of sexuality and reproductive rights on the feminist agenda thanks to Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. Second-wave feminists accomplished to legalize abortion and ensured that women have broader access to education and employment. "Women broke into "non-traditional" jobs and became electricians, plumbers, machine operators and more" (Rosenstock 22). As a result, women have started to show a stronger presence in the public sphere with various roles. In addition to that, in 1963, the USA passed the Equal Pay Act that prohibits wage inequality between men and women. It was followed by the UK in 1970 which was an act to ban unequal treatment by gender in terms of working conditions and payment.

Over the years, women sought to broaden the scope of their influence, and in this way, the term 'feminism' started to be attributed further meanings. Several more discussion points surfaced when women with different religions, races, and financial possibilities realized that they gain equality at changing levels because each group has varying life conditions and restrictions. On top of that, women have different socio-cultural backgrounds and psychology; therefore, they were affected at varying degrees by these improvements in the legal and business areas. "Critics have argued that the benefits of the feminist movement, especially the second wave, are largely limited to white, college-educated women and that feminism has failed to address the concerns of women of colour, lesbians, immigrants and minorities" (Jerath 165). That idea could be traced back to the beginning of the feminist movement during the Abolishment of slavery in 1850. All these laid the foundations for the Third Wave which embraced and appreciated plurality among women in the 1990s. This school of feminist thought "challenges the notion of universal womanhood" and aims to demythologize the idea

of a woman by featuring “ambiguity, diversity, and multiplicity in transversal theory and politics” (Kroløkke and Sørensen 2). Subsequent to the posthumous publication of Simone de Beauvoir’s letters from the 1940s and diaries from the late 1920s by her adopted daughter and literary executor Sylvie Le Bon de Beauvoir in 1990, Beauvoir’s work once more became subject to heated discussions (Simons xii-xiv). In the late 1990s, one of the noteworthy third-wave feminists Judith Butler appreciated Beauvoir’s work due to its assertion that sexual difference is primarily cultural rather than biological (Simons xvi). While *The Second Sex*’s profound and long-lasting effects on the feminist movement perseveres in the Third Wave, it differs from the previous forms of feminism, by their inclusion of new threats to women’s rights in the face of modernization into their discourse. In the USA, it is also known by the name “grrl” rhetoric and in Europe it is mostly referred to as “New Feminism”. “[It] is characterized by local, national, and transnational activism, in areas such as violence against women, trafficking, body surgery, self-mutilation, and the overall ‘pornification’ of the media” (Kroløkke and Sørensen 17). All these considered, it is possible to state that the third wave has an avant-garde notion that tackles with taboo subjects such as sexual preferences, pornography, and prostitution. Hence, feminist thought has transcended the search for gender equality and evolved into an umbrella term for “[...] women’s inclusion in all kinds of realms such as robotics & technology, political discourse, transgender and queer rights and so on and forth” (Jerath 166). In general, at its core lays “[t]he desire to reimagine feminism by uniting people with an interest in conventional, even stereotypically feminine issues—while continuing to be skeptical of the narratives of victimhood and liberation—is what unites them” (Kroløkke and Sørensen 17). Thus, there is a more inclusive agenda with a specific effort to represent the modern problems of every woman from various backgrounds.

This thesis will focus on postmodern feminism which is a branch of third-wave feminism that confounds the patriarchal norms embedded in society in order to prevent further gender inequality with a sensitivity to diverse experiences of women with patriarchy depending on their social status. While focusing on the individuality of women, this school of thought strongly challenges the concept of unified womanhood which the previous feminist waves put forward. That is because they concluded that such a generalizing approach is superficial in the sense that it assumes each woman suffers from patriarchy at the same level regardless of their race, religion or

socioeconomic status, whereas that is not the case most of the time. Hence, postmodern feminists found giving voice to the individual experience of women as a better way to address the inequality women tackle. By becoming more inclusive, it has also eliminated the previous criticisms towards the early waves of feminism. Embracement of differences has found itself a place in the postmodern feminist discourse as 'identity politics,' and feminist thinkers benefited from that while constructing the idea of *l'écriture féminine* to use it as a framework to approach the written work by women, about women, and for women (Kroløkke and Sørensen 13). Each woman was encouraged to publicize the troubles they have suffered because of the patriarchy by putting it all in written work so that their presence and the injustice embedded in patriarchal societies could be acknowledged. The emphasis in written work is significant in the sense that it advocates the permanent recording of the unequal treatment of genders. Therefore, writing is a rebellious act against patriarchy which might undermine the existing binary system by unfolding it.

The term proposed for the bulk of literature written by women about women's struggle with patriarchy is 'écriture féminine' (feminine writing); it was coined by postmodern feminist thinker Helene Cixous who considers writing as a path to salvation for women from the men favouring mechanism. She was born in 1937 in Algeria to a multicultural environment; her father was a Sephardic Jew and a French speaker, and her mother was of Austro-Hungarian descent and a German speaker. When her family life was combined with the Algerian culture and the Arabic-speaking surroundings, it created an atmosphere of 'cultural pluralism' (Conley xvii). Effects of her childhood background could be found in her work and her strive for the acknowledgement of plurality within the feminist discourse. Cixous also stated that she considered herself lucky for being born in the World War II period as part of not only one but three minority groups and experiencing the war and colonialism because these made her learn how to fight from the beginning (Conley cvii). Her family moved to France following the start of the Algerian War in 1954. She pursued her academic studies in various fields ranging from literary criticism, and philosophy to drama and poetic fiction. She studied English and wrote her doctoral thesis on Irish writer James Joyce and his works. Realizing that Joyce shares her interest in the birth of the artist, she combined these ideas with the hypotheses questioning the subject and the possibility of revolution through language (Conley 2). In time, Cixous developed new

approaches to literature and feminist thought. She believed in the importance of art as an instrument for social change and claimed that literature is capable of depicting the important social, political and cultural elements of its time. Moreover, she focused on the act of writing itself. The questions she tackled with are: “Where does one write from and how does one write? What makes one write? From where comes the impetus of its practice?” (Conley 11). She concluded that there is a path toward a sort of thought through the body (Jamili and Roshanzamir 115). In other words, to write is to exist for women because it is a way to claim their presence. This is why, she argued that the mere act of writing by women could be a way to challenge that preexisting system of patriarchy since writing is an era dominated by men. An alternative interpretation of Cixous’s “path through the body” is how writing helps women to discover themselves and to convey their opinions.

In order to explore Cixous’s ideas in depth, two of her prominent essays will be discussed here: “Le Rire de la Méduse” (1975) and “Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways out/ Forays” (1986). “Le Rire de la Méduse” was translated to English as “The Laugh of the Medusa” and the work discusses the concept of feminine writing (*Écriture féminine*) and remarks on the restrictions of patriarchal society on women. The critic illustrates how traditional socio-cultural limitations on women, which force them to subdue and stay within the socially accepted boundaries, have been treaded so deliberately that they eventually resulted in women’s hatred of one other. Cixous also argues that these social restrictions are traceable in writing. Later in “Sorties,” Cixous furthers her discussion on the unequal treatment of men and women in every aspect of life with reference to the woman’s othering by the patriarchy while adding up to her discourse on feminine writing at the same time.

Cixous asserts that there is a gender binary system embedded in patriarchal societies. She provides a list of examples for that: “Activity/Passivity, Sun/Moon, Culture/Nature, Day/Night, Father/Mother, Head/Heart, Intelligible/Palpable, Logos/Pathos” and concludes the list by connecting all these dualities to the concept of the binary opposition of Man and Woman (“Sorties” 70-71). The critic states that while these dualities form a hierarchal structure, all the disadvantaged or weak features in that twofold system are attributed to women whereas men are always associated with the superior ones. She dwells upon the consequences of the “dual binary oppositions” between genders (“Sorties” 71). Cixous claims that “Organization by

hierarchy makes all conceptual organization subject to man” (“Sorties” 72). She continues by elaborating on the pair of activity/passivity to illustrate how men reserved the privilege to take initiative in all matters for themselves, and how they used this system of binary thought to suppress women. “Woman is always associated with passivity in philosophy” (“Sorties” 72), and this is why, even within the concept of family, where a woman has the strongest correlation, all the authority is conserved in the father figure in patriarchal societies. The mother is not included in any equations in order to prevent the slightest attachment of importance. With regards to the dualities, the father figure is conventionally coupled with the son; therefore, the mother is simply left “unthought” (72). She is not considered equal to the father figure. After explaining the functioning of such a gender binary system, Cixous elaborates on the reason behind its construction in the first place in “Sorties.” She highlights how symbolical and philosophical orders are based on women’s downgrading to conclude that “subordination of the feminine to the masculine order” is essential to give “the appearance of being the condition for the machinery’s functioning” (“Sorties” 73). The effect of patriarchy on the family is more visible in Devlin’s *Ourselves*, since the patriarchal pressure on the Northern Irish women is forced both by the British officials, that is the imperial force, and by the men of their family, i.e., husbands, brothers, fathers. The women are expected to stay passive in the background whereas men take action. Correspondingly, in Jones’s *Somewhere*, the patriarchal pressure is illustrated over the Northern Irish women’s struggle with the British officials through their delicate situation which embodies a risk of direct confrontation with the British military forces. It is also possible to find references to how patriarchy shapes women’s roles within the family as a result of the burden of expectations it imposes on them.

Cixous then proceeds to unveil the effects of patriarchal pressure on women and how it shapes their behaviour as well as their ways of thinking. She argues that the family, being the smallest functioning group of society, undertakes the role of ensuring the continuity of the patriarchal order. This is why, women have been taught to behave according to societal expectations. Based on women’s belittling and restriction, these expectations range from dictating how a woman should talk, look and act to designating how she should think. Cixous touches upon the concept of motherhood as one of the biggest notions correlated with a woman. She says it is a contaminated concept by patriarchy (“Medusa” 881) because it is, in fact, used to

prevent women from existing or simply being. Motherhood is used as a term to repress a woman's individuality and another way to idealise her because it unifies all women under one title and that title dictates how they should behave. Furthermore, in most cases, women are only respected given they are mothers; hence, Cixous points out that it reveals the patriarchal ambition to categorise women under any label. "There has to be something of her" ("Sorties" 72), because without a label, it would not be possible to impose any rules on them. Cixous calls the systematic exposure of these rules on women since birth "brainwashing" and refers to the extensive pressure they create on women ("Medusa" 877). She says that the mindset that has been planted in their minds has caused women to be "[...] led into self-disdain by the great arm of parental-conjugal phallogentrism" and ashamed of their strength ("Medusa" 876). There, self-contempt and fear of personal strength could be interpreted in two layers. In the first place, women are afraid of the reaction of society if they do not fulfil gender expectations. Any unconventional action on their behalf might result in the alienation, beating or death of women. An alternative approach towards such fears might be the guilt originating from the woman subject herself. It would be difficult for her to recognize her power because this is what she has been taught to avoid; she has been 'brainwashed' into repressing her individual opinions, feelings and capabilities. Even if she could manage to detect that she has a somewhat peculiar tendency that is opposed to societal teachings, she might feel herself problematic. That would result either in the mental troubling of the woman or in the deliberate repression of such contradictory tendencies to prevent risking herself. Cixous draws examples from her own experiences while explaining the mental conflict a woman might have found herself for not feeling as she is 'supposed to do': "And I, too, said nothing, showed nothing; I didn't repaint my half of the world. I was ashamed. I was afraid, and I swallowed my shame and my fear. I said to myself: You are mad! What's the meaning of these waves, these floods, these outbursts?" ("Medusa" 876). She refers to all the drives that lead her to take various actions and all the strong emotions as 'waves,' 'floods' and 'outbursts' and illustrates how she tries to overcome them in order to stay 'sane' and not be labelled as 'mad.' This is why, these lines perfectly reveal the social pressure on women. In the rare cases that women embrace their own ideas and stick by them, the patriarchal machinery embedded in the society would do everything in its hand to subdue them including physical attack or isolation. Cixous also points out how women were either thought of as monsters or considered sick by society to note that in fact,

“[...] her shameful sickness is that she resists death, that she makes trouble” (“Medusa” 876). The main reason behind such strict measures on women is to avoid any problem within the ancient machinery of patriarchy; so, Men try to avoid any spoke in their wheel. Such a conscious or unconscious self-censoring mechanism finds itself a place in *Somewhere* through Kate’s imaginary monologues with her husband who abandoned her through which she still tries to justify her behaviour and emancipate herself from his constant criticism. Similarly, in *Ourselves*, the devastating effects of the patriarchal pressure on women are addressed through Donna’s vision of the devil whenever she has Liam around her.

In time, all sorts of physical and psychological limitations led to the creation of a false woman imagery. Women have been generalized and reduced to a single image. Cixous argues that though women have much in common, it is not possible to talk about “a female sexuality” that is “uniform, homogenous” or “classifiable into codes” (“Medusa” 876). This is why, the critic calls women to write about their own individuality to prove that any ideal image of woman is falsified and artificial. In the end, their rights were extorted by men and they were perceived as a “propriety” who had no agency and say. Cixous calls it “the reductive stinginess of the masculine-conjugal subjective economy” (“Medusa” 888) that presupposes the inability of a woman to think or decide for herself. Women’s alienation from their own personalities, as well as their bodies, are consequences of these artificial binaries. Since the woman subject has never paid attention to what she really wants to do or say, she faces the risk of losing connection to her inner self. Therefore, what is left of her becomes a mere passive being who abides to whatever is expected of her. Cixous compares the alienation of women from their femininity to keeping them in the dark. She then makes a correlation between the darkness as a black territory and ignorance of a woman subject’s own individuality: “As soon as they [women] begin to speak, at the same time as they’re taught their name, they can be taught that their territory is black: because you are Africa, you are black” (“Medusa” 877). Here, the analogy between colonialism and patriarchy could be seen clearly. Just like Africa as a continent is exploited and alienated in order to bear less responsibility over the process; a woman’s womanhood is hidden from her so that she never shows a strong character by using her full potential. She notes that there is great patriarchal repression on them that aims at women’s embrace of that darkness as their natural attribute (“Medusa” 876). Having

been estranged from her true self, she pursues her life by following the dictates of patriarchy without paying attention to what she really wants to do or say. Cixous then furthers the analogy by stating “Your continent is dark. Dark is dangerous. You can’t see anything in the dark, you’re afraid. Don’t move, you might fall. Most of all, don’t go into the forest. And so, we have internalized this horror of the dark” (“Medusa” 878). She explains how the feeling of inadequacy is systematically instilled in women by patriarchy in order to prevent them from crossing the boundaries that were drawn for them by society. It is seen that the female body is addressed as a ‘continent,’ so it is likened to a land to be owned or prohibited. Also, fear is used as an instrument and through this way, women were prevented from discovering their ‘forest’ which could be interpreted as their natural desires and passions. As a consequence, women were indoctrinated into exploring this dark territory within themselves, that is their femininity. That brings us to perhaps the most important point of Cixous’s essay; that is, in fact, “The Dark Continent is neither dark nor unexplorable,” it is still unexplored only because women have never attempted to do so. Patriarchy has persistently tried to convince women that what interests them is “the white continent with its monuments to Lack” (“Medusa” 885). Here, it is seen that Cixous continues to draw parallelisms between the woman’s body and land. She addresses the boundaries drawn by whatever patriarchy dictates as a white continent and highlights how that region is founded upon women’s diminution. Moreover, a parallelism could be drawn between the dark territory that requires women’s embracement of their feelings and desires and their confinement to the domestic sphere. In both plays, the main characters, with Freida being the exception, are hesitant to leave the familiar surroundings and conditions; therefore, they are reluctant to leave their homes to follow their dreams. Therefore, they might be afraid of the Dark, both in the sense of going outside to the public space and disregarding the patriarchal dictates by following their dreams.

Moreover, Cixous touches upon the unfortunate instances which women hate one other. The critic calls it the biggest crime men have ever committed towards women because they surreptitiously caused women to be each other’s enemies (“Medusa” 878). Cixous argues that this is a form of “antinarcissism” which “loves itself only to be loved for what women haven’t got” (“Medusa” 878). By this means, women have always sought to become that ideal woman whose characteristics were unrealistically determined by patriarchy. These women have found themselves in

search of an unattainable perfection. Hence, they have never felt competent enough in their natural existence. Furthermore, women have turned from each other because of insidious enmity grafted in them. So, even the slightest possibility of them realising their feminine power is averted. These ‘fearful’ individuals were deprived of their chance to find solace in each other’s companion and therefore lost their chance to gain strength. All these are in line with Jones’s *Somewhere* and Devlin’s *Ourselves* considering that both plays praise female communities by displaying women trios in support of one other. With regards to the fact that Jones took lateral support of several women playwrights in The Charabanc company while writing *Somewhere*, the play itself is, in fact, a product of women’s solidarity. There is a sharp contrast displayed between the hierarchal order of the male-dominated system and the equal social circle of the women.

Cixous discusses similar topics in “Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/ Ways out/ Forays” (1986) with specific reference to the otherness of the woman. Cixous emphasizes that her work is to provide an insight into “the other” (“Sorties” 74) as the author is a member of the otherized sex, that is the women. The critic starts by highlighting the difference between men and women in the context of institutionalized social understanding. Then, Cixous draws a parallelism between the history of mankind and gender relations and creates a metaphor between women and colonized countries. There, she touches upon and mocks Freud’s comparison of women to the black continent (Dobbs-Allsopp 1). Cixous notes that the likening of women to continents is a signal of the objectification of women because a continent is considered a piece of land to be conquered. Moreover, the critic describes the existing social structure as a Hegelian schema of recognition which the other is condemned to death (“Sorties” 91). This is the reason behind men’s “Empire of Selfsame” (“Sorties” 91), which exploits the other, with a fear of losing the attribute, that is to say, “a threat of castration” (76). After identifying the cause of the invention of such an effective social repression mechanism, Cixous comments on the concept of “sexual difference” (“Sorties” 76) by stating that sexuality is not simply anatomical; in fact, largely accorded to exteriority (77). This is reflected in the subversion of gender roles and female protagonists taking up manly attitudes and completing the tasks which usually are associated with men in both plays.

Cixous calls out every woman to stand against their colonizer, that is patriarchy. She likens the patriarchy to the colonial ideology because both have exploitation at its core; one is aimed at women while the other is at countries. Just like the resources of the exotic lands are systematically confiscated by the colonizer while leaving the natives of the land with barely enough to survive; womanhood and the unique characteristics of women are expropriated by the patriarchy by means of hiding them from women or causing women to be ashamed of their feminine traits. Cixous argues that because of the pressure, women have never had a chance to raise their voices. The critic invites women to accept their inner appeals and embrace every single desire they have; that is, indeed, the main purpose of the article “The Laugh of the Medusa,” to help women realize that their femininity is not something to be feared of. She chooses a femme fatale figure from Greek mythology, Medusa, to illustrate how men alienate women because of their own fear of losing power and thus depict Medusa, i.e. femininity, as a frightening figure. Cixous notes that the reason why “[men] need femininity to be associated with death” is their wish to maintain the repressive system because as long as the alienation of women is continued, there would not be any need to treat them as equal individuals. Cixous says that this is why men need to be afraid of women (“Medusa” 885). Of course, that alienation also works to estrange women from their own sex. Therefore, women also fail to embrace the characteristics of their own sex. The critic encourages women to embrace the beauty of their femininity as follows: “You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she’s not deadly. She’s beautiful and she’s laughing” (“Medusa” 885). Cixous introduces the concept of the New Woman who is liberated from the Old (“Medusa” 878). Though she admits that a long history of repression has left its mark on women, she also warns women not to continue it by following the norms that patriarchy has laid down for them. Cixous passionately denounces such an equation of femininity with passivity and death as leaving no positive space for women: “Either woman is passive or she does not exist” (“Sorties” 72). The fact that there are strict measures taken by the male-favouring authorities on women whenever they attempt to take action against the inequality of the prevailing system is brought to the fore in the Northern Irish women playwrights’ works, including *Somewhere* and *Ourselves*. Both *Ourselves* and *Somewhere* address the patriarchal fear of losing authority yet through different contexts. *Ourselves* presents the matter over the patriarchy’s relation with Irish nationalism. It is visible in Malachy’s behaviour towards his daughters, and

Liam's towards his sisters and wife that they hold a patronizing attitude that expects full obedience. Consequently, when the women act on their own will, or in opposition to their instructions, the men show unrestrained anger. *Somewhere* approaches the same matter by confronting the Irish women with the literal colonizers, that is the British. It is seen that the British officials do not refrain from using military ammunition on the Divis Flats' women on suspicion of them being the intelligence centre of the neighbourhood. So, the British prioritize maintaining their authority over risking some innocent residents' lives. This is how the link between patriarchy and colonialism is foregrounded in order to emphasize that Irish women suffer from patriarchal authority figures both on the national and social levels.

She proposes writing as a useful tool for women to shake the temple of patriarchy to its foundation ("Sorties" 73). Cixous states that though the language has also been refined to serve the purpose of patriarchy, women should not hesitate to inscribe their ideas and feelings ("Medusa" 887). All women are invited to write in order not to "leave [men] a single place that's any more theirs alone than [women] are" ("Medusa" 887). The critic argues that this is the only way to ensure that the future is no longer determined by the past ("Medusa" 875). Since traditionally a woman has never got her turn to speak, writing is pointed out as harbouring "the very possibility of change" and it is referred to as "the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures" ("Medusa" 879). To be more precise, Cixous believes that when a woman writes, "she physically materializes what she's thinking: she signifies it with her body. In a certain way she inscribes what she's saying" ("Medusa" 881). Therefore, writing is a woman's concrete rejection of patriarchy. Cixous talks about the power of women's writing and states that a woman writes in white ink ("Medusa" 881). Therefore, her work has the power of moving us (881). Once a woman takes the courageous step to outspoke her feelings and opinions, that would be the locus for the other women. It would provide others a gateway and will gradually enable them to reclaim what has been lost including the ability of self-love.

Cixous goes on to assert the effects of such men-favouring system that she names "phallogocentric tradition" ("Medusa" 279) on the history of written work. The critic notes that "[n]early the entire history of writing is confounded with the history of reason [...]" ("Medusa" 879), and just as the history of reason is shaped by men, in order to prioritize themselves under the disguise of the prioritization of reason; male

writers and their works are privileged over female writers. Cixous criticizes the male appropriation of writing and incites women to write as follows:

And why don't you write? Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it. I know why you haven't written. (And why I didn't write before the age of twenty-seven.) Because writing is at once too high, too great for you, it's reserved for the great-that is for 'great men'; and it's 'silly'. ("Medusa" 876)

It can be interpreted from the lines above that Cixous encourages women to be freed of the glass ceiling constructed by the patriarchal discourse and take a courageous step to start inscribing their own feelings and ideas instead of sitting silently and leaving the stage to men. The critic proposes writing as a solution for women to gain a voice of their own so that they will no longer have to be depicted through the male gaze. Cixous furthers her discussion by making an analogy between writing and a woman's body. Cixous notes the relation between the body and speech by saying that "[c]ensor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time" ("Medusa" 880). Therefore, when women are withheld from the world of writing, they also have trouble reaching out to their inner selves and consciousness as if they were left without a body. Expectably, "[a] woman without a body, dumb, blind, can't possibly be a good fighter" and is systematically "reduced to being the servant of the militant male, his shadow" ("Medusa" 880). It can be inferred from Cixous's arguments that men try to prevent any possible threat toward the patriarchal system they have built through their prepotency in the domain of writing because when women do not feel the need or find the space to access or record their thoughts, they would no longer pose danger towards the operating system of society which is designed to favour men over women at all costs. Therefore, there is a link between the place women occupy in literature and their physical existence in society. Writing is proposed as a primary step for women to make themselves visible in the eyes of the public as well as worldwide, depending on the scope of their readers' nationalities. In sum, Cixous envisages a strong correlation between the female body and the body of literature produced by women and argues that "writing herself" is the only way for a woman to "return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her" by the patriarchal system through alienation ("Medusa" 880). In both *Somewhere* and *Ourselves*, there are examples of Irish women who are bereft of their right to speak freely that is because they are perceived as threats in the eyes of the patriarchy. In *Ourselves*, it is most visible in Frieda's character because she does not abide by patriarchal dictates and does not hesitate to speak her

own opinion that criticizes her father, brother, and the existing system. This is why, the men around her think her as a devil that might confuse the minds of Josie and Donna. They demonize her because they do not wish the other women to be influenced by Frieda's self-ordained moves. If it was not for Freida, Josie and Donna would never have access to such ideas that undermine the patriarchal control over themselves. This parallels Cixous claims on how the dissemination of women's ideas might be a threat to patriarchy. In *Somewhere*, how speech of women is considered a threat to patriarchy is exemplified through the radio channel of the main women characters and the British soldiers' intolerance towards it.

Here, writing is proposed as a means of establishing a connection between the woman's body and mind. Later in "Sorties," she touches upon that idea once again by stating that "[she] sense[s] femininity in writing by a privilege of voice: writing and voice are entwined and interwoven [...]" (86). In other words, every attempt at women's writing should be attached importance since each attempt is a challenge towards the phallogentric system as "[each of these written pieces] takes place somewhere other than in the territories subordinated to philosophical-theoretical domination" ("Sorties" 84). Cixous, at the same time, points out the potential of such works as instruments that discover an alien territory. Writing, as a seldomly acquainted era by women, is full of promises both in terms of women realizing their potential and allowing themselves a space to recognize their opinions and feelings as well as to report their personal needs or tendencies. It is highlighted that writing allows women to create their own philosophies and theories instead of complying with the preexisting ones by the numerous male writers. While she acknowledges that the idea of the feminine practice of writing is new, it is difficult and even impossible to define it; she argues that "[it] does not mean it does not exist" ("Sorties" 84). Instead of ignoring the pile of works written by women, Cixous incites the reader to appreciate them and further encourages women to ameliorate the body of produced works. Based on the critic's discourse focusing primarily on writing "from woman and toward woman" ("Sorties" 85), it can be deduced that the main target audience is women as well. Last but not least, Cixous argues that feminine writing reveals the individuality of each woman with different personalities, feelings, dreams and sexual tendencies and that the insertion of women's stories into history undermines the objectification and universalization of women by patriarchy ("Sorties" 84). Hence, it can be argued that

*Ourselves* and *Somewhere* are examples of woman writing since they are written by the Northern Irish women for the Northern Irish women. Moreover, both have an attempt to challenge the male dominance over the Northern Irish theatre in the Troubles period, at their cores. Through their female trios, they portray women characters who are expected to be stereotypical at first glance yet end up pushing their limits and taking unexpected action.

Furthermore, she explains that she uses reading and writing to leave the real, colonial space which men govern (Marciniak 70). Cixous justifies her writing despite that repression by calling herself “I-woman escapee” (“Medusa” 879) because she was among the few rare female writers, including Simone de Beauvoir and Adrienne Rich, who managed to see the potential of writing as a means to challenge patriarchal authorities. Following the extensive discussion on the “enormous machinery” of patriarchy that “[...] has been operating and turning out its ‘truth’ for centuries” (“Medusa” 879), she notes that the number of female writings that inscribes femininity as well as the number of woman writers have been “ridiculously small” (“Medusa” 878). Along with women’s hesitancy, Cixous argues that the fewness of writing stems from the biased attitude towards women writers. She says, “publishing houses are the crafty, obsequious relayers of imperatives handed down by an economy that works against [women]” and “smug-faced readers, managing editors, and big bosses don’t like the true texts of women—female-sexed texts. That kind scares them” (“Medusa” 877). Hence, Cixous elaborates on the fact that written work by women was censored by male business owners in order to prevent women’s empowerment. Thus, it is the patriarchal way to transform women into mere companions for men who lack agency. However, it is also mentioned that the critic believes it is impossible to condemn women to eternal rest (“Medusa” 877) because what has been imposed on them is an unnatural concept together with its artificial limitations. It is their unconscious desire to inscribe their femininity hence, women always return from afar (“Medusa” 889). Cixous advises her female readers to write: “Write, let no one hold you back, let nothing stop you: not man; not the imbecilic capitalist machinery, in which publishing houses are [its] relayers” (“Medusa” 877). She also guides them in terms of the quality of their writing and argues that a good feminine work must be written by a woman toward women (“Medusa” 875). Moreover, it should be different from male writing. That is, it should never obscure women or reproduce the classic representations of

women as a sensitive, intuitive or dreamy figure who lacks agency (“Medusa” 878). *Ourselves* illustrates the inner challenge of a woman against patriarchy by Josie’s sleepwalking. Despite her being the obedient child of her father, Malachy, and a dutiful member of the nationalist militarist group, her unconscious takes control when she sleeps and seeks more than what is offered by the patriarchy. Sleepwalking could be interpreted as cries of help as a woman who is trying to survive under the yield of patriarchy. That is to say, her unconscious reacts to her instrumentalization by the male authorities. This is why, it can be read in line with Cixous’s commentary of how it is impossible for this unnatural order that is based on women’s degrading to last forever.

Considering that postmodern feminism’s emergence corresponds to the poststructuralist era, such a significant emphasis on the exploration of written work is not difficult to relate. In fact, poststructuralism is known to be a nourishing factor for postmodern feminism. This is why, it is useful to trace back the origins of poststructuralism in order to have a better understanding of the latter. Poststructuralism’s point of origin lies in Structuralism which originated in the 1950s with a claim that “[...] surface events and phenomena are to be explained by structures, data, phenomena below the surface” (De George xii). Post-structuralism emerged as a response to structuralism in the 1960s. It rejected the structuralist idea that the recurrent patterns or motifs of the texts could be studied to understand its underlying structure; “[advocates of this movement] view discourses (bodies of language or ‘texts’) and ‘readers’ as situated, rather than neutral” (Sands and Nuccio 491). So, the study of the underlying structure is connected to bias and misinterpretation. In other words, poststructuralism asserts that our ideas and perceptions are strongly affected by the language we use to refer to them. The meanings language creates are open to interpretation; consequently, it is impossible to infer a meaning without considering the political, social, and historical context in which that language is written or spoken (Weedon 19). This movement of thought started as a philosophical movement, but it broadened its influence on literature, politics, art, cultural criticisms, history, and sociology. Social sciences, literature and art have considered it as a unifying approach which is capable of providing a scientific footing for themselves (De George xi). The movement primarily argues that “[...] any settled form of knowledge or moral good is made by its limits and cannot be defined independently of them” (Williams 2). Among the prominent poststructuralist writers there are

Derrida, Deleuze, Lyotard, Foucault and Kristeva. Derrida and Lyotard trace these limits in language; Deleuze elaborates on the actual identities and virtual differences; Foucault argues that social myths about human nature and gender are man-made and “because they are made, they can be unmade” as he stated in an interview “assuming we know how they are made” (Foucault 252), and Kristeva focused on the identity politics. Especially Foucault’s and Kristeva’s works on gender have significantly contributed to the feminist discourse. Michel Foucault commented on the artificiality of gender by stating that “[...] the startling and potentially life-altering idea that ‘man’ (and ‘Man’) and ‘woman’ (and ‘Woman’) and all that we had been taught to believe about them were human inventions” (qtd. in Bordo 180-81); and Julia Kristeva elaborated on the relationship between the semiotic and symbolic orders to reveal how the internalized domestic role eventually leads to women’s exclusion from the society (Nagaoka 1). She also refused to see “the sexed body as the site of the inscriptions of masculine and feminine attributes” (Grosz 96). Though it is noteworthy to underline that despite the contributions her ideas made to feminist thought; she is known for her cautious approach towards the term ‘feminism’ and her direct rejection of “[...] feminisms that rally around the ideal of ‘woman’ or the ‘feminine,’ even in the name of feminine specificity” (Oliver 97). Thereby, she upholds the individuality of women and objects to the standardizing and generalizing definitions of them. Such immediacies result in poststructuralism’s affiliation with women’s rights and the feminist ideology. When all these are considered, it is not possible to draw distinct lines between poststructuralism and postmodern feminism. It is clear in the way that prominent thinkers of each school of thought often reflected on others as well.

Advocates of postmodern feminism deemed poststructuralism a useful instrument since they believe that: “By understanding the multiplicity of routes by means of which power is articulated, poststructuralism seeks to disclose the numerous sites at which resistance is possible” (Blunden 1). That is to say, postmodern feminists regard poststructuralism’s exploration of language and semiotics as practical tools to be benefited from. Postmodern feminism acknowledged the importance of feminist literature by embracing second-wave feminists Millet’s and Moi’s ideas which assert that one of the main responsibilities which a feminist must undertake is to expose how patriarchy has been used to oppress women (Moi 118). Moreover, Moi argues that feminists have adapted the existing critical methods according to their discourse, and

eventually the foundation for feminist criticism has been laid. Postmodern feminists argue that if feminist criticism is characterized by its political commitment to the struggle against all forms of patriarchy and sexism, it follows that the very fact of being a female does not necessarily guarantee a feminist approach.

Judith Butler is an eminent poststructuralist feminist whose ideas challenge the traditional binary oppositions of gender. She is best known for her performative conception of gender that she put forward in her book *Gender Trouble* in 1990. Butler states that she was inspired by French poststructuralism (*Gender ix*) while forming this approach known as “gender performativity” (*Gender xv*) and addresses the idea of gender as performance, as its name suggests. She explains the main aim of her work as “[...] to counter those views that made presumptions about the limits and propriety of gender and restricted the meaning of gender to received notions of masculinity and femininity” (*Gender viii*). In other words, this approach explores and elaborates on the ways in which gendered perspectives cast false necessities on men and women by revealing its artificiality. Moreover, it explores the “socially constructed character of gender” (*Gender xi*). There are mainly two effects of such social construction, the first one is the “[...] way in which the anticipation of a gendered essence produces that which it posits as outside itself” (*Gender xv*). It “[...] is basically to deconstruct the gender binary and to subvert the traditional doctrines being imposed on both male and female” (Rajkhowa 96). The second one is the highlight of the creation of such socially constructed acts through repetition. The renowned theorist mentions it: “Secondly, performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration” (*Gender xv*). That is to say, gender is essentially a performative concept; its performance is based on repetitive acts and their attribution to specific sexes over time. All in all, “[s]he argued that gender, rather than being an essential quality following from biological sex, or an inherent identity, is an act which grows out of, reinforces, and is reinforced by societal norms and creates the illusion of binary sex” (Morgenroth and Ryan 1). Hence, there is not any natural foundation to it. To exemplify that, she mentions “a man dressed as a woman, or a woman dressed as a man” (*Gender xxiii*) and how we come to conclude if a person is a man or a woman by looking at their clothes without knowing the “anatomy of the person” (xxiii). What is more, that person may face “[...] some threats such as

isolation, othering, being cast out of society in the event that he/ she does not fit into all these norms that are imposed on them” (Çınar 53). *Gender Trouble* aims at creating awareness for the artificiality of these deductions and therefore gives legitimacy to persons who do not follow the normative version of gender and “have been regarded as false, unreal and unintelligible” because of that (*Gender* xxv). Furthermore, the difference in expectations for each gender is referred to as the binary frame (*Gender* xxx). Butler here mentions her readings of Beauvoir that explain how women are regarded as a mystery in the masculinist culture and of Sartre that talk about how all desire is defined as trouble within the heterosexual and masculine point of view (*Gender* xxx). After that she concludes that “[t]he radical dependency of the masculine subject on the female “Other” suddenly exposes his autonomy as illusory” (*Gender* xxx). To put it another way, since the self-definition of the masculine subject depends on the existence of a contrasting ‘other,’ i.e., female subject, it is necessary to maintain the binary definitions. That makes the binary frame an instrument of patriarchy because it is thanks to that socially constructed division of genders that the hierarchal order of the society is consolidated in a way to ensure the maintenance of women’s subordination. This is why, “the gender categories that support gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality” should be abolished (*Gender* xxx). Both sexes get restricted and derailed from their wishes and desires since society expects them to comply with some gender expectations. While Butler touches upon its predicament on both sexes, it is shown that women especially suffer from it considering the patriarchal hierarchy the society is constructed upon.

After that, Butler draws attention to the drag performances to highlight how gender performativity shows the imitative nature of gender identities. Then she suggests subversive imitation as one way to undermine the gender binary (*Gender* 137-38) because if gender is based on imitative performances, it should be possible to imitate the other gender through actions, looks or speech. Sarah Salih, a professor of English who specialises in Butler and her works, claims that Butler warns us to realize that not all forms of imitation or parody are necessarily subversive; hence, she points out that there are two possible ways of imitation: “‘subversive’ parody and ordinary parody” (Salih 58). For a performance to destabilize conceptions of gender and sex Butler proposes to focus “not [on] whether to repeat, but how to repeat, or, indeed to repeat and, through a radical proliferation of gender, to displace the very gender norms

that enable the repetition itself” (*Gender* 148). Therefore, the context in which the imitative performance takes place is essential to consider it as subversive. “[Butler] puts forth performativity against the naturalization of gender identities and its fulfilment” and argues that “Some sort of identities imposed on genders must be reconsidered through the concept of deconstruction and subversion of gender roles” (Çınar 59). Finally, she mentions how poststructuralism pervaded not only into gender and sexuality studies but also into postcolonial and race studies (*Gender* ix). Then she claims that the strong distinction between gender studies and postcolonialism has been eliminated following their analysis through the lens of poststructuralism. Butler points out that there might be similar points in Homi Bhabha’s work and her own work, and various studies from these two fields could be united under the umbrella of ‘cultural studies’ thanks to these similarities (ix). In her later work *Bodies That Matter* (1993), she elaborates further on the matter of race by questioning race as another one of the “regimes of regulatory production contour the materiality of bodies” (*Bodies* 17). The feminist scholar argues that “racializing” is as important as “heterosexual imperatives” in the formation of the conception of gender (Çınar 63). Just like heteronormative norms, there are racial norms that aim to create stereotypes of gender. Butler then asks, “How do colonial and neo-colonial nation states rehearse gender relations in the consolidation of state power?” (*Bodies* 117). She strengthens the connection between gender relations and racial studies by stating that colonial states make use of gender relations in order to amplify their power over the states. That being said, it would be helpful to focus on another eminent scholar who has elaborated on the parallelisms between gender studies and colonialism to solidify the connections between colonial and race studies and gender studies which Butler sought to explore.

Maria Kurdi further unveils the relationship between patriarchy and colonialism. Keeping in mind the fact that the patriarchal system shapes the social, political, and economic position of women by determining the discourse with male superiority at its core, Kurdi firstly underlines that in colonial discourse, just like in patriarchal discourse, the colonized country is attributed feminine characteristics including weakness, dependency, over sensitivity and unreliability (Kurdi 2). These “degrading or romanticizing figurations of otherness” imposed in line with the “imperialist values of the West” either as a result of “an exoticizing primitivism” or “a paranoid vilification” are studied by “postcolonialist criticism” (Schwab qtd. in

Stevens et. al 407). Then she explains that one of the reasons why gender discussions in Ireland, Northern Ireland in specific, is, in fact, the colonial discourse. She links that to the phenomenon of internal fragmentation and argues that it is “[...] a dire consequence of the divide and conquer policy of imperialism which involved the separation of genders to further deepen the identity confusion of the subordinate people in the context of their unequal relationship with a stronger nation” (Kurdi 2). That is to say, igniting gender discussions works to escalate the identity crisis of the colonized country. Heated gender debates about the definition of womanhood and the position of women in society serve to shift the focus from questioning their national dependency on another country. Another function of that is to kindle identity crisis. Attributing such feminine-like characteristics to the colonized countries eventually results in their acknowledgement because while they are arguing against such features as weakness etc., they address such traits in themselves at the bare minimum. Considering all possibilities, such a disadvantaged vision of the colonized country might even result in the consolidation of such unfortunate traits within their society in the end; some might even embrace these characteristics without questioning after being affected by the colonial discourse. In a way, the colonizer uses gender discussion as a soft power to gain an upper hand over the colonized country. It is significant to expound on the position of women with regard to colonialization since the feminization of the colonized country creates an intricate situation for the women of the colonized land. In an attempt to overcome the colonial belittlement, the colonized country tries to cover all the ‘weak’ attributes addressed by the colonizer. Since all these ‘weak’ attributes happen to be the ‘feminine’ ones, such an attempt to contend the colonial power, eventually, becomes a struggle with womanhood. The strive for independence within the colonized country turns into a war against its own. This is how the patriarchal discourse and the colonial discourse reinforce each other in terms of the degradation of women. Hence, the women of the colonized country suffer from “double colonization” both by the imperial ideology and the patriarchy (Gandhi 83). This is why, Gabriele Schwab claims that the term “decolonization,” in fact, refers to all types of reaction against any disruptive and destructive influence by the colonizer whether in terms of “decolonization of other cultures, ethnic minorities, women, or the unconscious” (Schwab 37). In the case of Ireland, it is the distortion of the image of women and subsequent otherness. Ultimately, “[t]he strategic feminisation of the subordinate nation by the coloniser enhanced the process of nationalising the feminine

as its mirror image in the cultural discourse of the Irish” (Kurdi 2). What is more interesting is that its consequences could be concretely traced in Irish literature. Following the Act of Union in 1800, Ireland became an internal colony of Britain; the gendered discourse shaped by the colonial practice is evident in the literary works of that time. “In colonial times, Ireland was portrayed as a woman victimised by the colonising English male, leading womanhood to be associated with inferiority and weakness” (Izquierdo 105). Ireland is depicted as a young woman who laments for the pitiful state her country is in and being conscious of her duty to maintain her country’s integrity and well-being, she seeks to find herself a suitable male monarch who will protect her and her country from all the evil to come.

Gradually, such abstractions resulted in the creation of an ideal and therefore artificial image of woman in the eyes of the Irish. Kurdi summarizes that process as follows: “The image of woman undergoes sublimation, becomes an abstraction, an ideal, a symbol of the national good and moral perfection, an embodiment of higher goals such as the revitalisation of the nation” (2). In addition to creating false expectancy, such an idealistic image of woman weighed psychological and physical burden on the Irish women. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Irish nationalists linked the loss of national identity to the loss of independence and sought to revive Irish nationalism by returning to the Irish Gaelic myths and legends. They give Ireland different names like Kathleen Ni Houlihan, Dark Rosaleen, Mother Ireland, Sean-Bhean Bhocht, or the Poor old Woman. Yet, the personification of the country as “a woman, young or old, maiden, mother or hag” (Kurdi 2) in different situations was pursued. They portrayed Ireland as “[...] a woman who needed the help of young Irish men willing to fight and sacrifice themselves to free Ireland from colonial rule” (Izquierdo 105). That is proof that Irish nationalism could not successfully distance itself from the effects of colonialism and borrowed some factionary ideas which will eventually strengthen gender division and consequently disrupt social unity (Kurdi 3). Apart from the influence of colonial discourse, Patrick Colm Hogan offers us a different perspective on the colonized countries and asserts “reactionary masculinity” (Hogan 21) as another reason why the woman image of Ireland in the anti-colonial discourse might have been maintained. Basically, Hogan argues that to avoid the feminine traits attributed to the colonial powers, colonized countries tend to humble the feminine. By that, they try to evade the “threat of feminization” (Hogan 21). Therefore, in the Irish case, it can be

stated that nationalists try to disassociate the Irish society and the weak woman figure by linking the weakness only to the Irish state or land. They depict the Irish men as powerful in order to give the message that they will protect the Irish state/land which they portray as a dependent and helpless figure from the colonizers. Of course, such a fragile personification did not stay limited to the state and was projected on the Irish women as well. That created another hierarchy within the Irish society. To put it simply, initially, there was only the power dynamic between the colonizer, the UK, and the colonized, Ireland. However, subsequent to the formulation of Irish Revivalism in the shape of this kind of a gendered nationalistic discourse, the power dynamic between Irish men and women was added to the equation. Unfortunately, Irish women were placed at the bottom of such a power scheme. It can be interpreted as a double-acting move that both undermines the colonial discourse by constructing a powerful image of the nation and, in a way, strengthens the colonial powers' influence by damaging the Irish social integrity after downgrading the Irish women. This is why, postcolonialist criticism argues that giving voice to the "marginalized, hitherto silenced 'others,'" i.e., the Irish women, is a way to "challenge and indeed disrupt colonialist perceptions of the other" (Schwab qtd. in Stevens et. al 407). That is the point where postcolonialist criticism and feminist criticism meet on a common ground.

## CHAPTER 2: ANNE DEVLIN'S *OURSELVES ALONE* (1986)

Anne Devlin is one of the playwrights who used theatre to hold a “mirror up to a nation,” in Murray’s words (9). She brought gender discussion into her works and showed efforts to challenge the fossilized image of an ideal woman in Irish literature and, therefore, culture. Her works are pieces of a revolutionist women’s movement in theatre which seeks to initiate social change by increasing the visibility of Irish women. These are endeavours to reform the Irish drama as well because one part of the task is to increase the number of female theatre players on the Irish stage. Looking at the family background of the playwright, it is possible to get a better sense of Anne Devlin’s literary stance. She was born in 1951 in Belfast. Anne’s father, Paddy Devlin, was a socialist who argued that there should be social justice between the Catholics and the Protestants in Northern Ireland, and Anne’s mother and grandparents were Catholics (“The Trinity” 1). Anne believes that the political and religious diversity of her family contributed greatly to the development of her worldview and art. In one of her interviews, she referred to the rich culture of her family by saying that “as grand-daughter of an English Catholic and daughter of an Irish socialist, I learnt a huge amount about something supposed to be alien to me,” (Devlin qtd. in Kao 35). Her upbringing in the politically heated atmosphere of Belfast added to her familial background and resulted in her involvement in politics. She was barely 10 years old when the Troubles started in the 1960s. She elaborated on how the politically tense atmosphere of the city has led her to question her identity in her childhood as follows:

I write from my own experience - not biography - about things which make up my world: children, motherhood and cultural isolation. I start from the question ‘Who am I’ and my answers contradict the profile of aspirations or the dogmatic agenda that the paramilitaries have set for me. (qtd. in Bort 51)

It did not take long for her to realize the strong relationship between religion and citizenship in Belfast considering that she was a Catholic descendant, and her father was actively engaged in providing social justice for both sects (Privas-Bréauté “Anne Devlin’s *Ourselves Alone*” 1). Almost all Catholics in Northern Ireland considered themselves Irish while Protestants regarded themselves as British. Religion and nationality have been conjoint to define one’s identity. Virginie Privas-Bréauté remarks that “religious identities have come to determine nationalities in [Northern Ireland]” (“Autobiographical” 1). Devlin’s interest in politics continued in her

twenties; she became a member of the Labour Party in Northern Ireland like her father (Privas, "Trinity" 1). Her father mentions that she got injured badly in the head during a political march from Derry to Belfast in 1969 (Devlin P 95). That was one of the significant points of Anne Devlin's life where she encountered the dark face of Irish politics, that is institutional violence. Together with this experience, she "develop[ed] a critical observation of the plight of women during the Troubles" (Kao 35). In the end, she came to realize that "Troubles are about women fighting against men rather than Catholics against Protestants, Republicans against Loyalists, Nationalists struggling against Unionists and, above all, the IRA against the British army" ("Trinity" 1). In other words, she has discovered a parallelism between the patriarchal hegemony in Northern Ireland and the political hegemony of the British over the state. In the end, Irish women were the most suppressed group. Subsequent to her experience of teaching English and drama at a Protestant school, she moved to England in 1976 and has been living there ever since. While talking about her first days in England, Devlin notes that in her mind, she was still in Belfast, and she was creating the voices she needed to hear: they were women's voices (*State of Play* 96). Recalling Cixous's claim "[c]ensor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time" ("Medusa" 880), it is possible to argue that Devlin approaches the relationship between the woman's body and speech in the same way. So, Devlin concurs with Cixous's idea that when a woman writes "she physically materializes what she's thinking: she signifies it with her body. In a certain way she inscribes what she's saying" ("Medusa" 881). So, writing *Ourselves* is Devlin's unique way of embodying the voices within herself in the shape of a play, and, consequently, an attempt to lift the 'censorship' on women's bodies and speech.

To respond to that call, Anne Devlin wrote *The Belfast Trilogy* to provide a matriarchal representation of the Northern Ireland Troubles (Kao 31). It comprises *The Long March* (1984), *Ourselves Alone* (1986), and *After Easter* (1994). Being the second play, *Ourselves* dwells on gender, religion and politics. Critics note that it was a controversial play because "Northern Irish politics, at the time Devlin wrote this play, was not ready to respect the value of individuals during the war time" (Kao 49). The play revolves around three female characters who live in Belfast, and the audience gets to witness their search for identity in a politically chaotic environment. Their family and romantic relations and how they have helped shape their identity have also been

presented in the work. When explored in detail, it could be interpreted that Devlin uses her work “to reconstruct the ignored but diverse voices of Irish women—both inside and outside their homeland” (Kao 32). In her play, she seeks to explore Irish women’s identity together with an effort to undermine the passive, weak and self-sacrificing image of woman. Devlin’s primary motivation echoes Cixous’s invitation to all women to write by remarking that “writing herself” is the only way for a woman to “return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her” by the patriarchal system through alienation (“Medusa” 880). Just like Cixous proposed, Devlin followed the voices within herself and indited their cries for help through *Ourselves*. It is equally essential to remember the fewness of Irish female playwrights at the time *Ourselves* was written. Therefore, Devlin’s work is also an attempt to challenge the existing male dominance on the Irish stage attempting to challenge the phallogocentric system as “[taking] place somewhere other than in the territories subordinated to philosophical-theoretical domination” (“Sorties” 84) in accordance with Cixous’s encouragement. The play attempts to question and rebuild the Irish woman’s identity in relation to Cixous’s ideas can be further explored by its deliberate use of characterization with the help of Maria Kurdi’s ideas about the relation between colonialism and patriarchy. Space is also used within these plays to elaborate on the challenges that the female characters undergo. When all these are considered, it will be argued that *Ourselves* reflects the difficulty of being a woman in Northern Irish society by illustrating the multifaceted nature of identity including familial bonds, motherhood, and political aspirations. The complexity of the gender becomes more pronounced by the eventual fate of the main female characters who are either punished or ostracized once they refuse to comply with the patriarchal conventions.

*Ourselves* is a two-act play centring around an eight-month period of a family with a father Malachy McCoy who is a radical nationalist, a member of the Provisional IRA (Irish Republican Army), i.e., Provos. They live in West Belfast which has historically been the most nationalist of Belfast’s four constituencies. There are three children: Josie, the courier of the organization and the favourite girl of the father; Frieda the singer, the hairdresser, also the rebel of the family; and Liam, the son of the family who is on his father’s track in being an important member of the Provos. Liam is imprisoned at the beginning of the play but later released and actively seen in the play in Act 2. Their mother has passed away, so the audience learns about her merely

by a few mentions. The father, on the other hand, is a dominant figure in the family who gets to say the last word on any issue. Finally, Donna is the common-law wife of Liam who awaits him while he is in prison and takes care of their baby girl Catherine. She is also a childhood friend of Josie and Frieda. One day, the father brings Joe Conran who is a potential new member of the Provos with a British ascendancy. Upon meeting with Joe, Josie distances herself from her secret romantic affair with married Cathal O'Donnell, who is a top member of the IRA whom the British try to capture. Joe and Josie develop a romantic relationship in which Josie eventually becomes pregnant with Joe's child. Meanwhile, Frieda has a fight with her father upon her friend McDermot's visit to the club. Since he is from the Workers' Party, Malachy does not approve of their contact and suspects the two had an affair. Despite Frieda's efforts to convince him otherwise, Malachy banishes her from the club. She hopelessly agrees to stay at McDermot's house, and that results in a romantic relationship between the two until one day their house is attacked by a stone. McDermot refuses to believe that was a real attack, and when Frieda implies that it is done by the Protestants in the neighbourhood, he loses his senses and hits Frieda repeatedly. In return, Frieda secretly leaves his house for good. Donna, on the other hand, must deal with the constant raids and Liam's jealousy crises throughout the play. Then, it is revealed that Joe Conran is indeed a British agent who gave all the secret information about Provos to the British and thus hampered the operations of the IRA. Upon learning that, Liam argues that Josie should kill the baby because it belongs to a traitor. Malachy assures Josie that he will claim the baby as his own on the condition that Josie agrees to return to his father's house. Following Josie's reluctant acceptance, Frieda adds that she is going to leave for the United Kingdom because she prefers to be lonely than to suffocate in Belfast. In the end, Frieda and Donna sit silently as the dawn approaches after Josie leaves with Malachy.

The play employs an ironic stance while dealing with serious issues like political troubles, family dramas, gender inequality and institutional and domestic violence. Its satirical attitude reveals itself in the title of the play as well as its characters. The title "Ourselves Alone" is the English translation of Sinn Féin, the Irish name of the radical nationalist party in Northern Ireland (Kao 43). According to an Irish newspaper *Irish Echo*, the choice of the title together with its revolutionary approach towards politics and gender eliminated the possibility of *Ourselves* being

staged in Northern Ireland, and the play made its debut in London in a co-production with the Royal Court in 1985. The name of the party refers to Irish people forming a group with no interference from any other country, i.e. the British. Therefore, it can be read as a reference to the political aspect of the play because the story is of an Irish family whose men are radical nationalists involved in armed conflicts with the British, members of radical group IRA, during the Hunger Strike period. However, what concerns this thesis more is the ironic way Devlin chose that name while telling the story of three Irish women who are struggling to live alongside this political turmoil as well as the patriarchal repression they face from their own community. Wei H. Kao states that “The play in no way seeks to echo the militant spirit of Sinn Féin, the radical nationalist party in Northern Ireland, but delineates how three female characters, Donna, Frieda, and Josie, who are left “ourselves alone” at home by a husband or lovers who are imprisoned or carrying out missions” (Kao 43). So, the intended atmosphere is indeed one appealing to the Irish women. It can be interpreted as Devlin is addressing her own crowd, so she is writing *Ourselves* about women, and for women (Kroløkke and Sørensen 13) just like a sample of *l'écriture féminine* would be. The title echoes the playwright's effort to show Irish women that the nationalist and unionist discourses and patriarchal discourse, in fact, overlap. In all these perspectives, women are considered merely supporters, and they are only respected as long as they serve the interests of men. Before Devlin's *Belfast Trilogy*, female voices, particularly those of the working class, were often “unrecognized and misrecognized” (Aretxaga x). *Ourselves* “[...] cross-examines more acutely the body politics of the IRA, which does not treat women fairly but rather as domestic objects for love affairs, home help, and entertainment for men” (Kao 44). Through this work, Devlin tries to inspire women to realize the us/them binary that is successfully hidden under the nationalistic discourse which supposedly advocates the unity of all members of a nation. The playwright, thus, implies that all these speech about equity is just pretension, and, indeed, there is no equal place for a woman at the side of men.

Devlin uses characterization effectively to highlight both the gender dynamics of Irish society and the identity crisis of Irish women. Before illustrating the use of this technique, it would be useful to note that the process of creating a drama character by stereotyping his/her words, deeds, and ideas is called characterization (Vidhya and Arjunan 76). When approached in its entirety, it is seen that there are stereotypes for

both Irish men and women in the play, and these stereotypes reveal the gender dynamics within Irish society. Looking at the three female protagonists, it is possible to identify them as representations of the three women stereotypes: the mother (Donna), the mistress (Josie), and the career woman (Frieda), the three images that are mostly associated with women (Kilgore 231). Frieda is working at a club, singing for men to entertain them; Donna is patiently waiting for her husband to return from prison while taking care of their baby girl; Josie works as a courier for the IRA and is the mistress of one of the top members of the organization, Cathal O'Donnell. Hence, they appear to be stuck in roles defined by the negative stereotypes of women that were prevalent in the Catholic community in the early 1980s. Their existence is somehow shaped around one single cause, that is to serve men. The characterization reverberates the patriarchal tendency to categorize women under any label is echoed; "There has to be something of her," ("Sorties" 72) because without a label, it would not be possible to impose any rules on them. Hence, it can be argued that the deliberate placement of three female stereotypes at the centre of the play aims to open them up for discussion. In a female-centred plot with dynamic protagonists, their journey to discover their individuality helps Devlin question the validity of such superficial categories about Irish women, and women in general.

In the author's note, Devlin explains that she started writing *Ourselves* with two women's voices in her mind, one funny and one serious; and then found a third woman listening (*Ourselves* 10). That would make Frieda the funny one, Josie the serious one, and Donna the silent one. What they have in common is that, indeed, they are all "waiting on men" (*Ourselves* 16); that is to say, they are sacrificing their personal aspirations in order to further masculinist objectives. It is seen that despite their unconditional support, their hard work is not appreciated. Donna stays at home and dedicates herself to taking care of Catherine, but that does not save her from Liam's accusations of infidelity. Similarly, Frieda, even though she earns her own money and has a successful career in singing, is not respected because she refuses to identify herself as a nationalist. Last but not least, despite Josie's dedication and successful service to the organization, she cannot raise her rank in the group and stays a courier because of her gender. Considering the limits set on them, it would not be wrong to say that these women would hardly reach the necessary political and financial support of their own. Therefore, it seems almost impossible for them to liberate

themselves from their prescribed positions. Their situation could be likened to an endless cycle in which women are expected to fulfil and embrace secondary roles alongside men and never have a chance to realize themselves. Frieda's reproach underlines the gravity of the situation when she says: "I'm fed up living here, this place is a hole" (*Ourselves* 21). Thus, the atmosphere set at the beginning of the play could be interpreted as an unpromising one on behalf of the women.

Frieda is the rebellious figure in the family, working both as a hairdresser and singer she represents the Career Woman stereotype. She sings at a club which is used as the centre of Republican activity in Belfast. She is rebellious in the sense that she is represented as an independent figure who does not hesitate to make her own decisions as opposed to Josie and Donna. For example, despite her family's strong bond to the IRA, she does not follow the radical nationalist cause of her family. She says that she was once an active activist, but she gave up and now thinks that "Nationalism is always the last resort of people who've failed to achieve anything else" (*Ourselves* 33). Still, she does not consider herself apolitical; she says she sings and writes songs instead. Art is addressed as a form of political advocacy through Frieda. That message is also conveyed at the beginning of the play: Frieda says she does not want to sing songs about Internment anymore, because these songs are about men and that women are only seen as doormats (*Ourselves* 13). Instead, she wishes to sing her own song about women and what they have been through during the Troubles. The scene is important because it sets the tone of the play at the beginning by representing a female character who freely expresses her wish to stop singing songs that praise militarism. In this way, it can be read as a challenge to the militaristic discourse that is instrumentalized by patriarchy to praise men over women. Frieda implies that she intends to shift the spotlight from men to 'doormats,' that is to 'women' whose individualities have been disregarded for the sake of male privilege. She responds to that marginalization by choosing a path of creativity, that is by writing songs (Roche 175). In this way, art is presented as a means for women to challenge the social contract and provide a more flexible discourse, addressing unexplored topics like body mysteries, secret joys, waves of shame, and resentment towards the other sex. It recalls Cixous's ideas asserting that writing harbours precisely the very possibility of change since it is "the space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures" ("Medusa" 879). Similarly,

Frieda's songs are her attempts to make a change in favour of all women whose voices have long been overcome by the appraisal of masculinity prevailing in society as well as art. It corresponds exceptionally with Cixous's ideas on feminine works because while elaborating on the power of feminine art in undermining the existing social structure, Cixous particularly referred to songs as the "first music from the first voice of love which is alive in every woman" and argued that "in women's speech, as in their writing, that element which never stops resonating, which, once we've been permeated by it, profoundly and imperceptibly touched by it," the song "retains the power of moving [women]" ("Medusa" 881) This is why, it is possible to regard Frieda's insistence on singing her own song instead of the ones that has been sung so far. Last but not least, it would be beneficial to elaborate on the setting of the scene together with the use of light. Under the spotlight, Frieda is sitting alone at the centre of a dim room with walls surrounded by pictures of those who have lost their lives during the Hunger Strikes. That scene displays a woman who craves change and wants to make herself heard by singing the story from her own perspective. Therefore, she is introduced to the audience as a courageous woman who confronts the ghosts of patriarchy surrounding her. It can be argued that the setting insinuates Devlin's main aim in writing this play. She writes it, as an Irish woman, because she thinks the Irish literary era is full of men's work which talks about men and their challenges fighting for the country's independence. Devlin is here to provide an alternative aspect that challenges the patriarchal discourse by turning the light on 'the other,' that is women; she is to tell what Irish women have been through during these troubled times. That also coincides with Cixous's views that art, feminine writing in general, should be toward women and about women because this is the only way to incite women to realize that they are the ones, indeed, who are the victims.

Frieda is disillusioned with political nationalism because of what she has witnessed and experienced. Upon long years of witnessing the consequences of military sectarianism, she came to realize that "National identity is therefore fundamentally masculine in its construction and seeks to exercise control over women, the family, and reproduction as part of its formulation" (Moon 40). Her stay at Aunt Cora's and her sister Bridget's might have provided Frieda with a strong reference to the negative consequences of extreme nationalism on women. Aunt Cora is blind, deaf, dumb and disabled due to an ammunition explosion she experienced at the age of

eighteen while she was storing them under the floorboards of her bedroom to help her brother Malachy. On that account, she can be regarded as a victim of militant sectarianism. She has been shown at the front line of the parades to inspire the Irish women to remain faithful to their patriotic duty ever since. Considering that “Cora” means “maiden” in Greek, it would be possible to state that Devlin intentionally created this character to embody the ultimate silent, compliant and suffering woman (“The Trinity” 5). Devlin might have used Aunt Cora’s character to criticize the repeated exploitation of the image of Mother Ireland which has a serious impact on the creation of the patriarchal control over women’s bodies. It is possible to support that argument by referring to Cixous as well: “[a] woman without a body, dumb, blind, can’t possibly be a good fighter” and is systematically “reduced to being the servant of the militant male, his shadow” (“Medusa” 880). If Aunt Cora is the ideal image of the Irish woman that is imposed on young women by the patriarchal hand, the reason behind this is to ensure the woman subject’s full compliance with their rules. It is argued that “Cora’s multiple dysfunctions thus symbolize that Irish Republicanism is dysfunctional within itself and also with other political persuasions, if these female images remain patriotically defined” (Kao 50). That claim aligns with Devlin’s use of characterization to convey criticism of nationalistic discourse. Moon argues that through Aunt Cora, Devlin shows how the female body is turned into an instrument of political propaganda (Moon 37). Finally, the way Aunt Cora joins at all nationalist parades might be an indication that she symbolizes the woman whose body “has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display—the ailing or dead figure, which so often turns out to be the nasty companion, the cause and location of inhibitions” (“Medusa” 880). So, the character illustrates the ill-intentioned body politics of radical nationalism. Even though she has been disabled during a nationalist pursuit, she is not saved from being used on behalf of political propaganda. It can be stated that Aunt Cora evokes the discrepancy between the patriarchal discourse and women’s reality as well (Yungil 177); because all these pretensions of tribute at the parade would not change the fact that she has sacrificed herself.

It is also possible to comment on the symbolic aspect of Aunt Cora with regard to the concept of blindness. If blindness is interpreted as blind compliance to the patriarchal rules without questioning, that would make Irish women’s journey of

seeking self-subjectivity a path to awakening. In that sense, once they manage to raise their consciousness to the coarse nature of patriarchy, they would no longer be condemned to blindness. They will finally start seeing the truth for what it really is. If unquestioning subordination to the patriarchy is blindness, then Frieda would be the most awakened woman character in the play (Kurdi 102). Aunt Cora's character might be the Old Woman who has pursued a life in line with patriarchal dictations and sacrificed herself for the patriarchal cause; that would place Frieda who clearly expresses her intention not to allow her fate to be the same as Aunt Cora in the position of New Woman who refuses to be “simple or linear or ‘objectified,’ generalized” (“Medusa” 881). That claim could be supported by Frieda’s refusal to identify herself as a nationalist or socialist together with the fact of how she addresses the exploitation of women constantly throughout the play. For instance, she points out the long history of women’s suffering by saying “She [Aunt Cora] has been like that since she was eighteen. And Bridget [Aunt Cora’s sister] is a maid because she stays to look after Cora. And I’m still a maid because I’m looking after both of them” (*Ourselves* 29). Frieda understands the grim reality that it is always women who bear the burden of the consequences of political action. Moreover, she has stopped following the nationalist course of action because she sees no hope in nationalism for herself. She is convinced that “when there’s a tricolour over the City Hall, Donna will still be making coffee for Joe Conran, and Josie will still be keeping house for her daddy because it doesn’t matter a damn whether the British are here or not” (*Ourselves* 30). It can be inferred from these lines that Frieda has come to understand that the patriarchal structure lying behind all political ideologies is the same. Therefore, it is not a matter of national identity or political hegemony of the British or the Irish. It is indeed a matter of gender, of men trying to subordinate women. The play questions “the subjugation of Irish women to patriarchal forces while, at the same time, focusing on their possible awakening from the submissive and supportive relationships they have with men” (Kao 43). Devlin focuses on demonstrating that women are battling males throughout the Troubles, not Republicans against Loyalists, Catholics against Protestants, Nationalists against Unionists, or, most importantly, the IRA against the British army (Privas-Bréauté “The Trinity” 1). For these reasons, *Ourselves* turns into a story about gender conflict rather than political ideals or territory.

Josie's character parallels the most with the ideal image of Mother Ireland who is the caring and self-sacrificing woman figure in the sense that she has devoted her life to implementing orders within the organization. When Donna calls Frieda to behave respectfully towards Josie because she is older than her, Frieda answers: "Josie is older than any of us" then adds, "At least four hundred years!" (*Ourselves* 34). Frieda's reference to Josie as an ancient figure strengthens the argument that Josie's character is given as a symbol of Mother Ireland. Josie is a university graduate but instead of pursuing a career, she continues her life as a courier at the organization. She is the favourite daughter of the family as she never fails to follow her father's orders. This is why, her character could be representing the subservient Mistress stereotype as well. Furthermore, while Frieda and Donna talk about wearing make-up and dying their hair; Josie does not participate in any of their conversation. It can indicate her alienation from her femininity which also complies with the teachings of patriarchal discourse which relies on the genderless ideal figure of a woman whose femininity is repressed. In Act 1 Scene 2, Malachy attempts to hug Josie by saying "How's my mate! Hey!" (*Ourselves* 25). However, Josie withdraws herself noting that "I'm not your mate. I'm your daughter" (25). In response, he angrily releases her from his grip. This moment could be useful to comment on Malachy's approach towards Josie. He calls her 'mate,' as this can be understood as a friendly reference, it is also a word mostly used to address men. So, it is almost as if Malachy does not consider Josie's femininity, perhaps even sees her as a son. Josie's direct reaction towards the word is an indication that she finds it offensive as well. She is one of the women whose femininity has been tried to be "condemned to 'eternal rest'" ("Medusa" 877) by the patriarchy starting from their childhood so that they would never pose a threat to the functioning of the male favouring system.

The patriarchal pressure she was exposed to since birth seems to have worked since she seems to be fully dedicated to the patriarchal discourse which manifests itself in Josie's example in the form of radical nationalism. There are many instances where it is implied that the true reason behind Josie's political dedication is indeed the nationalistic propaganda to which she has been exposed since childhood. In Act 1 Scene 1, when Donna mentions the allegation that McDermot has deemed civil casualties appropriate as long as the damage given to the British is more, Josie says: "You don't know what you're talking about. Our force is defensive" (*Ourselves* 16).

Donna, in response, says that she is looking at her, but it is him who is talking. It can be understood from Josie's use of a first-person singular perspective that she considers herself as one with the organization. Donna's implication that Josie does not sound like herself is a signal that she has been brainwashed within the organization. Accepting such a bad rumour about a top member of the IRA would eventually affect the legitimacy of the organization; therefore, instead of paying heed to Donna's warnings, she chooses to respond with the political rhetoric crafted by the organization. That being said, it is possible to claim that Josie is a female figure who has been brainwashed by the patriarchy which Cixous described as the "enormous machine that has been operating and turning out its 'truth' for centuries" ("Medusa" 879). This is why, instead of expressing her own ideas she reiterates the patriarchal jargon.

In a similar vein, while Frieda highlights the importance of loyalty to loved ones, Josie argues that the only loyalties allowed are ideological ones:

Josie: Do you know what they did when they divided this country—

Frieda: Oh, here we go again. Mystical alienation.

Josie: They gave us political amnesia.

Frieda: Jargon. (*Ourselves* 23)

The contrast between Frieda's and Josie's characters is evident in that scene. Josie's listing of political jargon is countered with Frieda's sarcastic attitude indicating the vanity of her arguments. All these align with the Mistress stereotype Josie has been associated with. Critics argue that "Josie's voice has been invaded by that of O'Donnell: she doesn't find a means of expressing her own agency, but rather becomes co-opted by a masculine cause" (Rea 208). Therefore, her verbatim echoing of radical nationalists is a symbol of her successful transformation to a mere instrument on behalf of their ultimately masculinist cause. She stops thinking for herself and is content with repeating whatever she has been taught. She is silenced through manipulation as a servant maid for the political agenda. From Cixous's perspective, Josie can be seen as a woman who is reduced to serving the militant male, existing merely as his shadow ("Medusa" 880). That is the type of woman that Cixous calls "the false woman" who is only pretending to live but in fact, all she does is to exist (880). While talking about her history at the IRA, she reveals that performing dangerous tasks for the organization is indeed never an easy task for her. She says she started doing them before she had to

think of the consequences, and now she feels more scared than she was ten years ago (*Ourselves* 31). The worrisome consequences of militaristic sectarianism on a young girl are depicted through Josie's story. She highlights the fears more while performing tasks for the IRA now since she has become old enough to fully understand what is at stake if things do not go as planned.

Finally, Donna, being the mother figure in the play, has assumed the role of a carer and nurturer while Liam is in prison. He supports Liam and his family emotionally and takes care of the baby and the home while her husband is away. Though he is in prison throughout the first act and seen on the stage only in the second act, the psychological pressure he has on Donna is evident. Donna and their two-year-old baby girl Catherine await his return while he from time to time gets out on parole and visits them. In Act 2 Scene 2, the menacing effect of Liam's release on Donna is evident. When Frieda dyes her hair, Donna also wishes to dye her hair saying that her roots are also visible. Afterwards, she changes her mind and says, "If I go up to the prison tomorrow with dyed hair Liam'll think I'm running after somebody" (*Ourselves* 24). It is a good example of the pressure Liam's jealousy creates on Donna and how it limits her actions. It can be interpreted as another indication of how Donna renounces her femininity to prove how loyal she is to him (Privas-Bréauté "Anne Devlin's *Ourselves Alone*" 8). Later in Act 2 Scene 6, it is revealed that Josie is placed at Donna's house by Liam to spy on whether Donna is loyal or not. It shows the extreme level of suspicion and jealousy of Liam. Also, in Act 2 Scene 5, during the raid at Donna's, it is revealed by the policemen who raided the house to find Liam that he has been seeing another woman named Eileen. To provoke Donna to give information on Liam's whereabouts, they imply that he might be visiting Eileen that night then (*Ourselves* 70). Here, it can be understood that despite his restrictive attitude towards Donna, Liam himself does not behave loyal. He sees no harm in seeing others, and it is a widely acknowledged fact that information is consciously used by the policemen to hurt Donna. Again, there is unequal treatment for men and women; while it can be normalized when a man has an affair with multiple women, a woman is expected to remain loyal only to one man even though she is being cheated on.

Three female protagonists in the play are in a disadvantageous position in comparison to their male counterparts. This is most evident in the family dynamics. To begin with, in the McCoy family, the mother is absent whereas the father figure has

strong authority. That could be a way of the playwright's stress on the prioritization of father over mother figure in patriarchal societies such as Northern Ireland's through the creation of the McCoy family in a way that echoes Cixous's description of how patriarchy neglects the mother figure even within the concept of family where a woman has the strongest correlation in order to imply that "ultimately the world of "being" can function while precluding the mother. No need for a mother, as long as there is some motherliness: and it is the father, then, who acts the part, who is the mother" ("Sorties" 72), and thus, to conserve all the authority in the father figure. The mother is not included in any equations in order to prevent the slightest attachment of importance on a female individual. Instead, the father figure is conventionally coupled with the son; therefore, the mother is simply disregarded (72). In a similar vein, the demise of the mother of the McCoy's might be a reference to metaphorical death in life for the Irish women whose existences are simply disregarded within the traditional family structure and reduced to being child bearers. Also, Malachy's authority is coupled with his son Liam's. Such a male-dominant family structure is found in Liam and Donna's relationship as well. Liam, though he is in prison at the beginning of the play is presented as a strong figure who has been referred to many times by Donna as if his existence is a patriarchal control mechanism over her so much that just the thought of Liam intimidates Donna. When women somehow fail to follow men's dictations, they face violent consequences in varying aspects ranging from social pressure to psychological or physical violence. Devlin also constructed male characters in the play deliberately as representatives of radical nationalists, loyalists, and socialists in order to illustrate the proximity between masculinist ideology and extremist political behaviour. It can be argued that the reason all political ideologies in Northern Ireland inherently disregard women at their core is due to the country's colonial context. Alluding to Hogan's claim that "reactionary masculinity" (Hogan 21) in anti-colonial discourse leads colonized nations to downplay feminine traits to avoid the "threat of feminization" (21) imposed by colonial powers. In the Northern Irish context, nationalists attempt to distance Irish society from the weak female image by associating weakness solely with the Irish state or land. They portray Irish men as strong protectors of a dependent and helpless state/land against colonizers, and that results in the inevitable debasement of the female and the feminine. This grim reality is presented by the fact that regardless of the names, all men display the same toxic behaviour toward women. That claim could be supported by Devlin's double-casting

of actors playing Gabriel and Liam, and John McDermot and Cathal O'Donnell. To underline how the same masculinist perspective echoes in every man's mind, the names change but the actors remain the same. That would lead the audience to reconsider the extent to which masculinist rhetoric shapes our lives.

The female trio is exposed to various forms of patriarchal pressure: psychological, physical, institutional and emotional. Since the beginning, the play's tone is set in a way that consciously foregrounds the psychological violence Malachy inflicts on them. For example, in Act 1 Scene 2, Malachy comes in and reprimands them for the smoke in the house. That scene indicates how the protagonists are still treated as if they were children. Later in that scene, Malachy gives the girls a couple of quid and tells them to buy chocolate for themselves before leaving. Upon his leave, Frieda marks the absurdity of the situation by saying "Chocolates! Sweeties! What age does he think we are! A bottle of whiskey would be more like it" (*Ourselves* 27). It can be inferred from this scene that Malachy fails to acknowledge that the girls are now adults and, he considers them incompetent children. That reveals the superficial dimension of his relation to the girls, as it is clearly a result of a communication problem. From a psychological point, this scene proves that Malachy does not consider any of the three women as equals. He considers them as children who need protection, instruction, and punishment when necessary. It supports the Cixousian claim that women are not considered equal to their male counterparts ("Medusa" 879) and are reduced to incompetent beings because "accepting the other sex as a component makes them much richer, more various, stronger" ("Sorties" 76). So, the scene at the same time reveals that Malachy's strict mindset has been negatively shaped by the long-prevailing patriarchal ideology.

Furthermore, in the McCoy family, violence finds itself a place not only psychologically but also physically. Being the rebellious figure in the family, Frieda is the one who is exposed to physical violence by the father figure. In Act 1 Scene 4, when Frieda's rehearsal at the club is interrupted by McDermot from the Workers' Party, and Malachy suspects that the two had an affair; he hits Frieda once and starts chasing her to continue beating:

Malachy: You will not make little of me. Siding with the people who condemned Bobby Sands.

Frieda: They didn't condemn him. They said he beat his wife! Hard to believe, isn't it?

Malachy: Get out of my sight. (*Ourselves* 39)

The conversation above passes in the middle of the short chase between Frieda and Malachy between the hits. It can be inferred from the lines above that his main reason for reacting aggressively is the fear of humiliation by his political circle. He says that he will not let her humiliate himself by siding with people who condemned Bobby Sands, who is a member of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) and died on hunger strike while imprisoned in 1981 (*Ourselves* 39). He loses control of himself at the mere thought that his daughter's relationship with a socialist could cast doubt on his political devotion. Taking into consideration that Malachy is a committed radical nationalist, it is possible to argue that Devlin aims to highlight "the closeness of patriarchy and extremist nationalism" (Kurdi 100) through Malachy's violent behaviour. Since he does not even pay attention to Frieda's explanation stating that this is only a misunderstanding, it can be stated that his aggressiveness results from the fact that he cares more about his social and political position than his daughter's mental and physical wellbeing.

It is also significant to point out the sarcasm in the lines above. Frieda discloses her father's refusal to differentiate between respecting someone and admitting their misdeeds. Bobby Sands, a martyr for the Irish cause, is highly respected by the Irish nationalists; however, Malachy's reaction shows that his idealization of Bobby as a political figure overshadows his personal deeds. At the same time, there is strong irony because Malachy hits Frieda in this scene. So, he commits the same misdeed, which he finds hard to believe when he is told that Bobby made it at first and inflicts physical violence on his daughter. That scene leads us to question whether Malachy, and all other radical nationalists that he represents, really react harshly to allegations that Bobby beats his wife because they believe him to be an untouchable figure, or they consciously prefer disregarding it because each of them commits violence within their household as well. If so, this could be a full-fledged representation of the hypocrisy of Irish nationalism. In addition to that, considering that physical violence could produce feelings of shock and empathy towards Frieda, the subtext of hypocrisy may be deliberately conveyed along with it to create bigger repercussions on the audience through the shock it exposes. Furthermore, Frieda asks "What do I have to do or say, Father, to get you to leave me alone" (*Ourselves* 29), during the heated chase. So, Malachy is represented as the one who acts impulsively whereas Frieda is the one who

has a logical approach. Referring to Cixous's binary oppositions in which women are always represented as the irrational figure as opposed to men who are attributed reasonable deeds ("Sorties" 70-71), it can be stated that Devlin disrupts the conventional image of a woman while at the same time underlining its hypocrisy.

Following her father's attack, Frieda agrees to take lodger in John McDermot's, who is a Workers' Party member. It is unexpected for Frieda to accept living with McDermot because it means to accept living under a man's yoke. It poses a contrast between her strong will for independence while at the same time revealing her need for safety, which is most likely to be provided under a man's roof. In Act 2 Scene 8, after McDermot's apartment is attacked with a brick by Protestants, the two have an argument which results in McDermot's abrupt attack on Frieda:

Frieda: What's wrong John? Are the Prods not allowed to be bad? (She turns and picks up her case.) I think you are becoming something of an apologist for your tribe. (He leaps out of bed and slaps her across the head.)

McDermot: How dare you! (In a rage, he hits her again.) How dare you! (He hits her again.) I've spent my life fighting sectarianism.

(She falls into the corner, putting up her hands to protect her face and head. He hits out again.)

Frieda: Stop it! Please! (*Ourselves* 81)

The violence in the scene startles the audience. As this is the second time Frieda is exposed to physical violence by a man, the scene functions to help the audience empathize with her. Here, it is important to remember that Frieda agreed to take lodger in McDermot's place in order to be saved from her father's violent actions in the first place. Therefore, it can be read as an indication that the physical violence women are subjected to is not limited to the family members. It is equally significant that both Malachy and McDermot are devoted political figures, and they justify physical violence by their political ideologies. The way these two characters with different political approaches show the same violent reaction toward Frieda is taken into consideration, it can be stated that Devlin tries to convey a message through them. Despite their seemingly different political attributions, both Malachy and McDermot act the same toward a woman, Frieda, in a hot-tempered way, and both see no harm in resorting to violence. They supposedly evade the threat of any doubts cast on their political beliefs by exerting physical superiority. Considering their representation as devoted political figures, both Malachy and McDermot could be taken as

representatives of the followers of the political causes they stand for. Thus, the message could be that masculinist ideology is an underlying layer of not just radical nationalism but also of socialist political ideology. The relationship between these two politically representative figures and violence could be generalized to evidence the strong correlation between politics and patriarchy. Again, Frieda's self-defensive behaviour as opposed to McDermot's violent and frantic attitude shows strong contrast. Frieda provides an alternative view of the Logos/Pathos binary embedded in patriarchal societies in a way to attribute the logical approach or the repression of instinctive attitudes to male individuals whereas perceives pathos as a degrading feature mostly associated with their female counterparts who supposedly fail to control over their feelings ("Sorties" 71) by subverting the patriarchal binary oppositions. Yet, it is equally significant to consider the fact that Frieda decides to leave for England in the end. Therefore, despite her relatively high financial opportunities and decisive attempts to survive within the patriarchal constraints of Irish society, she ultimately fails to achieve her goals. Eventually understanding that it would be impossible for her to realize herself within these boundaries, she finds the solution in leaving. From that point of view, despite her unyielding character, Frieda is forced to leave her loved ones behind in order to pursue a life in which she can be as free as she wishes.

However, violence is not only found in the form of brute force in *Ourselves*. Josie, for example, is being exploited emotionally in addition to her instrumentalization for the political cause. At the beginning of the play, she is introduced to the audience while she is in the middle of a heartbreak following the end of her secret affair with a married IRA member, O'Donnell. The way he dismisses Josie and meets her whenever he wishes hurts her feelings. Josie confesses to Donna that she feels sick all the time now, and she does not think she can continue spending every night for O'Donnell to come (*Ourselves* 15-16). So, there is an implication that her emotional trauma caused by O'Donnell manifests itself as a physical illness. Furthermore, it is possible to interpret Josie and O'Donnell's relationship by Cixous's views on how the patriarchal system perceives a woman as "a 'dark continent' to penetrate and to 'pacify'" ("Medusa" 877), and upon conquering her, men make "haste to depart from her borders, to get out of sight, out of body" (877) with "fear of being 'taken' by the woman, of being lost in her, absorbed, or alone" (877). This might be the reason for O'Donnell's complete disregard for Josie apart from their occasional

intimate meetings. He presupposes Josie's attachment to her; hence he does not show any effort to show any affection towards her. From Josie's point of view, it can be argued that her quest for love is considerably more significant to her than the accomplishment of her activist endeavours because their objective of a united Ireland is an impractical ideal. Upon meeting with Joe Conran, she develops a romantic connection with him that results in her pregnancy and the revelation that Joe is a British spy. Eventually, her love life becomes a vicious spiral that ends with her feeling abandoned and disillusioned because the men she has fallen in love with are political activists whose true allegiances are always political (Kurdi 102).

Similarly, Donna is exposed to psychological pressure by means of Liam's constant accusations of infidelity. Liam repeatedly accuses her of not being loyal and questions who her true love is reserved for by implying that Donna still has some romantic feelings for her ex-husband. Such systematic accusations from Liam evoke Cixous's foregrounding of the instrumentalization of guilt as an oppression mechanism. Cixous claimed that women pleaded "guilty of everything, guilty at every turn: for having desires, for not having any; for being frigid, for being 'too hot'; for not being both at once [...]" ("Medusa" 880) so that they would be easier to "kept under seal" (880). Considering that Donna receives such accusations usually after she refuses to have sexual intimacy with Liam, it is possible to say that Liam activates that kind of judgment in reaction to his fear of losing Donna's seemingly endless affection towards himself. The psychological pressure Donna has been exposed to manifests itself in her hallucination of the Devil in Act 2 Scene 1. The scene takes place right after Liam's release from prison and the appearance of him at Donna's front door. It starts with a monologue of Donna in which she tells her memory of the time she first started seeing the Devil and having attacks:

Donna: The devil's back. He was lying with his head on my pillow this morning. When I woke up I recognized him immediately. Even though it has been years. (Pause.) The first time I ever saw him, he was standing in the corner of the room. I could feel something watching me. (...) He seemed to grow out of the corner until he was towering over me. I panicked because I felt I was suffocating. My first husband was with me at the time. He called a doctor. He said I had asthma. The funny thing was, I really didn't get over my asthma attacks until my husband was interned. And I haven't seen the Devil since. (Pause.) Until this morning. Liam bent over and kissed me goodbye as he was leaving. The trouble was he blocked my mouth and I couldn't breathe through my nose so I kept having to break away from him. (*Ourselves* 53)

Donna's monologue delivered while sitting alone on a straight-backed chair in the living room, with the only light on the stage focused on her face, creates a dramatic effect by giving the audience deeper insight. In addition to the focus of light on Donna's face, the use of pauses adds to the effect by creating suspense and a desire to hear the rest of the story. It is said that Donna's first attack started while she was with her ex-husband and her breathing difficulty corresponds to her vision of the Devil. Irony is also used in the text to highlight that the real reason behind her feeling as if she cannot breathe is not asthma, but her ex-husband's existence. It can be inferred from the way she stops having attacks following her husband's internment. Moreover, she highlights that she starts seeing the Devil again upon Liam's return. The supposed asthma attacks manifest themselves in Liam's innocent farewell kiss, and he ends up limiting her breathing. Symbolically, it might indicate how innocent acts of love result in suffocating consequences on the part of the woman. It is possible to argue that it is an example of a naturalistic detail complicated by the playwright to demonstrate the damaging effects of gendered subordination (Kurdi 101). Other examples could be Frieda's feeling as if she was drowning at the club filled with men or Josie's sleepwalking. It is equally significant to note that considering how Donna is imposed as the mother figure who constantly stays at home and waits for her husband's return, it is possible to liken her to the Angel in the house phenomenon. In that case, the use of the Devil metaphor would create a direct contrast to that. So, it would be possible to state that the patriarchy in the image of the Devil tortures the women who are expected to be innocent Angels within the household. Upon having these attacks, Donna starts to vomit or choke several times, but nothing happens in the end (*Ourselves* 53-54). It is as if the psychological trauma has a physical reaction on her. The way she attempts to vomit or choke could be signifying that she might want to get rid of whatever is blocking her breath but she never actually achieves to do so. This is why, nothing happens after these attacks.

Apart from his disloyalty and the psychological pressure his jealousy creates on Donna, it is equally significant to elaborate on Liam's physical/sexual pressure on her. In Act 1 Scene 1, soon after Donna's monologue, it is reported that it has been three weeks since Liam has returned from prison. When Donna says she is tired because she has taken care of Catherine all night, Liam reproaches her by saying "It's been three years since I came out of the Kesh, and all I hear is that you're tired"

(*Ourselves* 54). These lines reveal his lack of empathy with Donna, and then he continues: “You were never exhausted with your husband!” (54). The extent of Liam’s emotional abuse of Donna is doubled when he acts as if he holds a grudge about her past. He tries to accuse her by putting her previous relationship forward. That reveals how unhealthy the connection he makes is. He goes on to mention how all the men he had encountered at the prison talk about they all had sexual intercourse with Donna in the past and continues to accuse her by saying she accepted all others but does not want him. The impropriety and groundlessness of his allegations present Liam as a hysterical character who is in constant need of attention and verification. Alternatively, it concurs with Cixous’s reading of the masculinist perspective which first reduces the female individual to a mere servant for his own benefits, and “[h]e keeps, then, of the woman on whom he is no longer dependent, only this space, always virginal, as matter to be subjected to the desire he wishes to impart” (“Sorties” 73). Hence, the female counterpart is regarded as a tool to satisfy sexual desires. When Liam attempts to have intimacy with Donna, he disregards Donna’s clear answers and explanations, and he continues to question Donna’s love for her for no reason. It is almost as if he is obsessed with the idea of being loved less than the ex-husband or all the other men Donna has met. The frenzy of Liam evokes the idea in the audience that the real issue here is not about Donna’s love, but it is Liam’s feeling of insecurity and fear of humiliation. That idea might be supported by Liam’s constant fear of being cheated on and his mention of Donna’s past relationships. He would feel humiliated because he perceives it as a matter of not being enough for Donna while all the others were. Remembering that Liam is showing such excessive jealousy while he has been seeing Eileen at the same time, his expectancy of unconditional devotion seems hypocritical and unsound. Through the relationship between Donna and Liam, Devlin might be illustrating his fragile ego hidden under the aggressive attitude he presents. It leads the audience to question the real motives behind the extreme possessive behaviour of the masculinist ideology. Cixous connects all types of masculinist violence to the patriarchal means of sustaining the “Master/Slave” relationship in the functioning of the male favouring machinery (“Sorties” 73). This is the only way to prevent women from “threaten[ing] the stability for the masculine structure that passed itself off eternal-natural” (“Sorties” 73). Therefore, *Ourselves* underpins the Cixousian idea of the patriarchal employment of violence and repression to prevent female others from recognizing their individualities by paying attention to their feminine ideas and desires.

Another woman who was victimized by the masculinist ideology is O'Donnell's wife. She is neither seen nor heard throughout the play. The name of the woman is never mentioned in the play as well. She is only addressed as the wife of O'Donnell and the mother of his children. The way her character is silenced and the only reference to her existence is made by her relation to O'Donnell and the children might be a signal of how estranged she is from her individual identity. It is possible to support that interpretation by alluding to Cixous's claims on how phallic mystification has often tainted healthy relationships, because of its categorizing perception of "the 'mother' as nonname and as source of goods" ("Medusa" 881) because the existence of O'Donnell's wife is reduced to her productive role as a wife and a mother while her personality is neglected at such a degree that she is not even mentioned by her name. It is also mentioned how conceiving a child for the tenth time affected her negatively. Now the wife has a pale face and looks ten years older than she is supposed to be (*Ourselves* 85), it is as if she has lost one year for each child she conceived. That could also be interpreted as a sign of physical and even sexual violence to which the wife is exposed. Since the beginning of their marriage, she undertook the role of a mother by conceiving a child for each year they have been married. Therefore, it is possible to comment on women's reproductive roles and the default attribution of motherhood to women through her character. Persistence of responsibilities associated with reproduction fosters a culture in which motherhood is automatically assigned to women. Due to societal expectations that place them in the role of nurturer, most women are constrained to certain boundaries that might result in their failure to realize their dreams or realize their potential (Inhorn et. al 1). The expectancy that a mother should be confined to the household while raising children is one of the most significant reasons behind such an unfortunate result, though it is not the only one. Apart from the social pressure preaching a mother to be always close to her children at home, because of the responsibilities assigned with motherhood, a woman might not find time to spare for herself, to find or discover herself. That is, she might find it difficult to differentiate her individual identity from her motherhood. The way O'Donnell's wife is only given a place in the play through her socially prescribed role as the wife and the mother of O'Donnell's children could be representing how she became alienated from her individual identity because she was obliged to fulfil her duty of giving children to her husband as a wife and of taking care of her children as a mother. It is most likely that she could not find any chance to live her life for herself.

Instead, she must dedicate her life to fulfilling social expectations. Her tired physical appearance could be an indication of the difficult conditions she had been through. This is how a connection could be made to the feminist discourse on motherhood through this character.

Throughout the play, the protagonists in *Ourselves* gradually transform themselves and exceed the patriarchal boundaries set for them. To begin with, Josie undergoes a notable change with the baby. It is most evident in her monologue in Act 2 Scene 5 when Josie talks to O'Donnell just before she reveals that she is pregnant with Joe's baby:

Josie: Love? You once told me that to love was to confer a great existence on it- you were talking about patriotism- the love of your country. I've only recently realized that you never loved me. You took me. You possessed me. You took my youth and you hid it in a dark corner for a long time. You never draped me with a public celebration. But I'm out of the corner. It's over. The hiding is finished. [...] (*Ourselves* 72)

It can be understood that O'Donnell fails to connect with women because he avoids attributing any importance to them. He struggles to perceive women as equal human beings and thus thinks it is belittling to love any woman since she is at a lower level than him. That is to say, he avoids conferring a great existence on it. Another significant point to elaborate on is the subtle reference that relates romantic love and love for the nation. Josie states that the love O'Donnell mentioned patriotic love while talking about the feeling, so she had to infer O'Donnell's ideas on romantic love from his political statements. When the specific word choices "take" and "possess" are taken into consideration, it can be inferred that Josie is treated like a property in her relationship with O'Donnell. It concurs with Cixous's indication of how History has always "exploit[ed] feminine reception through alienation. A woman, by her opening up, is open to being "possessed," which is to say, dispossessed of herself" ("Sorties" 79). Moreover, the play continues to parallel with Cixous's views on the part of the male counterpart who refrains from "being possessed" since it would be interpreted as passivity (79) since O'Donnell traps Josie in the dark, as she puts it, to keep her only for himself and did not make any public announcements about their relationship. Through such a selfish act, it is possible to say that he wanted to spare her youth and beauty only to himself while not granting her any privilege including public recognition. These lines also recall Cixous's ideas on how femininity is kept in darkness ("Medusa" 876). The darkness could be interpreted in many ways. It could

be the repression of a woman's femininity, therefore the female individual who is forced to impersonate a dictated personality eventually loses connection to her feminine insights and feels lost. An alternative interpretation of darkness could be the restriction of women to the domestic sphere, thus left voiceless and unseen in the public sphere. Finally, the darkness could be indicating all the potential women have inside them but have never realized it because of all the limitations and feelings of inadequacy instilled by patriarchy. Cixous notes that the more a woman is forced to live in darkness, the more she starts to associate herself with it by forgetting it is a forced condition created by patriarchy ("Medusa" 877). Moreover, Cixous likens the woman's body to a dark continent to be owned or prohibited ("Medusa" 878). Then the critic proceeds to make a parallelism between colonialism and patriarchy by arguing that men want to maintain superiority and exploit women in any way possible similar to the way a colonialist nation would want to provide benefit only to itself by exploiting every source of a nation it colonizes ("Medusa" 885). All these are evident in Josie's relationship with O'Donnell because he refuses to give legitimacy or love to Josie and only wants to feed his own sexual desire. He later insists on pursuing their relationship despite Josie's unwillingness. All these indicate that he considers Josie a trophy to be kept and looked at whenever he wishes for. Eventually realizing that the dimension of O'Donnell's interest in her is limited to his own benefit, Josie states that she is no longer a property of him to be 'taken' or 'possessed.' It signifies that she has come to understand the manipulation she has been exposed to.

Just when she thinks it is finally the time to settle down and live an apolitical life Joe notes that he does not share the same enthusiasm for that peaceful family life. Josie considers the baby as a spark of hope for a new life and does not intend to continue her political activity once she has the baby. Joe, on the other hand, seems to be focused on political matters and does not support Josie's decision to leave politics behind. He avoids responsibility and reliability by expressing his unwillingness to the baby. It can be interpreted from that scene that once again Josie fails to build a healthy connection with the man she loves. In their relationship, Josie is prioritizing the family and the romantic relationship the two had while Joe is indifferent towards Josie's feelings and dreams. He seems to have no intention of establishing a healthy family life and definitely does not share the same joy for the expected baby. He allows himself only to have political reliance and projects his life accordingly. Joe's emotional

negligence is highlighted when Josie says Joe wanted her to have an abortion at first, but then he was convinced because “He said he never thought he could make love to a pregnant woman” (*Ourselves* 83). Devlin highlights the degree of superficiality of Joe’s character. Moreover, the violation of a precarious concept like motherhood forces the audience to reconsider the actions and motives of Joe’s character. In a broader sense, it puts the patriarchy into question by presenting a self-centred male character who does not value family. It might be a more effective way to evoke a reaction in the audience because when the concept of family, being the core element of a conservative society, is neglected, it might create greater repercussions. Neither Josie’s motherhood nor the sanctity of family is respected by Joe. So, it can be stated that Devlin also makes use of sensitive topics and taboos in her text to create the intended effect.

Upon the revelation that Joe is indeed a British spy, Josie is once more manipulated by a man. Joe’s treason to the IRA overlaps with his treason to Josie. Hence, his political manipulation doubles itself with his romantic manipulation. Once again, it could be stated as an element that strengthens the audience’s connection to the character because the Irish nationalists would empathize more with Josie’s shock because of his treason for the political cause. Considering Josie’s background of emotional exploitation by Radical nationalist O’Donnell, it is possible to argue that her repeated frustration this time caused by British nationalist Joe could be an attempt to “reveal nationalisms’ ideological linkages to gender” and it is possible to infer that regardless of the nationality, any nationalist thought and its relationship to patriarchy is symbiotic since critics assert that “the nation upholds patriarchy while patriarchal gender systems provide a narrative lubricant for smoothing out nationalism’s well-known internal contradictions [...]” (Waetjen 121-22). Hence, Devlin uses his male characters from different political views to highlight how the unfair treatment towards women is found in all of the political ideologies. Therefore, it can be said that every political ideology is nourished by patriarchal conventions, and in that sense, they resemble each other.

Even though Josie starts off as a woman who “unconsciously served the patriarchy with “served complicity” (Kao 55), she gradually learns to stand up for herself. Throughout the play, she has become a more active character who stops following the men in her life blindly, but objects and takes initiative when needed. For

instance, she refuses to be a part of O'Donnell's love triangle anymore. Also, she fearlessly expresses her wish to leave the IRA behind to start a family. A change from a subject who unquestioningly follows orders to a strong woman standing for herself can be observed. Therefore, when Josie's character is viewed as the Mistress who is "the repressed that ensures the system's functioning" ("Sorties" 74), the gradual retrieval of her autonomy manifests itself in her ideas as well as actions might be a way to undermine the Mistress stereotype who is selflessly dedicated to the patriarchal service. In this way, Josie "offers a revised view of women's potential self-empowerment" (Kurdi 173). That claim might be strengthened by referring to Frieda's comparison of her to the Mother Ireland figure as well. Since the beginning of the play, Josie is foregrounded as the figure of an ancient obedient woman figure, her acquisition of self-consciousness might be interpreted as a call for change for all women in a broader aspect. Josie's decision to take initiative illustrates that submission is not the only path women can take in life; it is not a necessity, and change is possible when a woman chooses to follow her own course.

Similarly, it is seen that Donna has been through a process of transformation within the course of the events. There is a step from a vulnerable and meek mother figure to a self-assured woman. Critics argue that Josie's pregnancy initiates the awakening of Donna as a woman who has suffered much in her love relationships (Kao 49). In Act 2 scene 9, when Liam says that Josie should kill the baby because it's a traitor's baby, Donna says "No. It's not Liam. It's what you never understood. A child doesn't belong to anyone. It's itself" (*Ourselves* 87). From a feminist perspective, Liam's direct correlation of a baby to its father is an element of patriarchal society to associate the baby as a possession of its father. Remembering that Liam has also asked Donna to leave her son from her ex-husband behind while she was leaving him, it is not an unexpected behaviour on the part of Liam. However, Donna is not willing to let Josie experience the same traumatizing pressure she faced, so she takes a courageous step by opposing Liam's interference. Furthermore, following the raid at her home, it is seen that Donna goes to the club and aggressively calls Liam to account for the trouble he had brought upon Catherine and herself. As if tranced, she comes to her senses after forcing Liam to exit the club. Recalling Cixous's views on how "the unconscious is impregnable" ("Medusa" 877), the way Donna decides to take control and accuse Liam might be an indication of how the return of the feminine unconscious

might be slowed down yet never prevented. This might be supported by the fact that Donna is described as if tranced at the club scene. Despite her efforts to follow along with Liam's toxic behaviours, it is seen that when the topic is about a child, either hers or Josie's, she fails to compose herself and discharges herself. While she tries to stay calm, her feminine instincts surface and eventually take control. Then she has physical intimacy with Danny who helped her after the club incident. She says she is happy with Danny because he makes her feel innocent (*Ourselves* 83). This is another illustration of the guilt-inducing mechanism of the patriarchy on Donna and how she decides to take action in order to be relieved from it. All these are indicators of Donna's eventual realization of the detrimental effects of Liam's psychological pressure. Kurdi argues that over time "Donna discovers that her psychic imbalance and emotional confusion are largely due to the jealousy of Liam, which he developed during the years spent in prison" (Kurdi 102). Throughout the play, Donna has been transformed from a self-sacrificing mother figure to a woman who chases her own mental well-being and does not hesitate to make courageous choices while prioritizing her happiness.

Although the three female protagonists clearly strive to bring about change in their lives, their attempts are fleeting, and they soon revert to the aimless struggle of their daily routines. To begin with, in the end, Josie is helplessly obliged to go back to her father's house and abide by his rules in order to save her baby. Murray terms the relationship between Josie and Joe as a Romeo and Juliet typo in which the two individuals from enemy groups intend to build a relationship but fail (Murray 192). The critic comments on Josie as a pathetic figure who has been delivered back to the power of men as a result of her unintentional betrayal (Murray 193). Therefore, even though Josie has come a long way towards becoming a strong and initiative-taking female subject, she ends up sacrificing her freedom for the sake of her baby's wellbeing. She is eventually obliged to return to her father's yoke, the roof of patriarchal hegemony. Similarly, Donna does not pursue the path to awakening to the final point and opts to maintain her relationship with Liam, proceeding as though nothing has happened. In the last scene of the play, Donna seems compassionate towards Liam and asks him to return home as soon as it is safe for him. It can be interpreted as Donna's conscious acceptance of the patriarchal hegemony. In other words, she chooses to maintain the existing conditions instead of insisting upon gaining her individuality. She contends herself with being the mother and the common

law wife of Liam and backtracks from the part of awakening against the patriarchal pressure. Therefore, the female protagonists in *Ourselves* abandon their rebellious attitude which is to earn them autonomy and forego their chance to “break out of the snare of silence” as Cixous puts it (“Medusa” 881). In the end, they are “conned into accepting a domain which is the margin or the harem” (881).

Both Josie and Donna prefer to stay in their comfort zones, and there is no possibility of change left for them. Through such decisions, they choose to stay in Northern Ireland under Malachy’s and Liam’s dictates. With that regard, it is possible to argue that the play presents female autonomy as if a thing to be traded in return for safety while at the same time underlining the hostility of a patriarchal environment. Here, it is significant to point out the intricacy of their renunciation since it is impossible to name a single reason behind it. Their primary concerns may vary, including protecting their children, maintaining familial bonds, pursuing romantic desires, or following a nationalistic ideal. Yet, it is evident that these female protagonists abandon their strive for autonomy to maintain their existing bonds. After Liam exists, Frieda expresses her amazement at Donna’s warm attitude towards Liam. Frieda’s gesture can be interpreted as a criticism of Donna’s renunciation of her female subjectivity in order to have a life companion. Frieda adds that she prefers to be lonely than suffocate after saying that she is going to leave for England (*Ourselves* 90). By dint of her refusal to live under the yoke of the patriarchal dictates of the Irish society, Frieda distinguishes herself from the other protagonists. The reason why Frieda chooses to go to England instead of Dublin might have a relation with colonialism. Since colonial discourse has always promoted England as a strong and protective figure, Frieda might assume going there would ensure her empowerment while going through an identity crisis. Her departure provides a glimpse of hope for the female characters in the play by offering an alternative scenario in which she might achieve individual autonomy by dint of her fresh start. Still, it is possible to comment on it as an unappealing scenario in which a female individual must sacrifice her past and family and face the ambiguity of a rebellious journey with no guarantee of success. Seen in this light, Frieda’s self-imposed exile is the point where she acknowledges the fact that she is alone in this journey of the unknown. Undertaking the risks that come with it, she decides to embark on a journey to England with the hope of discovering her self-identity in depth. This invokes the title of the play, as she is left 'herself alone,'

and consequently, the Irish women she represents—those willing to embark on a journey of self-exploration by sacrificing everything they own, as she does, with the hope of changing the existing order—will also find themselves on their own.

Space is also used deliberately to convey the identity struggle of the three female characters. By means of space, what is meant is the dramatic space that refers to “the use of space by individual dramatists [...]. Dramatic space is the study of space as a semiotic system in a given play” (Issacharoff 214). It is dynamic because it involves an effort to investigate the relationships between space and other performance components as well as the mechanics of space from scene to scene. Space can be reviewed under three main categories. Firstly, space could be approached with regard to public and domestic spheres to make inferences on women’s place within the public sphere. Then, women’s flashbacks from their early childhood could be taken as instances of their dreamscapes to avoid reality which is embroidered with patriarchal repression. Finally, a woman’s body could be a representative of the nation and could be discussed under body politics.

Room has a significant place in the play because it offers Frieda, Donna and Josie a place to establish bonds whenever they face a threat from the outside world. As a protection mechanism, it is seen that Donna, Josie and Frieda have developed a women’s community through which they support each other. When they experience a bad incident, they visit Donna’s place, and the group could be stated to have a healing function for them. Maria Kurdi cites Nancy Chodorow’s claim that “feminine identification processes are relational” (Chodorow qtd. in Kurdi 176), in order to highlight the significant effect of female relationships on their identity development (Kurdi 100). It can be argued that female companionship helps them overcome the challenges they face by acting as a healing mechanism. All these challenges eventually contribute to their identity development because they help them realize the patriarchal constraints around them. They are forced to stand their ground and create strategies in order to survive in a hostile environment. All these highlight women’s isolation and loss of subjectivity within the constraint limits of the domestic sphere. The way Frieda, Josie and Donna find comfort in each other’s existence is another aspect that parallels Cixous’s views because that depicts an alternative view of the ingrained animosity created by patriarchy. Cixous also points out how women have turned against one another because of patriarchy and calls women to abandon these crafted patterns

(“Medusa” 878). Traditionally, women miss the opportunity to grow stronger because they are unable to find comfort in each other’s company. However, in *Ourselves*, women are closely related and that indicates an alternative and more promising perspective for the women community.

It is also significant that whenever the three are having a moment in a good mood, their scene is interrupted by the father. A critic refers to that as: “Relieved through the story, the women’s laughter and the sheer joy of being among just themselves in nature are opposed to the temper of the men, especially the father character, who soon discovered them and disapproved of their behaviour” (Kurdi 100). So, the entrance of the father figure, representing the patriarchy disrupts the harmonious atmosphere created by women. That could be shown as proof of the continuation of the patriarchal surveillance within the private sphere as well. It is seen that throughout the play, femininity and compliance with the masculinist ideology are related to the domestic sphere. To illustrate, Frieda is the career woman who works at a club whereas Donna as the mother figure almost never leaves home. Yet it is significant that even when they are at home, they are always under the patriarchal surveillance (Moon 43). This is why, they try to maintain their individuality despite the forced isolation, constant surveillance and boundaries limiting their action. Anthony Roche points out that it is a dramatic technique called “dramatic decentring of emphasis” which is often found in feminist drama (Roche 176). It indicates how social hierarchy and repression of one other only exist in the presence of men. Thus, it is used to highlight the negative effect of patriarchy, and how it unbalances the relations among people by creating a power dynamic.

Traditionally, the room has been used as “a metonym for the gendered nation” (Conrad 108) in Irish literary canon. It is also a controversial concept being a place where “private sphere has come to be connected with the public sphere of the nation” (Moon 26). Therefore, it is a junction where private meets public. In *Ourselves*, it is seen that men and women in the play have attributed different meanings to the concept of home. For women, the home is a safe place where they cherish their old memories, drink homemade wine and dye their hair whereas for men it could be a centre of political activity. This is why, Malachy considers home as a safe house and brings Joe, a potential threat, to Donna’s home; McDermot similarly uses his home as an office to complete his political agenda and makes his calls from his living room. All these

indicate that public and private division is blurred as a result of political extremism. It is implied in Aunt Cora's case as well. The ammunition blast at her bedroom, which is expected to be the most private place belonging to an individual, reveals the great extent of male intrusion into the female sphere. Home is no longer a safe place that provides an atmosphere of nourishment for women. The way Donna's home is constantly raided is another example of male intrusion into the domestic sphere. Cixous comments on the illusionary division of the domestic sphere from the masculinist threat by saying "No matter how submissive and docile she may be in relation to the masculine order, she still remains the threatening possibility of savagery, the unknown quantity in the household whole" ("Sorties" 85). The continuous intrusion from the public space in *Ourselves* concurs with Cixous's view and underscores that the masculinist threat is impossible to avoid for women regardless of the place they are positioned.

Donna does not leave home except for the scene at the club. So, it is possible to claim that her character is identified with the domestic sphere. She performs chorus and takes care of the baby while other characters visit and leave her home. From a feminist perspective, her continuous effort to fulfil her responsibilities as a mother and a housewife could be an example of a woman who "performs all the ritual tasks which preserve the prisoner's sense of importance" (Condren 179). That is to say, women's entrapment in the domestic sphere is justified by the endless cycle of household chorus. Donna's confinement at home is a dramatized instance of the masculinist strategy that aims to facilitate women's control by restraining them to the domestic sphere (Rea 220). It is seen that it is only after repeated raids that she finally decides to leave home and talk to Liam at the club. Continuous male intrusion into the domestic sphere eventually leads her to step into the public sphere. Critics argue that the disruption caused by the British soldiers at her home could be a symbol of the turmoil her life is in (Moon 35). Donna's club visit is the only time she confronts Liam because of the danger he brings home. Thus, her leaving the domestic sphere corresponds to a time when her feminine consciousness is raised. In a way, the inseparability of politics and private life led her to realize the oppressiveness of the way in which she has been treated (Kurdi 101). In the end, Donna is seen at her home again and seemingly given up questioning Liam's authority. That signals the strong relationship between the

domestic sphere and women's compliance. After she has returned under Liam's roof, she has agreed to abide by living in accordance with his rules.

Moreover, Frieda's noncompliance with the patriarchal society's imposition aligns with her introduction to the audience at the club, in the public sphere. Considering that Frieda lives with her aunts', her will of freedom could be traced back in her leaving Malachy's roof in the first place. She says that she has no wish to be her father's housekeeper. Therefore, her refusal of the traditional assistant role at home is evident. However, her leaving the father's house does not necessarily mean she is safe from the patriarchal surveillance. She is surrounded by numerous men and, therefore subjected to male gaze at the club. Furthermore, she faces physical violence from her father on suspicion of her relationship with McDermot. It is a good example that domestic violence also finds itself a place and verification grounds in the public sphere as well. She leaves the club for good following Malachy's attack on her and moves in with McDermot's. It is interesting because living under his roof is ultimately accepting to follow McDermot's rules. If the domestic sphere is related to the submission, it could be read as Frieda's consent to go under a man's oversight. So, her freedom is restrained. It is a contradictory move when Frieda's independent character is considered. In addition to that, she is secretly followed by a man while she is outside, and she is reported to the police by people at the park while catching leaves. All these instances highlight the continuation of the constant patriarchal surveillance in the public space. When she once more faces physical violence at McDermot's, her attempt to escape patriarchal tyranny fails for the second time. In the end, failing to secure herself within the boundaries of Irish patriarchal society, she embarks on a self-imposed exile. So, she is ostracized from the society. Therefore, Frieda's character encapsulates the patriarchal tendency to comply with the male favouring system by giving up her feminine individuality which Cixous summarizes as "There's no room for her if she's not a he" ("Medusa" 888). Her "internal exile" (Yungil 176) results in her decision to leave Ireland for good and move to the United Kingdom.

Finally, Josie's devotion to Radical Nationalism and therefore masculinist ideology enables her more freedom to leave the domestic sphere in comparison with Donna. Josie stays at Donna's but visits the club or occasionally stays in hotel rooms when she is on a mission. Here, it is significant to point out that the extent of her freedom to be in the public sphere is strongly granted to her in relation to her service

to the patriarchy. She only fulfils the organizational missions whenever she is outside the home. In this way, she can be stated as a political object who serves as the implementer of men's wills (Kao 40). It is also striking that while she is fulfilling the IRA's duties, Josie is never left without the patriarchal surveillance. For example, it is revealed that she is watched secretly by Malachy and O'Donnell while she is at the club questioning Joe; or she is accompanied by Joe at the hotel room for the task. So, it can be argued that despite the seemingly achieved freedom of movement, Josie is, in fact, always under patriarchal monitoring whenever she is in a public space. At the end of the play, it is understood that she is allowed to live at Donna's as long as she behaves in line with Malachy's directions. When she and her baby face a threat as a result of Joe's espionage, she is obliged to return to her father's home. So, in the face of a public threat, she is forced to step back into domestic boundaries. While Malachy protects his patriarchal authority by defending Josie, he also reasserts his patriarchal control and reasserts his authority over Josie and the baby, by claiming Josie's baby as his own (Moon 40). Josie's return home could symbolise that her provisory freedom ends, and she is confined to live with her father. She eventually agrees to live within patriarchal limitations in order to save herself and the baby from trouble.

In the end, the binary opposition between the public and domestic spheres dictated by the patriarchal system does not disappear; rather, its inevitability is emphasized. The decision of female characters to continue living under male dominance, in order to protect both themselves and their children, exemplifies the robustness of the patriarchal order. Josie, by abandoning her journey towards individualization and agreeing to move in with her father, not only illustrates this but also highlights the vulnerability of female individuals to masculinist threats. This situation underscores that, in the face of such threats, seeking the assistance of another male authority figure, as Josie does, is proposed as a means of protection. Similarly, Donna decides to tolerate Liam's mistreatment and infidelity in order to preserve her safety under Liam's roof despite the many instances that prove such safety is only illusionary. With that regard, *Ourselves* portrays female protagonists who continue to "wander around in circles, confined to the narrow room" ("Medusa" 877). While Frieda seems to have escaped the restrictions of the domestic sphere by dint of her embarkment to the UK, indeed, her supposedly self-exile underpins that as a rebel, she

is basically taken out of the equation by the masculinist authority figures, and now she belongs to neither the domestic nor the public space.

Regarding Josie's character, it is equally significant to point out the relation between the female body and the nation. Since national identity is fundamentally masculine, it is based on the monitoring and controlling of women because female sexuality is seen as a threat to the nation's purity. In such a masculinist perspective, women are expected to abide by the patriarchal teachings passively. This is why, critics argue that "Joe's impregnation of Josie symbolises, for the men in the IRA, including her father Malachy and her brother Liam, the ultimate violation of their national territory" (Moon 39). It can be interpreted that her pregnancy with Joe's baby is perceived as an intrusion towards the national body from the British. The notion of mixed identity initiated by the pregnancy of Josie is illustrated by her noting that she has two hearts now. While Liam and Malachy, two generations of patriarchal thought, argue about the fate of the child over its national identity, Josie, the female body, is presented as a nourishing space for the baby that gives the baby to form an individual identity. Consequently, it can be stated that the female body "breaks the smooth symmetry of paternal linearity and inheritance, the myth of historical determinism and progression, and the consolation of a coherent nonfluctuating time [. . .]" (Phelan 158). Yet, the reproductive power of the female individual is disregarded. Liam argues that the child should be killed because it is a traitor's child; therefore, a woman is only responsible for reproduction whereas the nationality of the baby depends only on the father. The British father, in that case, is the one who gives the nationality, and Josie's brother and father are the ones who decide whether the baby should be kept. Thus, the mother has no say in this discussion.

Yungil comments on Josie's silent acceptance while the baby's fate is decided by her acoustic disappearance (Yungil 176). Delivered at the mercy of her father and brother, she metaphorically vanishes, and her silence is an indicator of the way patriarchal structure silences the body of a mother neither on her nor her baby's fate. A similar instance of metaphorical disappearance would be for Frieda when Malachy refuses to acknowledge her existence in the room at Donna's. It is possible to claim that "Frieda's lack of visibility within visibility, her being pushed off-stage on-stage" (Yungil 176) is an indication of the masculinist perspective that ignores noncompliant women. She is marginalized from the social group by men because she has refused to

follow the political agenda and patriarchal teachings. Through Frieda's metaphorical disappearance, "the masculine ear" and how it only hears "language that speaks masculine is illustrated" ("Sorties" 87) can be exemplified. In general, it is possible to conclude that through Frieda's and Josie's characters, the Cixousian claim on how the patriarchal ideology dismisses women, regards them "[i]nvisible as humans" and only perceives them "as tools—dirty, stupid, lazy, underhanded, etc." ("Sorties" 76) is underpinned. Frieda is an unyielding figure who refuses to be instrumentalized by the patriarchy; therefore, she is not given any credibility within the family, and her father disregards her existence completely. Comparably, Josie is only approached as a vehicle to produce a baby, and she has not been granted a chance to determine her and her baby's fate. She is provided a place within the patriarchal circle on the condition that she agrees to abide by Malachy's dictates and gives up on her autonomy. Thus, as Cixous proposed, in Josie's case the masculinist goal is that "the body of what is strange must not disappear, but its force must be conquered and returned to the master" ("Sorties" 76). That aligns with the attributed role of Josie's character as the mistress: her service is needed, so she is offered a bargain instead of total disregard. Josie's existence is a must because there is "no master without a slave" ("Sorties" 76).

Critics argue that the room in which most of the play takes place is where Devlin pushes "the limitations of its representational reality and realist legacy" (Etherton 187). It is asserted that Devlin deliberately places the notion of the room, a signpost element of theatrical realism, at the centre of her play in order to point the audience to visualize what is not shown on the stage. In other words, she uses the familiar setting of a room with the aim of creating a rather acoustic landscape that enables the placement of "ghostly moments of memory, moments of absences, moments of hearing instead of seeing" (Yungil 175). Accordingly, Devlin uses Josie and Frieda's silence despite their visibility on the stage as an illustration of patriarchal oppression. While the room continues to be the main setting that displays the course of events both within the domestic sphere and the female consciousness, there are many techniques used to prompt the audience to ponder on what is not spoken or shown openly on the stage. These techniques are word-scapes and dreamscapes. Devlin uses them to incite the audience to question some important messages the play tries to convey. The patriarchal surveillance of the female body, the damaging effects of extremist nationalism on the female community, and the issue of identity could be

stated among these messages. To begin with, by word-scape “a space constructed in language and existing is memory” (Sears 107) is meant in this thesis. Aunt Cora’s character is the most evident example of a word-scape in the play, and in that case, the space it evokes would be the female body, and mediately the Irish nation. Critics argue that Aunt Cora parodies a long tradition of the female personification of Ireland (Kurdi 103). The display of such a blessed image of a woman veteran evokes the traditional embodiment of Mother Ireland or the Poor old Woman. Such an idealistic image of a woman creates false expectancy and weighs psychological and physical burdens on Irish women. In Aunt Cora’s presence at the parades, there is a neglect of female individuality through the promotion of women’s self-sacrifice for the nation. By way of repetitively exploiting the image of Mother Ireland through its evocation in Aunt Cora, a cultural construct is tried to be instrumentalized to influence Irish women on behalf of the nationalist propaganda. Moon argues that through Aunt Cora, Devlin shows how the female body is turned into an instrument of political propaganda (Moon 37). Such idealization bears the risk of dehumanization of the woman subject and encumbers her with a heavy burden that requires her unconditional assistance to the cause. So, the character illustrates the ill-intentioned body politics of radical nationalism. Even though she has been disabled, she is not saved from being used on behalf of political propaganda. In reality, all the parade and pretensions of tribute would not change the fact that she has sacrificed her health. Therefore, it can be stated that Aunt Cora evokes the discrepancy between the patriarchal discourse and women’s reality as well (Yungil 177). While Aunt Cora is neither shown nor heard on stage, the word-scape created by Frieda’s elaborate description of her leads the audience to imagine her invulnerability. Furthermore, Frieda’s sarcastic attitude as if mocking while mimicking Cora’s disability is a defamiliarizing Brechtian effect that brings “the unrepresentable, the unseen” to the stage while at the same time “destabiliz[ing] the sacredness of the image” by use of a satirical humour in addressing a tragic subject matter (Yungil 177). Since the current condition of Aunt Cora is spared for the audience’s imagination, it would incite them to consider the grave situation the female subject is in by picturing it.

Dreamscapes are also used to highlight a contrast between the constrained conditions of reality and their desire for a freer space. Dreamscape refers to a mostly anarchic representation of a dream in a painting or other work of art in order to question

the foundations of an authoritarian, coercive power (Rogoff 6). In *Ourselves*, dreamscapes are found in the forms of awakening memory or a dream on the part of the female characters. It is seen that Frieda, Josie and Donna feel happy when they evoke a memory from the past. For instance, in Act 1 Scene 2, Josie tells Donna about her recurring dreams in which she sees herself as a warrior man. Her dream could be interpreted as an indicator of her will to attain the complete freedom a man has by subversion of gender roles. Not content with the limitations of reality, the female unconscious seeks freedom through imagined versions of reality in dreams. Therefore, these dreams are indications of the female subject's entrapment "between dreamscapes and reality, between an inner free zone and an outer zone of surveillance" (Yungil 177). Since Josie unknowingly acknowledges that she will never reach the full credibility and privilege of a man because of gender boundaries, she tries to overcome those patriarchal boundaries in her dreams. Through her dream, she remarks her will to be an equal to her male counterparts. Moreover, while Frieda is catching leaves at the park, she calls people to remember their childhood and reprimands them by asking if they do not remember to be happy. Again, by a simple reenacting of a child's game, she tries to attain the happiness she had when she was at a young age. It is important to point out the relation between childhood and innocence as well. It can be interpreted as a sign of the increased patriarchal surveillance as the female subject comes of age. The reason for that could be the difficulty of controlling the female subject after adulthood. The importance of dreamscapes is underlined with the placement of one at the end. While Donna and Frieda are sitting alone waiting for the dawn, Frieda remembers a childhood memory of the three in which they have secretly swam without their clothes until Liam, John and Malachy find them. The women's depiction as one with the nature in happiness could be used to highlight the nonhierarchic nature of women communities while at the same time criticizing the detrimental effects of artificial binary social structure. In that sense, the three's nakedness could be read as a reference to their liberation from their socially prescribed gender roles. They return to their natural state of being and remove their clothes. That final moment is notable in the sense that it creates a sharp contrast between the ideal dream world in which women are free and happy and the domestic setting within patriarchal walls of reality.

All in all, Anne Devlin's *Ourselves* provides an alternative perspective on the Troubles by shedding light on the difficulties Irish women faced during that time. The

play depicts the awakening of the Irish feminine identity in response to the increased patriarchal oppressiveness in the course of the 1960s. The play is deliberately crafted to illustrate “the development of a new sense of independence and self-identity” (Aretxaga 75) of the Irish women. Characters of Josie, Donna and Frieda are structured to represent the three women stereotypes that are mostly associated with women: Mistress, Mother and Career Woman. Their male counterparts in the play are also constructed in a way to illustrate the relationship between political extremism and domestic violence. Women in the play attempt to cross their socially prescribed boundaries of action while standing their grounds against the patriarchal authority, which could be read as an indicator of their effort to explore and establish the female individual identity. To illustrate the female experience in a more detailed way, space is also used consciously by Devlin. The play illustrates the binary structure of Irish society that confines women to the domestic sphere and enforces constant surveillance on them in the public sphere. It is possible to discuss the use of space in the play in three main categories: the emphasis on the domestic and public spheres division by use of the room as a traditionally concrete structure of the female confinement; the use of word-scapes to highlight the detrimental effects of extremist political agendas on women through Aunt Cora’s elaborate portrayal; and dreamscapes of reality to underline the sharp contrast between women’s ideal free world and the patriarchal constraint they face from the outside. Yet, it is significant that in the end, each of the female characters somehow surrenders to the patriarchy. Frieda’s self-imposed exile, Josie’s silent acceptance of moving back to Malachy’s, and Donna’s decision to continue her relationship with Liam all reveal that these characters renounce their attempts to attain freedom within Irish society. Maintenance of the patriarchal hegemony manifests itself in the use of space as well. In the end, the traditional duality between the feminine domestic sphere and the masculine public sphere is preserved as Donna and Josie return under Liam’s and Malachy’s roofs. Frieda, on the other hand, is disposed of her position both in domestic and public spheres and is forced into exile. Taking all these aspects into account, *Ourselves* portrays the challenges of being a woman in Northern Irish society by showcasing the layered structure of identity encompassing family ties, motherhood, and political ideals. The intricate dynamics of gender are further highlighted through the ultimate fates of the main female characters, who face punishment or exclusion upon rejecting patriarchal norms.

### CHAPTER 3: MARIE JONES'S *SOMEWHERE OVER THE BALCONY* (1987)

Charabanc Theatre Company has earned itself a unique position through its numerous attempts to increase women's representation on the Irish stage. It was a playwriting and acting group founded in 1983 by five Irish actresses: Sarah Marie Jones, Eleanor Methven, Maureen McAuley, Carol Scanlan, and Brenda Winter (Foley 36). It is argued that Charabanc's establishment was significantly affected by these female actresses' resentment towards the fact that there are only peripheral characters available for them in the plays by the all-male Field Day Company, established by playwright Brian Friel and actor Stephen Rea in *Deny* in 1980 (Kurdi 35). They decided to establish Charabanc as an attempt to change the fewness of professional job opportunities and women's place in the traditional Irish drama which then had a narrow scope allowing women to be present on the stage only as "wives, mothers, or the background for some guy on stage" as Methven puts it (qtd. in Martin 89–90). Their founding manifesto expressed their commitment to present Northern Ireland society in their plays (Foley 36). While they were hesitant to acknowledge themselves as feminists for fear that the label might alienate the Ulster audience, most of their plays deal with "social marginalization of women and women's issues" (Foley 40). In general, it can be stated that their plays "adopted a working-class, female perspective on the Northern Irish present and past" (Ojrzyńska 139). In an interview, Marie Jones states that "there is no doubt that we were feminists in the sense that we were presenting women, and very strong women, who always formed the centre of the plays, which were about empowering women" (Jones qtd. in Foley 30). It was an unconventional organization because the founders of this all-female company were writing the plays in collaboration, and all roles including the male ones were played by women at the company. However, Marie Jones explains that this was not a deliberate choice to exclude men; rather, Charabanc members were left with no other choice since it was not possible to find any actors who were willing to work through the long-term unemployment periods which the members were obliged to have due to the government's social welfare scheme (DiCenzo 179). It is an important detail to understand the unbiased background of the company.

The founding members chose the name Charabanc as a reference to the open sightseeing busses which Belfast women hire from time to time to take a tour outside the city (Methven and Moore 278). This everyday entertainment of Belfast women is

preferred for the name of the theatre company that aims to provide an alternative view of the everyday lives of Belfast women in their plays. It can also be commented as a reference to the founding actresses' desire to carry the issues and realities of the Belfast women outside the city itself, just like a charabanc bus does. To that end, they "interview[ed] women of their mothers' and grandmothers' generations" and visited "local libraries" (DiCenzo 177). It indicates their endeavour to reflect the real challenges of the Irish women. While writing and acting were collaborative, they "audition[ed] directors to help with the staging" (Martin 89). Methven explains that the director was meant to be an outside eye just in case they get very involved and very subjective at times (qtd. in Martin 93). This is how the company started to create its experiential plays where there are no lead roles and requires a low-cost and easily transportable stage set (Heininge 14). In order to create the intended atmosphere, sound effects and lights are benefited from. Another important characteristic of Charabanc plays is the blending of "social acuity and satiric comedy" (Roche 241). That is the joint presentation of the challenges of Irish women's everyday lives with black humour. One final significant characteristic of the group is their experience in playing in front of mixed audiences in Belfast, that is the company's plays have opened new possibilities both for Protestant and Catholic audience members to sit side by side while watching the plays. Some of its plays that represent the creative high point of the company are *Now You're Talking* (1985), *Gold in the Streets* (1986), and *The Girls in the Big Picture* (1986). Their plays' great success enabled them to have extensive tours starting from Northern and Southern Ireland to the United States (DiCenzo 176). This is noteworthy in the sense that it underlines the unifying force of drama and highlights Charabanc's success as a theatre group that managed to appeal to both sides of the Irish community as well as to the international audience.

While the company has worked jointly on creating the plays, over time Marie Jones became the prominent playwright of the group (Roche 242). Her plays created a tremendous impression with Jones's touch of comedy that became her signature. Jones was born in East Belfast in 1951 as the daughter of a Protestant working-class family and remained based in Belfast (Sternlicht 138). She says that her initial interest in playwriting arose from the family stories told during her weekly visits to her aunt's house in her childhood (Gardner). Being involved in local drama groups as a teenager, Jones finally found a chance to work with a popular comic actor, James Young and

performed in his review *Little Boxes* (1968-1969) (Lonergan 164). She became known as a comedic actress while at the same time pursuing writing. Following the establishment of Charabanc in 1983, Jones finally found her voice and established herself as a prominent playwright. Jones explains how Belfast is at the core of her writing in an interview as follows:

Belfast is the source of my material, every day out on the street talking and listening to people. It's about language. If I lived somewhere else, I couldn't hear these rhythms, how people verbalise their emotions, their humour, their anger. That's what I hear and write. And all my best friends live here. (qtd. in Foley 36)

Jones's skilful portrayal of the everyday lives of the Belfast people earned her a famous position as a playwright. Following her resignation in 1990, Charabanc Company was continued by Scanlon Moore and Eleanor Methven until its official disbandment in 1995. One of the plays is particularly prominent being the last collaborative work of the company (Roche 242) as well as one of the texts carrying distinguishing features of Jones's creativity: *Somewhere Over the Balcony* (1987). It is marked by critics as "the creative culmination of the best qualities of Charabanc's early work" (Harris, "Inventing" xliii).

The play depicts one day of three Catholic women under constant British surveillance in Belfast's Divis Flats. One of the women is Kate Tidy; a devout Catholic who lives in a damaged home with her son, and a dog. Her dependency on numerous religious figures of saints is her signature trait. Another main character is Kate's neighbour Ceely Cash who is an irreverent widow and the owner of a souvenir shop that sells the military equipment left in Belfast streets to the tourists as relics of the Internment. She runs bingo games among the neighbourhood members using her illegal pirate radio station. Rose Marie Noble is the third character and their neighbour. She is a mother of twins, and motherhood has a profound impact on her personality. The plot is set on the eve of the internment anniversary. While the three sit on their balconies in the last remaining tower block of the council flats on a 'normal' day, they witness a number of strange events. During the day, they see a wedding party of Danny and Charlene at a chapel turning into a riot, and while the guests are held hostage, the three communicate with the bride's mother Mona throughout the play to help the wedding group resist the British military forces positioned outside the chapel. Meanwhile, a controlled explosion crumbles the walls of Kate's flat; a ministry official

is caught by many Tuckers in the play mistaken for a British army official; cars without engines are continually being washed to ensure they look good if they are stolen; an ambulance and a helicopter are hijacked by old Tucker and a turtle. These events are not shown on the stage but told by the three while they look over their balcony and try to organize the chaos outside by updating the community against the threats through the information line. What makes the story even more interesting is that all these take place while the three are under surveillance of the British army members positioned on the roof of the building opposite. The three's occasional attempts to get in contact with the British officials are a motif in the play.

The play's premiere was on the day after the Remembrance Sunday bombing in Enniskillen, County Fermanagh in November 1987. Despite the consideration of cancelling the opening at the Belfast Arts Theatre, the company eventually decided to follow the agenda. This is why, the initial response of the audience was mixed because the bombing event in the play itself overlapped with the recent incident. Some critics argue that the hectic conditions at the time overshadowed the play's success in Northern Ireland (Foley 46). However, in the long term, *Somewhere Over the Balcony* became one of the texts representing Jones's artistic license (Foley 42). By its placement of a women's trio at the centre of the plot in order to display the physical and psychological effects of the patriarchy, the play is useful in exploring Jones's ideas on the Irish women question. This is why, it is possible to elaborate on the play in connection with the concept of feminine writing. The representation of the Irish women in *Somewhere* will be discussed with reference to Cixous's prominent works "Medusa" and "Sorties." The aim of the discussion is to address the discrepancy between the notion of feminine writing and the play itself; thus, to conclude that *Somewhere over the Balcony* does not carry all elements that suffice to be considered a sample of feminine writing with regards to its plot and characterization. To that end, the use of characterization and space in the plays will be explored following a summary of the play and an analysis of its dramatic structure.

The choice of setting is significant since the complex is the centre of Republican activity. Built in the 1960s, Divis Flats were mostly demolished by the end of the 1980s, and this is how the place came to be known as a Catholic ghetto with its very poor housing conditions (Ojzyńska 140). Considering that the founding members of the Charabanc were Protestants, their courage to write about and act out women

from the Divis Flats is worthy of mention. That is because it signifies that their focus is an inclusive one that aims to give voice to all Irish women without regarding their religious or political views. Ultimately, their attempt proved successful as *Somewhere* managed to create a cross-cultural dynamic with its unionist/protestant actors portraying nationalist/catholic characters (Heininge 14). The company provided class and gender as alternative lines of identification in order to shift focus from the sectarian conflict in front of their mixed audience of Protestants and Catholics (DiCenzo 183). The choice of narrating the Troubles from the eyes of the working class and catholic protagonists is a significant one in the sense that it deliberately gives voice to the disadvantaged group whose sufferings are often neglected due to the political and patriarchal forces. From that aspect, it is in line with the third-wave feminist ideology that “embrace pluralistic thinking within feminism and work to undermine narrow visions of feminism and their consequent confinements” (Kinser 133). Moreover, that earns the play a postcolonial subtext thanks to its portrayal of how Catholic women suffer from “double colonization” both by the British imperial ideology which is fundamentally Protestant, and patriarchy in Irish society (Gandhi 83).

The title *Somewhere Over the Balcony* is a precursory of the irony awaiting the audience in the play itself. It evokes the song “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” by Judy Garland which draws a positive picture that awaits people where all troubles are eliminated. Critics argue that “[t]he association soon turns into bitter irony: what is happening high up in the sky falls wide of being romantic: it is the helicopters of the British army that are circling above as they conduct a regular surveillance of the civilian population” (Kurdi 192). So, the idealistic expectation awakened by the title is shattered by the reality of the chaotic world of the three Belfast women. What they find over their balcony is not a rainbow, but the surveillance team of the British forces. Furthermore, it is possible to put a different interpretation of the title and the song’s relation by pointing at the extent of achievability of that dream place to be found over the rainbow. The protagonists are unable to reach the rainbow and the perfect land beyond it even if it exists, because the British forces are awaiting in between. It can be taken as a criticism towards the British intervention of Ireland and how it affects the lives of Belfast folk negatively. Instead of dealing with the idealistic images from their dreams, they need to face the reality of the British existence in their neighbourhood.

From most aspects, *Somewhere* perfectly fits into the category of working-class theatre considering its appropriacy according to the number of elements listed by John McGrath. The play's use of songs, comedy, and local dialect in order to facilitate the audience's connection with the characters as well as its preference for "a moment-by-moment effect" rather than "a slow build-up to great dramatic moments" could be listed among the features (McGrath 54–61). Moreover, it is also possible to find elements of farce in the play like "the complicated twists in the plot, the fortuitously timed encounters, the absurd disguises" that are made "even more entertaining by the popular songs and hilarious rhyming couplets" (Gilbert 444-45). In a review of the play, Harris argues that the rainbow the play offers could be "the best one—laughter" ("Rev. of *Somewhere*" 48). The incorporation of popular songs into the play is another effective strategy frequently employed by the Charabanc as an instrument to unify the audience as well as engage them. However, it is important to note that the comedy elements in the play are evened by the serious moments. In this way, "the play maintains a disturbing tension between hilarity and horror; the comedy seduces the audience into the world of the play, but viewers are never allowed to lose sight of the violence done to the lives of women daily" (DiCenzo 181-82). Therefore, the carefully crafted script ensures the audience's active engagement during the performance. The carnivalesque nature of her plays that is found in *Somewhere* also resulted in Jones's plays being defined as low comedy. However, upon that claim, Jones explains that this is a deliberate move to engage the working class with her theatre as follows:

My plays get accused of being low art all the time... Even by the arts establishment in my own city. But what's wrong with being popular? I sometimes feel that people want to keep the theatre as some kind of special preserve for people like them, educated, cultured people; they don't like it when a play packs out the theatre with ordinary people having a good time. (qtd. in Gardner)

It can be understood from Jones's statement above that her main aim is to ensure that she reaches the working-class audience and gets a reaction from them. Her aim could be evidenced by her use of heavy local dialect in her plays including *Somewhere*. That attitude aligns with Charabanc's ethos to write "from and for community" (Foley 46) since the characters are adapted from the everyday lives of Irish society and use the local dialect. Yet, the audience fails to empathize with the characters by dint of the stretched absurdity of events as well as dialogues. Their confusion alienates them and leads them to consider the bizarre events in the play deliberately. Similarly,

*Somewhere Over the Balcony* consists of 2 acts with single scenes each; however, there is no logical storyline. Instead, there are numerous bizarre events interrupting each other. It is argued that “the sheer ridiculousness of its plot suggests that the political situation cannot and should not be accepted as normal, even if the characters appear to take it in their stride” (Gilbert 444). Thus, characterization, plot structure, and dramatic elements are purposefully used to encourage the audience to consider the ‘woman question’ on both political and social levels. This is why, it is possible to say that in line with third-wave feminism, *Somewhere* assumes that women’s experiences of discrimination are “in fact political problems because they stem from structural disadvantages that women face in patriarchal societies” (Schuster 648). Since there are no personal solutions at this time, women should “identify structural dynamics causing these problems and develop joint, political responses” (Hanisch 77). While revealing the structural dynamics of the Irish society, the patriarchal background is emphasized in the play as the first step towards improving the conditions for the Northern Irish women. So, Jones uses *Somewhere* to convey her opinions on gender equality and therefore to be the voice of the suppressed Irish women. With that regard, *Somewhere* is an attempt to undermine men’s “Empire of Selfsame” (“Sorties” 91) by uncovering the existing social structure as a Hegelian schema of recognition in which the other is condemned to death and presenting alternative views to the conventional system as Cixous suggests (“Sorties” 91).

The three main characters are created skillfully to represent three exaggerated stereotypes of women in the Troubles: Rose is the overprotective mother of twins, Ceely is the career woman with her souvenir shop, and Kate is the religious woman with her numerous religious figures. That offers a view of an alternative society in which the protagonists with different aspirations in life present a “microsociety” (Ojrzyńska 140). Yet, the extent of their characters reaches beyond the patriarchal expectations that supposedly limit them to be the innocuous Mother, Career Woman and Religious Woman trio which is overcome by the British forces waiting outside and left with no choice but to follow the roles deemed appropriate for them by the patriarchy. The diverse experiences and viewpoints they offer contradict any monolithic understanding of women in West Belfast. To begin with, despite their seemingly forced confinement within the walls of the tall towers of the Divis Flats as women, they manage to continue their interaction with the public space by using an

illegal radio station and shouting over the balcony to the British and their neighbours. Therefore, it can be stated that they somehow manage to breach the limits and still manage to maintain the concept of social interaction within their communities. Furthermore, it is seen that they sell the military equipment left on the streets by the British which is a means of turning the horror of the Internment Day into a financial advantage. So, instead of holding on to the grief of the day, these women manage to turn it to their own benefit. It is evidence of their resilient personalities. Through the celebration of female creativity by the strong stance presented through its female protagonists, *Somewhere* challenges “the reductive stinginess of the masculine-conjugal subjective economy” (“Medusa” 888) that tends to underestimate women’s ability to think and decide individually. Moreover, the agile women characters narrate an alternative story that moves from “victim feminism” to “power feminism” (Kinsler 131), that is in accordance with the third-wave feminist goals. From Cixous’s point of view, it is possible to refer to this aspect of the play as one that subverts the patriarchal binary expectations which attribute man to activity whereas woman is promoted to be the weak and helpless one. (“Sorties” 70-1)

The traditional attribution of man’s activity and strength as opposed to woman’s passivity and fragility is also contradicted through the intricacies of *Somewhere*. Being the owner of the pirate radio station, Ceely Cash is the bridge between the public and the domestic spheres. She is an entrepreneur who likes to communicate with people. Instead of living within the domestic boundaries forced by the political turmoil of the Divis Flats, she finds a way to reach out to the public sphere. She also provides entertainment and information through the radio and thus serves her community. She lives with her seven kids, Granda Tucker, who has not talked a word ever since his internment, and Dwane’s turtle Starsky. She says that her ‘Big Tucker,’ i.e. husband, Johnny is dead. So, Ceely is presented as the provider of her family. She owns a souvenir shop that makes her the career woman in the play. The shop is a celebration of female creativity because it is a productive solution against repressive power. They “appropriate objects belonging to the male world to their advantage” (Ojzyńska 145). With that regard, her surname ‘cash’ once again underlines the ironic nature of the play. Moreover, throughout the play she acts like the brain of the group: she organizes people in the chapel and gives instructions to them.

The most striking feature of Ceely, however, could be her boldly expressed desire for the British officials spying on them. For the new group positioning on the roof at the beginning of the play, Ceely says “I love it when a new tour comes in. All them wee pink arses not tanned yet” (Charabanc 447). Then, she starts looking at a jogging soldier through binoculars and talks about how “hot and sweaty” (447) he is. Ceely as a both sexually and intellectually active character subverts the gender roles. Within patriarchal discourse, desire is defined as trouble within the heterosexual and masculine point of view (*Gender xxx*). This is why, Ceely’s sexual interest in men challenges the traditional image of the woman as the object of desire. Moreover, Ceely’s character challenges the patriarchal norm that advocates the repression of “female sexuality” as referred to by feminist scholars (“Medusa” 876). She continues by striking “provocative” and “sexy” (Charabanc 447) poses for the army spying on them. Ceely enjoys “a temporary reversal of gendered models of behaviour” (Ojrzyńska 147). Instead of seeing her femininity as something to be afraid of or hide, she acts confidently and embraces her womanhood. This is why, it embraces Cixous’s call for women to celebrate their femininity, asserting that “[Medusa]’s not deadly. She’s beautiful and she’s laughing” (“Medusa” 885). Moreover, *Somewhere* can be interpreted as an effort to undermine the colonialist approach as well as the male sectarianism and patriarchy when it is considered how the patriarchy and the colonialism reinforce one other in terms of the feminization of the colonized land and attribution of masculinity to the colonizer (Moane 33), and the colonized people are “offered a distorted view of manifestations of their difference by interpreting them as markers of inferiority” (Kurdi 1). That is to say, by acknowledging her feminine traits she also defies the colonialist perspective of femininity as a Northern Irish woman who is courageous enough to exhibit her body and express desire towards the colonizer, i.e., the British officers. There is also a reversal of the power between the colonized and the colonizer.

The play continues to meddle with the traditional image of a weak and passive woman with Rose Marie Noble who is the overprotective mother of twin boys. She spends her time constantly instructing her kids to behave themselves and to stay away from the eyes of the British watching them. Rose’s cautiousness is stressed when Ceely implies in Act 1 that “the poor wee articles never see the light of day” (Charabanc 449). Rose does not let the children outside much, and it is because of the presence of

the British officials. She wants to protect them from any possible danger. She lives with her husband, but their relationship is an unconventional one. The masculine hegemony seems to be subverted in the case of their relationship since Rose is the one who keeps guiding 'her Tucker' apparently in every respect. For example, when Rose sends Tucker to watch over the empty flats across, she shouts "Tucker! Go you over and guard them empty flats. You polished the car this mornin' ...you hung your ma's curtains yesterday...You don't need a crash helmet...Just go" then continues by changing her tone "I'll bring your sandwiches over to the site, pet" (Charabanc 450). These lines signify Tucker's overdependence on Rose's oversight and nurture. Especially the way she changes her tone might be intended to create a parallelism between Rose's maternal behaviour towards her children and her husband. In the end, the picture of the husband invoked in the audience's minds is a non-self-sufficient one who depends on his wife. The alternative version of society that *Somewhere* depicts transforms men into mere companions by handing the authority to their female counterparts. Also, that is a distorted version of the patriarchal understanding of family which advocates the father's definitive dominance, and the mother is simply forgotten by centring the plot around the mother, Rose. It undermines the default "subordination of the feminine to the masculine order" ("Sorties" 73) in the family thus showing how this is not, in fact, "the condition for the machinery's functioning" (73). The nonconformist female dominance within the family indicates that the prevailing patriarchal hegemony is replaceable. Thus, it threatens male supremacy within the family as well as in society, on a broader scale.

It comes as a great shock to her when the British arrest her upon catching her polishing her husband's riot helmet, a truncheon, and an old bin lid. She says these are not meant to be used for attacks, and it is just for her man's work. It can be read as a highlight of the dangers Irish women face while carrying outside roles for sectarian organizations. In the masculinist ideology, Irish women's participation in the nationalist cause is ignored in the political discourse whereas the Irish men are praised for their sacrifices. It results from the fact that women are entrusted with side roles like carrying intel while men participate in field missions. All these led to disregarding of women's contribution and help. Rose's arrest while cleaning her husband's gear could be a reference to the fact that the women also face danger while fulfilling their support tasks. Hence, it highlights Irish women's place in the resistance. Also, Ceely notes that

Rose will love being interrogated because in the end that gets her out of the house for a couple of hours (Charabanc 457). That absurd remark reveals the great extent of isolation the Divis Flats women face. They are confined to their homes so much that they rarely leave. Her husband just watches over the balcony with the kids and waves at her while she is taken while Kate tries to band the bin lid and protest the officials. So, the contrast here could be interpreted once again as a sign of men's passivity and indifference when it comes to supporting women. In addition, the play draws an alternative picture of a family in which the husband is in charge of looking after kids at home while the wife is interned. The disclosure of the fact that the husband lost the kids after Rose's return underlines that the women do not undertake an easy task as well. They try to keep their kids safe and their family intact while the father is away. This is why, they are equally strong characters.

Lastly, through the character of Kate Tidy, the stereotype of a pious woman who fully entrusts herself to religion is displayed and undermined. Kate is a devout Catholic living in a damaged home with her son Dustin and dog Pepe. Her husband Frank left her. She is portrayed as a pious woman who spends her life talking to the numerous figures of Saints at home and asking for their help. She tries to live her life in accordance with the religious teachings and frequently preoccupies herself with religious rituals. However, throughout the play, she is prompted to question the fundamentals of religious didactics as she deals with the harsh reality of the Troubles. She raised her son religiously as well and is proud when Dustin joins the wedding at the chapel as an altar boy. After the explosion at the end of Act 1, Kate's walls are demolished and following that her faith in religion shatters. She starts to question her reliance on her religious figures. Act 2 starts with Kate's recalling of her late husband Frank's words before he leaves her, "Kate, no good will come of you" (Charabanc 459). It made her question whether all the trouble she had been through was indeed her own fault. Soon after the three spot Grandma Tidy while trying to get inside the chapel in disguise as a nun, Kate shows more violent behaviour. For example, she takes a toy catapult in her hands to shoot the priest who tries to convince people in the chapel to end the riot. The priest in the play does not try to help the Irish people inside the chapel but works in favour of the British government by asking the rebels to stop and saying that their rioting is a sin against the church. That scene is a reference to the church's involvement in political matters on the side of the British as well. Therefore,

the church is not objective. In the end, Kate's, being the most religious woman in the play, shooting the priest can be taken as a criticism of the hypocrisy of the church with regards to the Troubles politics. Another significant aspect of this moment is Kate's courage to take the shot because that echoes her previous attempt at shooting a belfry. Unlike her hesitation at the belfry, this time she seems to be more composed and not afraid to shoot at the priest but hesitates only to hurt the pigeon on his megaphone. What is more, following her shot at the man, she attempts to shoot Granny Tidy as well. If it was not for Ceely's interruption, Kate would have proceeded. All these signify the great change in Kate's attitude. She seems to have moved from a passive character to a pugnacious one. It is as if the risk of losing her son to Granny Tidy has awakened an aggressive part in her. Kate seems to be encouraged to take control of her life in her own hands instead of praying to the saints for help. Such fluctuation in her character is reflected in her speaking as well. For example, in Act 1 Kate's speech is full of religious figures and prayers. However, in Act 2, after Kate realizes the threat of Granny Tidy, she starts using offensive language. She says "[...] what the hell do you want?" to Rose (Charabanc 465), then says "the soldiers don't know what the hell is goin' on" (466), and finally calls Granny Tidy as "an oul' whore" (467). All these lines can be read as a reflection of her inner rebellion to her words. It is also ironic that such a devout religious person starts referring to hell constantly.

The gender binary system is also challenged with regard to the relationship between men and women depicted in the play. The most evident example of this would be Kate and her husband Old Tucker's relationship. Old Tucker is living with Kate; however, he is never shown on stage except for his numerous mentions. He is described as a mute character who has never spoken a word ever since he was interned. He is an unconventional character because he is a mute and passive man as opposed to constantly talking three women. So, the roles are reversed in terms of the activity/passivity binary structure. Moreover, it is a reversal of the patriarchal system that tends to repress women in terms of both their body and their speech with an aim to maintain their hegemony over them which Cixous addressed by claiming that "[c]ensor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time" ("Medusa" 880). In *Somewhere's* version of the Divis Flats, men are absent, so they are not given any presence except for the female protagonists' stories whereas the Northern Irish women abundantly use their privilege of speech and are present on the stage.

Moreover, Old Tucker is not alone in the neighbourhood; all men are named the same including the protagonists' children. The fact that all men in the play have the same name is a sign of Irish men's likeness, or their "entrapment in the narrow confines of Irish masculinity" (Ojrzyńska 143). Similarly, when insistence by patriarchal discourse to stereotype women is considered, it can be read as a means of reverse stereotyping. Therefore, it might as well be a reaction to women's being seen as monolithic beings by highlighting its absurdity by projecting it on men in the play. It is seen that Ceely's son Dwane, who is taken to the USA as part of a children's safety program, manages to protect his name while all other men including the children in the neighbourhood are addressed as Tuckers. That proves the idea that the generic name is a signal of the narrowmindedness of the Irish masculinist ideology. Dwane is not a Tucker because he is away, and he has not grown into the Irish patriarchal values.

Foley explains that Tucker is, in fact, "a pet name for Thomas," and notes that Mary Jones "used it consistently in the text to suggest the alliterative effect of the constant *tuc tuc tuc* of overhead British Army surveillance helicopters" (Foley 43). So, the name Tucker is both an irony and a sound effect to the play. It can even be said that it indirectly makes a connection between men as pets which defies the existing patriarchal narratives that tend to praise men and masculinity over women and femininity. In the same vein, men are described as "lazy bastards out of work" (Charabanc 450), and that is evidently in contrast with the traditional praising of Irish men. Similarly, Rose is surprised when her Tucker does not listen to her word to help her find the children and says, "He must have went cuckoo, he has never disobeyed me in his life" (Charabanc 464). It can be stated from these lines that Rose is the influent party in their relationships which is unexpected for conventional man/woman relationships. Consequently, it does not conform with the male favouring frame of thought in which women are "reduced to being the servant of the militant male, his shadow" ("Medusa" 880). There is a shift in the gender roles, Tucker is supposedly the obedient one who is expected to follow the orders from her wife, Rose. When all these are taken into consideration, it can be stated that the passive/active and strong/passive binary structures of the patriarchy are subverted in the play in a way that empowers women.

Here, it is useful to open a parenthesis to talk about Dustin since he strikingly manages to protect his own name while all other boys in the play are called “wee Tucker”s. An explanation might be found in Kate’s conversation with Rose:

Ceely: I am all excited so I am...When wee Tucker was we, big Tucker was wee, big Tucker used to say to him, ‘Son, what do you wanna be when you grow up?’ And he would a said, ‘On the run, daddy’. Oh, God, if he was alive the day he would be so proud of him. He’s probably in Bundoran by now.

Kate: It’s well for you, Ceely. My Dustin wants to become a computer scientist. (Charabanc 458)

Ceely’s son was raised in the presence of his father who preached to him to be a rebel against British rule, and he is now a wee Tucker. Conversely, Kate’s son Dustin, who aspires to be a computer scientist, protects his name. It can be read as a criticism towards the glorification of extreme sectarianism since it underlines the danger behind it. All this praise leads wee Tuckers, i.e. boys, to dream of becoming a part of the militaristic sectarian groups instead of following an academic path. Once these children are brainwashed, they lose their individuality and devote themselves to the sectarian cause; they all become ‘Tuckers.’ Eventually, they lose all their chances of having a proper life away from this political chaos. Kate’s Dustin is not drawn into the aggressive atmosphere of the Irish sectarian mentality, that’s why he has managed to separate himself from being a blindly devoted organization member. Dustin is not a Tucker because he is not seized with the Irish patriarchal values. That proves the idea that the generic name is a signal of the narrowmindedness of the Irish masculinist ideology. The ridicule aimed at male sectarianism and the Irish patriarchy that thrives on it reaches an absurd level when the trio of women elevate their dog, Rambo, to the status of a legendary local hero who supposedly took on the British without any weapon (Charabanc 449). By means of such underestimate, male sectarianism is mocked (Ojczyńska 143). Overall, it can be stated that the play includes deliberate subversions of the patriarchal dual structure that functions to shift the focus on women. By this means, Belfast women’s struggle for survival on an everyday basis and the role they played within the community is highlighted.

However, there is another aspect of the play that reveals different means by which the Irish women are restricted by the limits of the male favouring system manifest by the use of physical, psychological and military violence. That is to say, there is more to their seemingly strong personalities who manage the chaos of the Divis

Flats smoothly when elaborated on. To begin with, Ceely has always dreamt of being a famous Bingo Caller and setting up her own radio station. However, after her husband's death, she is obliged to live a poor life together with her seven children and Granda Tucker. In one of her monologues, she talks about her dreams as follows:

I could have been somebody it hadn't been for lookin' after him....Not even my friggin' da...could be calling out numbers in the Silver Star Bingo, makin' something of myself. Oh, but I know what he wants...me to shut up too so that nobody says nothin' to nobody ever again, but I am a communicator, that's me, that's my way. (Charabanc 459)

The lines above enunciate the fact that Ceely is indeed a victim of patriarchal social structure. She never gets to follow her dreams because of her responsibility of taking care of her late husband's grandfather and the kids. Because of her sense of responsibility towards her family stemming from social expectations, she is hindered from realizing her dreams. Considering that one of her children, Dwane is taken away from her under the name of providing better life conditions for the disadvantaged children of the area, Ceely's victimization is even doubled. She was obliged to separate from her child because of economic and political challenges. This conveys the story of a woman who, under the yoke of patriarchy, has had the roles of 'mother' and 'nurturer' forcibly imposed upon her, left bereft of her hopes in the process, as if the essence of who she was meant to be had been taken away from her. These labels, thrust upon her by a society that ignores her true potential and aspirations, have left her struggling to find her own identity. On that account, *Somewhere* is a multifaceted work with political, social, and feminist dimensions, serving as a historical record of the experiences of Irish women. From a theoretical perspective, it conforms with Cixous's assertions that address how the concept of motherhood is tainted by a peculiar social system in which positions of authority are predominantly occupied by men ("Medusa" 881). Motherhood is really employed to keep women from existing or from just being because the role unites all women under a single title that prescribes how they should behave. It is also employed as a phrase to stifle a woman's individuality and to idealize her. It exposes the patriarchal need to assign labels to women. Since it would be impossible to impose any regulations on them in the absence of a label, "There has to be something of her" ("Sorties" 72). The character of Ceely represents all women who have been dispirited because of the social roles they need to fulfil, and the burden created on their shoulders. When she relates her desire to be famous to finally 'making something of herself,' the idea that she wishes to proclaim her individuality by ridding

herself of her labels is underpinned. It can be stated that she is tired of being among the anonymous Irish women who have been confined to their homes and never get a chance to introduce their individuality to the world. She attempts to change this fate by trying to interact with other neighbourhood members and making a name for herself. Even though she wishes for worldwide fame, she knows that is impossible now because of Granda Tucker. She blames him and argues that what he really wants is to silence her and everyone else. When Granda Tucker's age is considered, it is possible that he has a conventional mindset which has been shaped by the long-lasting reign of patriarchy. This is why, the character of Granda, who lives with Ceely and her children, might symbolize the patriarchal ideology that promotes motherhood as a woman's sole role to fulfil. Because of her need to attend Granda Tucker, i.e., the patriarchal traditions, Ceely is unable to follow her own path and realize her dreams.

The psychological effect of patriarchal pressure is more evident in Kate's character. She is an extremely religious person who repudiates any help from people around her since she waits for saints to come to rescue her. Throughout the play, it is revealed that Kate's daughter Coreen died in an unfortunate accident by slipping on some rubbish on the stairs, and her ex-husband Frank blamed her for not collecting the piece from the ground. Through that revelation, Kate's inner guilt is displayed. She starts talking about how Frank used to blame her for everything. That is to say, the real reason behind Kate's fanatic requests for help from the religious figures is indeed her efforts to see any proof of her own self-worth. Losing her self-confidence because of the continuous accusations of her ex-husband, she desperately looks for any signs to prove that she is worthy to be saved, or even loved.

She spares a considerable time from then on as if talking to him. Kate imagines Frank laughing at herself thinking that he has been proved right. While her imaginary talk with Frank might sound fun at first glance, it indeed has more beneath the surface. The portrayal of Frank and Kate's relationship shows that Frank's relationship with her is, indeed, a manipulative one, in which Kate is to blame for anything from rats in the house to kids playing outside. She starts remembering Frank because she returns to her traumatic years after the demolition of her walls. It is as if her 'failure' in protecting the home invokes Frank's ghost which criticizes her. This is, in fact, a strong indication of the great extent that she was overwhelmed back in the day with her husband. That kind of unhealthy relationship reminds Cixous's lines that state "[The

woman] has always been occupying the space reserved for the 'guilty'; "guilty of everything, guilty at every turn: for having desires, for not having any; for being frigid, for not being 'too hot'" ("Medusa" 877). This is a patriarchal strategy to repress women's individuality by making them feel as if something is wrong with them. By this means, it would be easier to control them because their self-confidence will be undermined. Kate is a good example of the devastating results of psychological repression on women. She has "internalized the sense of guilt" (Ojrzyńska 148) to such an extent that she is still haunted by her late husband's ghost in her mind and tries to clear herself of his accusations. Kate's despair is once more highlighted when she announces her last will through the radio line. Waiting for her ceiling to fall upon her any time, she asks community people not to allow Grandma Tidy to take Dustin and Pepe. That moment of goodbye confronts the audience with the fact that she faces death because of the damage done to her building. It strikes the audience as a grim reality while they are having fun with Kate's one-sided squabble with Frank. She is indeed a woman who has lost her daughter and been blamed for everything by her husband, and now she is in a dilapidated house in fear of losing his only son to her husband's mother.

Finally, the character of Rose underlines the fact that the patriarchal pressure goes far beyond the social level and takes the shape of military violence as well. She is accused of attempting a rebellion against the British forces after being caught while cleaning a truncheon on the balcony. In her imaginary conversation with a British soldier, she says: "No it's not...well, I suppose it would be if you were to be offensive with it, but it's not goin' to offend nobody" about the truncheon (Charabanc 457). Her subsequent arrest together with these remarks indicate the uncontrolled power handed to the British army officials during the Internment period that allowed the captivity of everyone without evidence in case of any suspicion. It is risky because it carries the probability of unfair detention of Northern Irish people because of arbitrary suspicion. It strengthens the parallelism between the patriarchy and the colonialist ideology in the sense that both shape their discourse and agenda in a way to establish authority on the other party. In addition to that, both have a mechanism designed to put the other party at a disadvantage by making them appear guilty.

Moreover, the officials who interrogate Rose threaten to arrest her husband and thus leave her children orphaned. The direct threat to the family integrity reveals the

cruelty of the officials. Therefore, it underscores the fact that what the colonialist forces really want is full obedience. To achieve that, they are willing to destroy any potential threat starting from the smallest functioning group of the society, i.e., family. On a broader scale, Rose can be assumed as a personification of Ireland which faces the colonialist forces, that is the British, when the colonialist tendency to attribute feminine traits to the colonized land is taken into account. Then, as the supposedly protective figure, the British should have approached Rose benignly, because she is the dependent and helpless depicted Ireland figure (Hogan 21). Instead, *Somewhere* shows that the colonialist authority relentlessly employs brute force, exemplified by these threats and the British's use of military gear, to maintain its hegemony over 'the other'—in this context, the women of Belfast. In other words, that is a reference towards how the patriarchal discourse and the reality contradict. Given the power imbalance between them, the harsh response of the British forces towards ordinary Northern Irish women confined to their homes illustrates the hysteria of a colonial power desperately trying to maintain its dominant position. These examples recall Cixous's concept of the threat of castration of the patriarchy; in which 'the other,' i.e., the woman, is exploited in a way that its individual existence apart from its subordinated relationship to the dominant party is ignored with an aim to preserve the existing power dynamic with the gender hierarchy. Cixous explains the real reason lying under such a strict conservation mechanism is indeed the fear of losing its privileged position ("Sorties" 76). Therefore, it underscores the fact of how the patriarchy and colonialism are intertwined.

What the audience sees on the stage is only the three main characters and the rest of the characters are offstage. These absent characters are mediated through the diegetic space, so the narrated space. The original term "diegesis" refers to "a narration or narrative account" (Gruber 81), so the diegetic space in the play is the whole neighbourhood which is not formed on the stage physically but created in the audience's minds through the protagonists' descriptive narrative. The actions and the ongoing events within this invisible stage are reported to the audience via Ceely, Kate, and Rose. In reference to narration, the commentary of Kate, Ceely and Rose over the balcony resembles a "surreal Greek chorus" ("Review of *Somewhere*" 47). The fact that all action takes place offstage, and the existence of the unity of time, place and characters are other aspects of *Somewhere* that parallels with Greek classical theatre.

However, critics argue that the use of such a chorus-like structure has its risky aspects as well (“Review of *Somewhere*” 47). For example, thanks to that peculiar structure, the play has a delicate balance between the performance and the narration of all events taking place outside. By means of their narration, “the women are positioned as filters through whom the outside street action is relayed,” and “this is a dramatic manoeuvre that suggests ways in which they might live out their lives amid the clamour of violence and political mayhem” (Gilbert 444). As a reaction towards their surroundings, the three characters make extensive use of monologues that are played directly against the audience. These are mainly focused on explaining the characters’ inner worlds to the audience. It is argued that monologues are used to initiate “the extended exposure of one character” that “allows the audience to come close to an understanding of them and allows them and the actor to lay out a great deal of relationship between that character and their context [...]” (MacLennan 132). That is to say, the characters’ monologues provide insights into their identities. The revelation of the protagonists’ characters at full length in multiple dimensions, challenges universalisation of the womanhood as a patriarchal strategy to eliminate any potential contradiction by the number of female individuals by arguing that their resistance contradicts the supposedly feminine characteristics promoted by the phallogocentric system. In this regard, *Somewhere* provides a chance for the female protagonists to discover their potential by providing a space that allows them to think for themselves which is ensured through the full-length monologues. Therefore, the play can be indicated as an example of feminine writing by dint of its capacity to provide its female playwright to “write herself” (“Medusa” 880), that is to write about both her and other women, represented by the three exaggerated stereotypes, feelings and thoughts in response to their struggles caused by the patriarchy by turning the spotlight on the Northern Irish women in the play. The inclusion of women’s accounts of history challenges the objectification and patriarchal universalization of women and highlights the uniqueness of every woman with her own personality, feelings, dreams, and sexual tendencies (“Sorties” 84). In this way, it shakes the “phallogocentric tradition” (“Medusa” 279) on the history of written work and creates an alternative piece of literature in which the female is no longer obliged to be narrated through the male gaze. Yet, “[The monologues] also underline their sense of isolation [...]” (Gilbert 445). The monologue moments when each woman sits on a chair while a spotlight is falling upon her focuses the audience on women and their problems one by one.

Furthermore, apart from these special moments spared for songs and monologues, the audience fails to empathize with the play because “the lives and contexts are too far removed, too dramatically manic to elicit normal responses” (Foley 46).

Considering Cixous’s feminist criticism on the structuring of a patriarchal society, one would expect to see a slice of Belfast people’s lives where men have dominance over women. However, it is seen that Jones strategically subverts the patriarchal hegemony by pivoting the play around an all-female trio and including no male characters except for the narrated ones. It offers diverse interpretations, though. Entrustment of the complete narration to three main characters results in the questioning of the extent of imagination incorporated in the characters’ account of the story. The doubt is induced by the serenity of the protagonists in reaction to the bizarre incidents taking place in the neighbourhood. This is thanks to “Charabanc’s narration technique” that “sets up a dialectic between perceived and conceived space that reflects the play’s tension between hilarity and horror” (Gilbert 445). In other words, the audience is startled because of the contrast between the chaotic action narrated by the characters and their unanticipated responses towards that chaos. A solid example is found at the end of the play when the trio realize that Granda Tucker and the turtle hijacked the helicopter to help the riot in the chapel against the British. Instead of elaborating on the absurdity of the incident, they suddenly shift focus, and the stage prompt suggests that they continue as if “everything is now back to normal” after a long pause (Charabanc 468).

While the three female protagonists undeniably show effort to make a change in their lives, their efforts are short-lived, and it does not take long for them to return to the aimless brawl in their daily lives. To start with, Ceely continuously dreams of what would become of her life if it was not for Granda Tucker and imagines herself to be free enough to realize her dreams. However, despite her numerous complaints of regretting not to have escaped, she does not take any real action. Unexpectedly, it is indeed the so-called indifferent Old Tucker who leaves home to defend those in the chapel while Ceely and the other two protagonists who criticize him stay at home. That undermines the accuracy of Ceely’s, and consequently the rest of the protagonists’, narration because it presents a different active/passive dynamic than what has been narrated so far. From that renewed perspective, it is seen that there are more gaps between reality and her part of the story. For example, she talks about leaving the city,

but never actually attempts to do that. Also, she constantly shouts at the people at the chapel and gives them instructions but there are no signs that they keep her word. Finally, she constantly yells at the army as if calling them to account for the bad incidents happening in the neighbourhood. However, there is no evidence in the text that shows her cries really reached the British army officials. So, there is a chance she is having a one-sided conversation throughout the play. When all these are considered; it would be possible to claim that Ceely is indeed left confined to a small balcony of a damaged building in company with the Granda. Similarly, although Kate seems to have taken control of her life in her hands upon attacking the chapel, she does not hold on to her defiant spirit for long. After Granda Tucker's announcement to the British army, the three return to their daily conversation as if nothing has happened. Kate repeats: "On a day like today you could be anywhere" (Charabanc 468). She acknowledges the possibility of leaving the place and its chaos but does not take any action to leave. The fact that she looks over the bizarre events of the day underscores her intention of not leaving the Divis Flats, so she consents to the poor conditions there. Last but not least, considering Rose's ruthless instructions to Kate while directing her to aim at the belfry and the priest, Rose's character seems to have been empowered by her willingness to do anything in her power to save her children as a mother. Yet, her passion to take revenge seems to have ended soon after she sees her twins at the helicopter with Granda Tucker. Suddenly, she returns to normal along with the group and asks if the water is back on. This can be interpreted as an indication that Rose's connection with the outside is broken, and she has returned to occupy herself with domestic matters. Her perseverance in the routine indicates there is no change ahead for Rose and her family except for their damaged car. Eventually, Rose will continue to care for her demanding twins as well as her indifferent husband by putting her exhaustion aside.

Perhaps the only fitting response to be invoked in the face of the images of these three women who are trying to survive within the Divis Flats' chaotic area is guilt. Taking the light-hearted scenes aside, what is left with these three women is their struggle for survival. At the end of the play, Ceely loses her radio, Kate loses her home, and Rose's twins become runaways. Despite the women's heroic narration, apparently courageous interventions, and petty criticism of the men of the area, it happens to be men who take real action about the Brits in the end. When all these are considered, it

can be stated that their attempts to control the chaos around them are indeed imaginary (Ojrzyńska 143). They attempt to instruct their neighbours, husbands, children and dogs over their balcony, but there is no evidence that they are really heard, or their words are kept. Consequently, it is possible to see the women's insistent and even hysterical attempts to reach out to people outside as indications of their isolation and helplessness. The way they return to their daily routines at the end of the play underlines their "desperate acceptance of life which acknowledges complete powerlessness" (Foley 45). The life will continue the same for these women. The next day, the British presence in the era will continue, and our protagonists will find other seemingly important events by the reach of their balconies to occupy themselves with. The endless loop of their lives is suggested by the protagonists' occasional interruptions of their discussions about the riot and soldiers with comments about the nice weather or the broken water supply in the neighbourhood. "Their limited power is imaginary" (Foley 45), yet this is the only thing that gives them strength to survive. Kate, Ceely and Rose will continue to sit on their balcony every day and pretend as if they are a part of the society which, in reality, they have been excluded. More importantly, by dint of their imagination, they will try to feel as if they have the power to change things for the better. Even though Kate, Ceely and Rose come to realize the extent of the patriarchal boundaries set around them from time to time, in the end, there is not any formal conclusion or an alternative path chosen by any of these women. They all seem to have returned to their daily routines within the patriarchal limits set around them.

Both the stage space and the dramatic space are used effectively in *Somewhere* to depict the daily challenges women in Northern Ireland live through in the face of the social and political hegemonies of their country. In terms of the stage space, there is a simple structure with three women and their balconies. The protagonists narrate the chaotic reality of the neighbourhood from their balconies in the decrepit tall towers of the Divis Flats. Three women's placement at the heart of the play as narrators obliges the audience to listen to what the characters, and the Northern Irish women they symbolize in general, have to say. There the play's women-centred setting and the events bring criticism to the repressions on women both by the military and patriarchy. The British surveillance team positioned over the balconies is the main target of the protagonists' criticism, while the focus frequently shifts to the

shortcomings of the masculinist ideology in a broader aspect. Thanks to the characters' female community that nourishes empowerment and motivation both individually and as a group, the male-dominated reality remains backstage. This is why, it disrupts the patriarchal order which causes women to be each other's enemies as indicated by Cixous ("Medusa" 878). Lojek states that "[t]he rejected male-dominated hierarchy is [...] associated with issues of sexual domination and manipulation" (92). Women choose to respond to the military violence they are exposed to "by using humour and mocking the male armed struggle" (Grassi 107). On account of Kate, Rose and Ceely's narrative, it is possible to say that the notions of rationality and social progress are to be found not so much in the male-dominated, violent and dysfunctional public space but on the fringes of the domestic and the public, on the balcony—a site of productive mimesis and jouissance (Ojczyńska 146). That is to say, the main characters' responses to the aggression of the public space are joyous thanks to the elements of comedy like misunderstandings, disguises, or songs embroidered within the play. That works to undermine the binary structures of rationality and irrationality; chaos and harmony; violence and peace by providing an alternative vision in which women display all the positive properties.

The play's unconventional staging contributes significantly to its questioning of the patriarchal structure. To begin with, the balcony is considered a part of the domestic sphere and a threshold between the public and domestic sphere. Thanks to its connection both to the domestic and public spheres, it allows the three women to establish a connection with the outside world; and blurs the distinction between the two spheres by allowing the women to access beyond the domestic sphere. With that regard, the use of the balcony could be taken as a "metacommentary on Charabanc's own creative practice which sought to expand the scope of voices and perspectives represented in Northern Irish theatre [...]" (Ojczyńska 148). The company try to make the women of Northern Ireland seen and heard just like Kate, Ceely, and Rose are on the stage. Yet, the staging presents the power dominance in the society in a two-way structure. On the one hand, the women's commentary over the balconies of high-floor buildings can be approached "as a means of staying on top of the immense isolation, loneliness and desperation that is their everyday condition" (Pelan "In a class" 9); on the other hand it is possible to take it as a means of women empowerment since they are "high up and aware of their surveillance, they bombard the army above them and

their fellow residents below them with batterings made of words” (Pelan, “In a class” 9). Hence, it is possible to say that there is a deliberate interplay between the binary structure of passivity and activity concerning the female subjects. That depends on whether their verbal intervention into the neighbourhood should be taken as an indication of activity, or as a way of trying to make sense of the turmoil they experience.

Considering that a balcony is a borderland between male-dominated public and stereotypically female private spaces, the staging provides a fertile ground for readings on the conventional division of domestic and public spheres. The women’s presence on the threshold between the two spheres can be an indication of their struggle to survive and to make a presence in a predominantly male-dominated public space. Borrowing the phrase from the postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha, critics argue that “Suspended between these two gendered areas, [the balcony] serves as a perfect “outside” or “third” space” (Ojrzyńska 144). It provides the means where domestic interacts with the public, i.e. women get in touch with the outside world. Therefore, it blurs the distinction between these two spheres. Moreover, it is the place where the protagonists welcome all the violence and absurdities outside and translate it into laughter by their imagination. To that extent, it is possible to address the female community in the play as a “counter society” that portrays real or possible alternative realities where harmony prevails reached by way of interdependence (Kristeva et al. 27). When viewed from this aspect, there is a parallel between the female trio present in *Somewhere* and its writers since the play is also a work of the female community, i.e., the Charabanc Company, written as a reaction towards the prevailing patriarchal hegemony in Northern Ireland deliberately to present an alternative reality where the Northern Irish women are at the centre.

The female protagonists’ position in the hybrid space is highlighted in their attempts to domesticate the objects belonging to the male-dominated public space. It is most evident in the trio’s unconventional use of military gear. For instance, Ceely has a stolen radio transmitter that is used to announce local news and play bingo but is thought to be a “suspect device” by the British; and Rose polishes her husband’s riot helmet that she claims to be used in place of toilet bowls (Charabanc 457). It can be seen that the military equipment is used out of their purpose by these women and is somehow domesticized. Finding such equipment within the domestic sphere is an

alienation effect that leads the audience to realize the extreme conditions the women are in by underlining the absurdity of the situation. It signals how the women of the Divis Flats are accustomed to the existence of the military in their living areas. Similarly, when they prepare to help the people in the chapel against the British army, Rose and Kate suddenly enter the scene with a police riot helmet, a bin lid, a baton, and an army shirt. It can also be pointed out as a conscious subversion of gender roles since the traditional image of weak women is shattered once the protagonists start fighting back. Critics argue that on a broader scale, “this idea of re-appropriation and re-exploration of the objects belonging to the male-dominated sphere corresponds to what Charabanc strived to achieve when they entered the Northern Irish stage and adapted it to the new perspective they offered” (Ojrzyńska 145). Just like the protagonists who appear to have developed their own methods of resilience as a reaction to the repressions, the Charabanc members use their plays to raise their voices against the masculinist ideology. There is also the use of domestic objects as objects of resistance against the British. It is a means of alienating the audience as well. For example, they start using bin lids to announce the arrival of the British forces during the Troubles as a solid example of domestic resistance, and bean cans are used to communicate with people in the chapel. The contrast between the nourishing female society in the domestic sphere and the chaos of the hierarchical male order in the public sphere highlights how the hierarchal structure lying at the core of the patriarchy only led to destruction as shown in the example of demolished Divis Flats.

Also, the women’s monitoring of the British soldiers thanks to the openness of the balcony transforms it into a resourceful space for the subversion of gender roles “as a site of two-way surveillance” (Kurdi 192). The protagonists’ returned gaze of surveillance can be read as a means of resisting and reversing such intervention (Sullivan 163). Their courageous ultimatums and expressions of sexual desire directed at the British soldiers build up a satirical subtext towards the political system itself over the offstage soldiers. While at first reversion of the surveillance can also be perceived as “the possible deconstruction of the culturally manipulated view of women as helpless and rendered passive” (Kurdi 193), it does not take long to question the liability of the main characters’ perspectives and the real extent of their power.

Furthermore, the openness of the balcony which allows the British to watch over the protagonists reveals an alternative aspect of the Troubles period. It is possible

to say that since “[t]he play’s theme was the eve of the anniversary of the introduction of internment, and so we were shown the women who had undergone another kind of internment after the seizure of their husbands/men” (Roche 241), that is the sustained surveillance of the British army over them. There is a simple set up with “offstage anonymous figures” (Roche 242) that provokes the feelings of uncertainty and desperation in audience. It prompts them to interpret the protagonists’ attempts to interfere with their surroundings over the balcony as indications of their isolation and weakness. It can be read as a sign of isolation because the three women are confined to the domestic sphere; they occupy themselves with domestic tasks and rarely go out. The limit of their access and power in the public space is underlined when they pretend to help the British army land the chopper with hand signals (Charabanc 447). It is an indication that their limited power is, in fact, only imaginary and that they are restricted to the domestic sphere. Alternatively, the positioning of the balconies on the stage can be approached as a technique to turn the gaze at the audience (Ojrzyńska 142) to blur the line between the audience and the performers. The feeling of being monitored is invoked by the characters addressing the audience over the stage, and that impels the audience to empathize with these helpless women who are disturbed because of the unwelcome eyes on themselves. In that case, the protagonists’ criticisms of religion, gender inequality and the sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland are reflected to the audience itself.

Finally, it is possible to mention the imaginary space in *Somewhere* as another element that underscores the protagonists’ vivid imagination. The women’s trio create dreamscapes of reality where they seek solace from the harsh reality of their everyday lives. The most distinctive depiction of a dreamscape is Rose’s fairytale adaptation of the military violence in Belfast while reciting it for her kids. She imagines herself a queen, and her husband a king who fights with the scary dragon outside to protect the little princes, i.e. the boys. In that alternative world that Rose yearns for, they move into a new castle with “a wee bit of a garden and real roses,” and “[the princes] could play in the streets” (Charabanc 454). This is an obvious amelioration of the up-to-date reality that delicately embodies Rose’s wish to leave the Flats for good. The creation of such a dreamscape could be explained by the increasing danger in their daily lives. Here, the power of imagination is used to escape reality and obscure the real and imaginary spaces. Another significant reference to the power of imagination in the

play is found in the title. “[T]he undefined and unrestricted nature of “somewhere over the balcony” as a space evokes the unlimited capacity of the women standing on the balcony, an edge or border in relation to the house, to transcend the grim and destructive limitations of mundane reality mentally” (Kurdi 193). In simpler terms, the vague and limitless quality of a place that is “somewhere over the balcony” as a location alludes to the women’s limitless ability to psychologically transcend the depressing and damaging restrictions of everyday reality. As Foley puts it: the women manage to go beyond the turmoil, poverty, and absence by transforming them into their opposites by dint of imagination (Foley 45). In a similar vein, Kate repeats “That’s what I love about this place. On a day like today you could be anywhere” (Charabanc 458-68) towards the end of each act. ‘Anywhere’ in Kate’s speech could be taken as a reference to the imaginary land over the balcony where they aspire to be, but also “it could refer to an imaginary place of their own, which for them is not utopian, but quite real, and in which they substitute their own voices for the ones of men engaged in their armed struggle and sectarian conflict” (Grassi 108). Therefore, it is an indication of their unique perception of reality that rejects the male hegemony. Last but not least, the repetition of the phrase might be to universalize the values the play promotes like gender and class equality, or to highlight that the struggles women face because of the masculinist ideology are the same across the world.

In light of all these, it can be stated that *Somewhere Over the Balcony* is written to raise awareness of gender inequality and military violence in Northern Ireland. Per this purpose, the characterization and the space are used exquisitely in various ways. The main characters’ frequent displays of power through subversion of gender roles are mainly products of their imagination to pretend as if they have a say in the operation of the patriarchal structure around them. While that gives them strength to endure, it indeed portrays the aimless mayhem in their lives by underpinning the great extent of their exclusion from society. This is why, the play does not show the trio as female subjects who come to decide to take control of their lives or to reject elements of patriarchal dictation permanently at the end. Instead, they seem to continue their lives as if none of these absurd events have been lived. It leads us to question why they prefer to remain stable. Furthermore, the peculiar staging that offers a turned gaze at the audience underscores the protagonists’ confinement to the domestic sphere. Their futile attempts to raise their voice in the neighbourhood or bring order into their

community only highlight their isolation and desperation. As a means of processing the chaos of the public sphere, the women instrumentalize their imagination by creating romanticized figments of reality and dreamscapes. However, all these do not change the fact that they maintain their status quo in which they rarely leave home, which is traditionally a feminine space.

When approached in relation to Cixous's concept of feminine writing, the play can be pointed out as a solid example of feminine writing with regards to its accurate depiction of the social structure based on gender inequality and various attempts to reverse and undermine such patriarchal conventions embedded in the Irish society both by the use of irony and subversion techniques. Even though the female trio discover the black territory within them and embrace their own individualities as Cixous advocated for ("Medusa" 877), they still have no agency and say in the end ("Medusa" 888). The fact that the protagonists' lives return to normal as if nothing has happened proves that the female empowerment witnessed through *Somewhere* is only imaginary. Reasons behind their choice of abandoning the path to autonomy may range from protecting their children and sustaining family connections to adhering to nationalistic ideals. Yet, it is evident that these female protagonists relinquish their pursuit of autonomy to preserve their existing bonds. Therefore, the play portrays the challenges of womanhood in Northern Irish society by showcasing the layered aspects of identity, such as family ties, motherhood, and political ambitions. This complexity of gender is heightened as the main female characters ultimately face punishment or are blamed when they refuse to comply with patriarchal dictates.

## CONCLUSION

A comparative analysis of Marie Jones's *Somewhere Over the Balcony* (1987), written for the Charabanc Company, and Anne Devlin's *Ourselves Alone* (1986) yields valuable insights into the recurring themes and patterns present in both works, which emerge from the same historical and cultural context. Both negotiate Northern Irish women's experiences in the Troubles era through the employment of similar characterization and space elements. With that regard, they have feminist aspects. Hence, a reading of the plays' dramatic elements through the lens of postmodern feminism with specific reference to Cixous's works allows for a better grasp of the gender dynamics, especially the state of the Irish feminine identity during the Troubles. Written by Northern Irish female playwrights, set in the same period, and centred around female protagonists at a time when neither female playwrights nor actresses are prioritized *Ourselves* and *Somewhere* provide fruitful grounds for postmodern feminist readings.

The leading roles reserved for female characters show that these plays are concerned with increasing female visibility on the Irish stage as well. An alternative interpretation of the correlation between these plays and the Irish feminine identity can be the use of writing to help women discover themselves and to convey their opinions. In this context, it can be argued that Devlin and Jones encourage Irish women to question patriarchal narratives and to discover their true identity, free from societal impositions. They start walking on their path through the body as Cixous put it ("Medusa" 880) to describe the relationship between a female narrator and her story. Therefore, writing is employed by the playwrights as an act that helps women realise their potential and allows them a space to recognize their opinions and feelings as well as to report their personal needs or tendencies. From that aspect, both plays challenge male dominance by presenting history from female-centred narrations and creating diversity on the male-dominated Irish stage. This is why, they can be considered examples of feminine writing, as they challenge the patriarchal discourse in which "woman never has her turn to speak" ("Medusa" 879).

The theoretical chapter shows that developments in the feminist school of thought have become more inclusive over time and have shown that every woman should have equal rights and voice, regardless of religion, language, and race. The

postmodern branch of feminism celebrates femininity with a specific reference to female individuality. Helene Cixous is a prominent postmodern feminist whose endeavours have contributed greatly to the quest for gender equality. She foregrounded the importance of all pieces of written work by women. She coined the term “écriture féminine” to describe the feminine practice of writing by women, about women, and for women. Her ideas on female individuality and gender equality and how they are reflected in female writing provide fruitful grounds to explore *Ourselves* and *Somewhere*.

In terms of characterization, both *Ourselves* and *Somewhere* feature characters corresponding to various Irish female stereotypes in their relevant sociocultural contexts, and they attempt to deconstruct the traditional female identity that has been promoted. The most significant method used to highlight this deconstruction is the subversion of gender roles by the female protagonists. *Ourselves Alone* depicts the mother, the mistress and the career woman trio with its female protagonists Donna, Josie and Frieda, respectively. *Somewhere* incorporates a religious aspect with the inclusion of a character as a devout Catholic, Kate, together with an overprotective mother Rose, and an irreverent widow and a career woman Ceely. All these female trios are structured in line with the traditional roles attributed to women in patriarchal societies like the Irish society. Yet, although the three female protagonists strive to make changes in their lives, their efforts are short-lived, and they quickly return to the aimless struggle of their daily routines. To begin with, in *Somewhere*, all three protagonists return to their daily conversation as if nothing has happened at the end of the play. When the absurdity of the abrupt change in their attitude is combined with the unreliability of their narration, it is possible to argue that *Somewhere* underscores the fact that female empowerment is either merely imaginary and not practical in real life, or the female trio voluntarily accept to maintain their position within their predominantly patriarchal surrounding. Similarly, in *Ourselves*, Josie ultimately finds herself forced to return to her father’s house and complies with his rules to protect her baby; Donna chooses to maintain her relationship with Liam and continues as if nothing has happened. Even Frieda, the most unyielding character realizes that a change in Northern Ireland would not be possible; thus she embarks on self-exile. Therefore, *Ourselves* offers unappealing exchanges in return for female autonomy: it is either to be obtained for the sake of the female individuals’ safety as Josie and Donna

do or by facing the ambiguity of a rebellious journey with no guarantee of success as Frieda does, while at the same time underlining the hostility of a patriarchal environment.

Space is also employed in numerous ways to portray the binary structure of patriarchal societies. One obvious aspect to elaborate on is the division between the public and the private spheres. In both plays, femininity and compliance with the masculinist ideology are related to the domestic sphere. To illustrate, in *Ourselves* Frieda is the career woman who works at a club whereas Donna as the mother figure almost never leaves home. In a parallel way, in *Somewhere* the three women are confined to their homes under constant surveillance and even their slightest attempt of getting into contact with the public sphere via the information line or over their balconies is considered as potentially rebellious behaviour. With regard to the patriarchal ideology that restricts women to the domestic sphere so that their dependent, subordinate status can be continued (Simons 77), the protagonists of both plays make several attempts to breach the patriarchal boundaries. However, in the end, the binary opposition between the public and domestic spheres dictated by the patriarchal system does not disappear; rather, its inevitability is emphasized. In *Ourselves Alone*, Josie abandons her path to individualization by agreeing to move in with her father; Donna tolerates Liam's mistreatment and infidelity to secure her safety under his roof; and Frieda, the disobedient figure, removes herself from both the domestic and public spheres through self-imposed exile. In *Somewhere*, the binary structure is dealt with by the use of a balcony to create a threshold between the public and private spheres. It is presented as a liminal space that is open to possibilities. Yet, the simple setting with "offstage anonymous figures" (Roche 242) also provokes feelings of uncertainty and desperation in the audience and eventually prompts them to interpret the protagonists' attempts to interfere with their surroundings over the balcony as indications of their isolation and weakness.

Furthermore, the relationship between the female body and the nation is a feminist theorem that is encountered both in *Somewhere* and *Ourselves*. In the latter, it is possible to discuss the relationship between the nation and the female body with respect to Josie's character. The men in the IRA, including Josie's father Malachy and brother Liam, see Joe's impregnation of Josie as the ultimate violation of their national territory because the inherently masculine national identity is predicated on monitoring

and regulating women by considering female sexuality as a danger to the nation's purity. Thus, her pregnancy is perceived as British interference in the country's sovereignty. In *Somewhere*, however, there is a more indirect reference. Considering that all the female protagonists are Northern Irish Catholics who are confined to their homes under continuous British surveillance, the women could be interpreted as symbols for the Irish nation and the British surveillance could be referring to the Irish nation's colonialization by the British. When the postmodern feminist discourse on how the female body is addressed as a 'continent' ("Medusa" 878) to be owned or prohibited is taken into account, the analogy between the Irish nation and the female body in these plays is amplified.

Lastly, word-scapes and dreamscapes are found in both *Somewhere* and *Ourselves*. Devlin in *Ourselves* uses word-scapes to parody a long tradition of the female personification of Ireland and to underline that the ideal image of woman promoted by the patriarchy contrasts with the Northern Irish women's reality since it may result in the idealization of the female subject. Moreover, dreamscapes which are to be found in the forms of awakening memory or a dream on the part of the women characters in the play are used to reiterate the happiness the protagonists seek in their dreams or their childhood memories as against their troubled mindset in the present. In a similar vein, *Somewhere* gives place to dreamscapes of reality to give the protagonists a moment of retreat from the harsh reality of their everyday lives. There are attempts at retelling reality in the forms of fairytales and dreams of a hopeful future. All these instances can be marked as signs of Northern Irish women's attempts to use imagination in order to transform the turmoil around them. Yet, it would be a double-edged interpretation because the imaginary happy place can also be taken as a highlight of the women's limited position in changing the political chaos of the era for the better in real life. Since they do not have any power in reality, all they are left with is to dream about it. Therefore, it might as well be a sign of the Northern Irish women's hopelessness to attain better living conditions. In relation to the references to the idealization and generalization of women in both plays, the latter interpretation of the word-scapes and dreamscapes seems more appropriate.

All these are strong indications that Devlin and Jones follow Cixous's path that encourages all women to write about the patriarchal restrictions to challenge the archaic male favouring system, because writing, as a primarily male-dominated area,

historically overlooked the difficulties women had been through and even excluded the female perspective as a whole. Therefore, a change in writing is a change towards the existence of repression. Nevertheless, it is essential to note that the main characters in both plays somehow surrender to the patriarchy at the end. In *Ourselves*, Frieda leaves the country for good, Donna pursues her relationship with Liam despite his misdeeds, and Josie agrees to live with Malachy in order to protect herself and her child. Correspondingly, in *Somewhere*, despite their momentary activism, all three characters return to their everyday lives as if nothing has happened. Hence, what is left is Rose's arrest, Kate's demolished home and Ceely's confiscated radio station. So, the women are still the sufferers and confined to the patriarchal stewardship in the end in both plays.

Despite their best efforts to explore the Irish female identity extensively in connection to their independence, the female protagonists in these plays renounce their exploration of self-identity. This reveals that identity is a complex and multifaceted concept that cannot be reduced to simple categories such as religion, language, race, or gender. It is also influenced by various factors, including one's worldview, emotional or familial ties, and political ideals. In these plays, the female characters' strong connections hinder their freedom, and these works question whether women must renounce their autonomy to maintain these bonds. Taking Anne Devlin's Catholic, and Marie Jones's Protestant descendancies, into account, it can be stated that they utilise drama to transcend the persistent religious and political conflicts in Northern Ireland by incorporating a gendered perspective. In doing so, the choice of female playwrights to use theatre as a medium to accurately and vividly reflect women's perspectives highlights the power of the theatre. The ability of theatre to address specific issues through its artistic capabilities underscores the strength, mystery, and richness of performance art. The selection of theatre, both in terms of text and stage, as a tool to reflect individual struggles, from the past to the present, continues to demonstrate its enduring power as a form of art. In line with this purpose, it is possible to argue that *Ourselves* and *Somewhere* show how theatre can be used as an instrument to write by women, about women, and for women (Kroløkke and Sørensen 13).

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## TURNITIN REPORT

SÜMEYYE SÖNMEZYURT 21316812025

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## RESUME

**Full Name: Sümeyye SÖNMEZYURT**

### **Educational Status:**

<b>Degree</b>	<b>Major</b>	<b>University</b>	<b>Year</b>
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