
Brian Friel's Short Stories and Play Revisited: Orientating "The Visitation," "Foundry House," and *Aristocrats* in their Historical and Audience Contexts

Chu He

Indiana University South Bend, USA

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Abstract. By juxtaposing Friel's pieces "The Visitation," "Foundry House," and *Aristocrats* for a genealogy study, I will argue that their 'nearly identical' theme actually ramifies in different contexts: "The Visitation" and "Foundry House" respectively capture the reactions from both sides of the Atlantic to John Fitzgerald Kennedy's winning the American presidential election in 1961 and portray how such an unprecedented victory of a Catholic Irish immigrant shapes the identity formation among the Irish people as well as the Irish American community, while *Aristocrats* is not a direct response to an outside event but an overdue inward look, a close examination of the domestic situation in the 1970s Republic. In this way, Friel's three works outline the trajectory of an Irish identity pursuit ranging from external affiliation to internal reconstruction.

Key Words. Brian Friel, "The Visitation", "Foundry House", *Aristocrats*, Irish-Americans, homecoming, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, historical and audience contexts, Irish identity.

Resumen. Las obras de Friel "The Visitation", "Foundry House", y *Aristocrats* se yuxtaponrán y someterán a un estudio genealógico que revelará que su 'cuasi idéntica' temática en realidad se ramifica en contextos diversos: "The Visitation" y "Foundry House" captan respectivamente las reacciones en ambos lados del Atlántico ante la elección de John Fitzgerald Kennedy como presidente en las elecciones americanas de 1961, al tiempo que muestran como la inaudita victoria de un inmigrante irlandés católico influencia la formación identitaria del pueblo irlandés y de la comunidad irlandesa-americana. Por otra parte, *Aristocrats* no supone una respuesta directa a un acontecimiento externo, sino una tardía introspección, un examen profundo de la situación doméstica de la República en la década de los 70. De esta manera, las tres obras de Friel trazan la trayectoria de una búsqueda de identidad irlandesa que va de la afiliación externa a la reconstrucción interna.

Palabras clave. Brian Friel, "The Visitation", "Foundry House", *Aristocrats*, irlandeses-americanos, retorno, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, contextos históricos y particulares, identidad irlandesa.

The relationship of Brian Friel's short stories and plays has long ceased to be a fresh topic as many critics have categorized it as one of continuation and development due to their similar themes and concerns. Such a tendency in Friel criticism can be seen in the discussion of "Foundry House" and *Aristocrats*, the prime example of Friel's short stories and plays in

which there is a consensus of opinion that the ongoing theme of homecoming and disillusion arrays the two works in a homogenous, linear line. As one critic claims, "*Aristocrats* casts its net much more widely, to explore at greater length issues which can only be hinted at in the more constricted form of the short story" (Cronin 1992: 9). While it is undeniable that

Aristocrats does evolve from “Foundry House” and further develop some initial ideas of it, it is reductive to lump them together indiscriminately without considering the specific time, place, occasion, and media from which they were produced. By examining their different historical, cultural, and audience contexts, this article will show that “Foundry House” and *Aristocrats* actually branch off from their common themes to address distinct historical events, issues, and audiences of their times. Moreover, this article will go beyond these two well-known works and include another Friel’s short story, “The Visitation,” which is barely noticed by the critics and rarely compared with Friel’s other works, but which, according to Richard Bonaccorso, has “a nearly identical theme” with “Foundry House” and *Aristocrats* (1991: 72). By juxtaposing the three works for a genealogy study, I will demonstrate how the “nearly identical theme” in the three works actually ramifies in different directions. More specifically, I will argue that, respectively, “The Visitation” and “Foundry House” capture the reactions from both sides of the Atlantic to John Kennedy’s winning the presidential election in 1961 and portray how such an unprecedented victory of a Catholic Irish immigrant shapes the identity formation among the Irish people as well as the Irish American community, while *Aristocrats*, by contrast, is not a direct response to foreign affairs but an overdue inward look at Ireland, a timely examination of the domestic situation in the 1970s Republic. In this way, Friel’s three works outline the trajectory of the Irish identity pursuit from external affiliation to internal reconstruction.

Unlike “Foundry House” and *Aristocrats*, “The Visitation” remains literally unknown until Bonaccorso brings it to our attention in an aside comment: “There are similar concerns, however, at the heart of both works [“Foundry House” and *Aristocrats*], one being Friel’s longstanding interest in the psychology of class confrontation. (Indeed, one can find a nearly identical theme in one of his earliest published works, “The Visitation”, a story published in *Kilkenny Magazine* in 1961)” (1991: 72). As a matter of fact, “The Visitation” and “Foundry House” echo each other not only in their interest in “the psychology of class confrontation” but more importantly in their portrayal of the characters’ unshaken loyalty to

a mythologized entity in spite of its unflattering reality. Given both characters’ deep psychological need for inspiration to deliver themselves from their own mundane, petty lives, which leads to their selective blindness and willing indulgence in illusion, the two short stories are thematic twins and function as the equal precursors to Friel’s *Aristocrats*. More interestingly, the two analogical stories also came out at the same time: “The Visitation” appeared in *The Kilkenny Magazine: An All-Ireland Literary Review*, Autumn-Winter issue, 1961, while “Foundry House” was published in *The New Yorker*, November 18, 1961. “The Visitation” is thus not a work of apprenticeship, that is, “one of [Friel’s] earliest published works” as Bonaccorso suggests (1991: 72) but a contemporary with “Foundry House.” Although their approximate publication dates could be a pure coincidence, and despite the fact that Friel himself admits that it is quite normal “[t]here are always two or three [stories] going at the same time” (“An Ulster Writer” 1965: 32), the two stories written in the same vein yet published separately in Ireland and America still form a curious case worth our investigation. As we all know, 1961 is a momentous year to both Ireland and America, because John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the great-grandson of Irish immigrants, became America’s first Irish-Catholic president. Published in the same year, “The Visitation” and “Foundry House” deal with the repercussions of such an event on both countries. That is why the Irish and American audiences are related yet addressed individually in these stories.

Since 1960, Kennedy’s presidential campaign had received a continuous, full coverage in Irish newspapers and become ordinary Irish people’s concern: “[t]here was considerable interest in Dublin in the result of the election, and throughout the day telephone calls from people seeking information were received at the *Irish Times*” (*Irish Times* 12 May 1960: 1). Admittedly, Kennedy was the first Roman Catholic to run for President in the predominantly Protestant America since the failure of Alfred E. Smith, but what really won the heart of the Irish was his public acknowledgement of his Irish heritage: “[h]e told a welcoming crowd of 15,000 that his ancestors left Ireland 100 years ago and landed

at Governor's Island in east Boston, now the site of the airport" (*Irish Times* 19 July 1960: 4). Considering the century-long discrimination and prejudice against Irish immigrants in America, Kennedy's reference to his Irish ancestry was undoubtedly an act of courage and honor.

If Kennedy was not ashamed of his Irishness, the Irish people took great pride in him too. Mr. Lemass's comment on Kennedy's victory best represented the Irish people's feelings: "it is a source of joy to us that a man of Irish blood has been elected to that very high office" (*Irish Times* 10 Nov. 1960: 11). By foregrounding the indissoluble blood connection between the American president and the Irish people, the Taoiseach of the Republic made it clear that triumph belonged not only to Kennedy the individual but also to the whole country and its people: the previously obscure and poor country was now intimately tied to the most powerful country in the world, and the long-disparaged "Paddies" regained their dignity as well. No wonder Ireland celebrated Kennedy's inauguration as its own festival: Kennedy's great-grandfather's hometown, New Ross in County Wexford, "had experienced everything that was reminiscent of a major fair day or a Wexford team winning an All-Ireland final. There was dancing in the streets, fireworks, a gigantic bonfire" (*Irish Times* 21 January 1961: 9). Since "there won't be half as much fun in Washington, D. C." (*Irish Times* 14 January 1961: 8), the inauguration day seemed more important to Ireland than to America. To honor its hero who had brought home glory, Ireland presented many gifts to President Kennedy: a silver christening goblet from the people of Co. Wexford, a silver badge to mark the Patrician years, a coat of arms from the Irish government, etc. (*Irish Times* 16 February 1961: 9; 8 March 1961: 10; 14 March 1961: 6), gifts that tightened personal and national bonds between Ireland and America and preserved such a kinship beyond the election fad.

While Ireland claimed President Kennedy proudly, America showed the same zest for the Irish. Being Irish suddenly became a blessing rather than a curse: "Those with a speck of Irish blood in their veins, the inheritors of Irish names, have suddenly become something of a ruling class in this community. Those of Irish birth are the natural lords of every manor" and

for the first time there were "more people who wish they were Irish than those who actually are" (*Irish Times* 18 Nov. 1960: 8). Kennedy's success not only turned Irishness into an enviable quality, uplifted the social status of Irish Americans, and enabled them to embrace their cultural heritage but also made Ireland a new hit in tourism. Dunganstown, near New Ross, had "more American journalists and photographers ... since young Jack started to run for President than Birr ever dreamt of, or could hold" (*Irish Times* 14 January 1961: 8). Compared to the traditional tourist site Birr, a designated Irish Heritage Town, Dunganstown had become a more promising new heritage town and tourist attraction. The sudden surge of tourists even led Wexford County Council to propose "signpost[ing] all roads leading to Dunganstown ... [because many] tourists, particularly Americans, have been visiting the farm this summer" (*Irish Times* 22 June 1961: 8). Although the initial tourist interest centered on President Kennedy's ancestral home, those visits "would have a chain reaction and would encourage similar visits by different clans to Ireland" (*Irish Times* 6 December 1961: 11). More Irish Americans would come back to trace their family roots and traditions and to honor their ancestral past. As time went by, these sentimental, homecoming trips would gradually catch up with those trips made by journalists or curious Americans in general, and would provide more lasting momentum to Irish tourism, which already showed a remarkable expansion in 1961: "During the first six months of 1960, 25,000 passengers from the United States passed through Dublin and Shannon airports. In the corresponding periods of 1961 the figure grew to 30,000 — a very substantial increase" (*Irish Times* 6 December 1961: 11). With Ireland recovered as the ancestral home to the American President and millions of Irish Americans, it had become "one country that [Americans] don't want to leave off [their] next trip" (*Irish Times* 19 December 1960: 7).

The two distinct reactions to Kennedy's presidency — the Irish people's feelings of great elation and honor, and the Irish Americans' nostalgia and longing to go home and reclaim their cultural heritage — are dealt with in "The Visitation" and "Foundry House" respectively. In this way, the two stories, like the two sides of a coin, are correlated but not

identical. By addressing specific and different readers, Friel holds up a mirror to them for a close and ruthless self-examination, and uncovers the myth-making in both Ireland and America.

On the surface, “The Visitation” is a simple story about “The World’s Tailor” David A. Rosenbloom’s visit to a local shop and its tremendous effect on the small clerk George Barrow, but when we put the story in its historical and cultural context, it becomes a subtle satire of the Irish people’s glorification of “their” American President Kennedy. Having been published in *The Kilkenny Magazine*, the story was circulated around Kilkenny, a neighboring county to Wexford, Kennedy’s ancestral home. Such proximity makes one wonder whether Friel is targeting his intended readers, that is, people in Wexford, as they are mostly impacted by the event and thus in a strikingly similar situation to George Barrow, although in a sense, all the Irish people are George Barrow, for they feel no less proud to be connected to Kennedy than the Wexford folks. What’s more, the story was also published at a time when rumors about Kennedy’s visit to Ireland, including New Ross, Co. Wexford, were in the air. As a matter of fact, Kennedy himself set up such an expectation among the Irish people. In the message sent to New Ross on his inauguration day, he admitted that “[my wife and I] hope that we shall have a chance in the next months or years to visit New Ross and to see again the people of Wexford County” (*Irish Times* 21 January 1961: 9). He also expressed such a wish indirectly through his sister-in-law who told the Dublin reporters “[the President] would very much like to come to Ireland, as he is crazy about the Irish people” (*Irish Times* 11 August 1961: 1) and through Mr. Edward Grant Stockdale, the new American Ambassador in Ireland, who performed his first official duty by visiting New Ross on behalf of the President (*Irish Times* 19 May 1961: 6). Although President Kennedy did not visit Ireland until two years later, all the friendly gestures he made easily led Ireland to expect his visit in the near future. That is why the Irish press kept tracking his European visits to see whether he would stop by Ireland. Given the national anticipation for President Kennedy’s visit, Friel’s “The Visitation” can be read as a

Foreshadower of what is going to happen once the great visit takes place.

Viewed in hindsight, President Kennedy’s visit to Ireland strikingly resembles David A. Rosenbloom’s call upon a local tailor store and in this way Friel accurately predicts the sensation such visits cause in ordinary people. The similarities between Kennedy and Rosenbloom are apparent: if Rosenbloom is “The World’s Tailor,” “one of the biggest clothiers in Europe, a millionaire” who owns “one hundred and forty-seven shops all over the British Isles” (Friel 1961b: 9-10), Kennedy can be called “the world’s leader” as the President of America, the wealthiest and strongest country in the world. Apart from his prominent status, Rosenbloom is also associated with Kennedy through two unusual objects he carries: a white carnation and a silver snuff box. If Rosenbloom “[a]lways wears a white carnation” in his button hole, Kennedy is also said to “[a]lways carry] a blue bachelor’s button in lapel” (“J.F. K. Miscellaneous Information”). The symbolic meaning of the white carnation furthers their analogy. Though not used as commonly as the lily, the carnation, which is also known as gillyflower, is also a symbol of the Virgin: “Geldart, and other pre-eminent authorities, list the gilly flower as a symbol of the Virgin Mary” (Webber 1938: 179). As a flower of purity, virtue, and innocence, the white carnation has been adopted by the Catholic Church as one of its symbols for the Virgin Mary and the crucifixion of Christ since the thirteenth century (“The Carnation”).

Such an allusion to Catholicism is actually reinforced through the name Rosenbloom, a German name that means “rose”. Although rose is by no means a symbol exclusive to Catholicism as the Rose Cross or Rosicrucianism shows, which is more closely related to Protestantism, it is undeniable that rose is a widely-known, prevalent emblem in Roman Catholic tradition: rose is “a common symbol of Our Lady” who is called the Mystic Rose (Webber 1938: 179) and “is usually rendered as a design with five petals signifying Mary’s five joys” (“Rose”); the Catholic prayer beads are also named the Rosary meaning “rose garden” and the “[recitation] of the Rosary consists of fifteen decades of the Hail Mary” which is “indeed like a garden of devotions centering around the Virgin Mary”

(McBrien 1995: 81); if “Mary’s Rosary is symbolized by white, red, and yellow roses corresponding to the joyous, sorrowful, and glorious mysteries” (“Rose”), a red rose is often viewed as a symbol of martyrdom too, representing Christ’s precious blood. Given their religious connotations, Rosenbloom’s Catholicism is suggested through the flowery image of carnation and rose. Rose, as a matter of fact, is not only a religious flower but also a national flower. Although it often stands for England, it can also refer to Ireland, such as “the black rose” in James Clarence Mangan’s poetry or “the rose” in Yeats’s early poems. In this way, Rosenbloom is connected to Kennedy on both religious and national background, whose rise to presidency seems a sure sign of the “bloom” of the “rose.”

Like the flowers, the snuff box also hints at the kinship between Rosenbloom and Kennedy: they both smoke. Rosenbloom takes snuff while President Kennedy smoked 4-5 cigars a day (“J.F.K. Miscellaneous Information”). Snuff and cigars have a lot in common. They both give way to the more dominant, popular form of tobacco — cigarette — and remain in a marginal status in the twentieth century, yet unlike the mass-produced and consumed cigarette, they are both related to the elite and aristocracy at some point in history: snuff was a choice of the elite in the eighteenth century while a cigar is a symbol of prestige in modern times. In this sense, Rosenbloom’s taking snuff is less an obsolete habit incongruous with his modern tycoon image than a devious indicator of his close affinity with President Kennedy.

If Friel alludes to President Kennedy through Rosenbloom, he also uses George Barrow to showcase the Irish people’s frame of mind in their encounter of “greatness.” Although the visit only lasts a quarter of an hour, it is an event of a lifetime to George, for he cannot believe that “I have spoken to The World’s Tailor himself” (Friel 1961b: 12), nor can he calm down from the tremendous upheaval Rosenbloom’s visit causes to him: “his mouth ... was wide in a foolish grin ... [and] his eyes bright and excited” (Friel 1961b: 8). He repetitively goes over the scenes in his mind and tells his wife all in meticulous details to convince himself that such a famous person does come to his shabby store: “[in] person! In the flesh! Standing beside me as close as I am

to you now!” (9), whose casual comment on the polished floor becomes “a divine commandment — First I am the Lord, thy God, you have kept my house very clean” (12), which greatly flatters George, since “a man like that ... doesn’t throw compliments around, does he?” (10). The visit of Rosenbloom means so much to George because his own life has nothing to boast of. Working in a shop day by day and living with his wife since their only son Robin left home, George leads a drab life full of “trivial happenings” (11), whose only pastime is to visit his friends, another lonely couple Billy and Anne, every Tuesday, which, however, is equally insipid: “Billy with some new boring story about the grandchildren and Anne smiling her false teeth smile” (14). His friends’ petty, colorless life mirrors his own empty, dull existence. Rosenbloom’s visit changes all this: associated with the World Tailor, George is no longer nameless but becomes somebody, and his mundane life acquires new meaning. No wonder his voice is full of “triumph and pride” (8) and he cannot wait to tell Billy about his accomplishment: “he’ll be as jealous as hell” (14). By asking his wife to ignore the dirty dishes: “[I]et them wait — in celebration of David A.’s visit” (12), George is actually casting off his dishwater life and declaring the start of his new life. His dependence on Rosenbloom for a new identity is symbolically represented by his “holding on to the banister to assist himself” (14): only through external connection can George establish himself. Rosenbloom is thus the banister George has to hold on in order to sustain a scanty sense of self worth.

In pretty much the same way, the Irish people also felt honored and elevated through their connection to President Kennedy. If Rosenbloom’s visit to nameless George acknowledges his lifelong hard work and injects a much needed portion of self-esteem in him, President Kennedy’s visit, as “the first visit of the Head of an important State to Ireland” (*Irish Times* 17 April 1963: 9), also moved Ireland to the front of the world stage from its background and brought a strong sense of pride to the Irish people: “enthusiastic and wildly excited at seeing the great grandson of an Irish immigrant who is now the most powerful man in the western world,” the Irish people rightly claimed that “[t]his was a great day for New Ross, for Wexford and for Ireland

... All Irishmen had a thrill of pride in their nationality and were proud of the fact that an Irishman had been chosen to lead the American people" (*Irish Times* 28 June 1963: 7; 29 June 1963: 11). They were proud not only because "[t]he personal triumph of President Kennedy represented a major breakthrough by the Irish in the new world" (*Irish Times* 3 May 1963: 9), but more importantly, because the great man came back and paid tribute to his unrecognized country and people (*Irish Times* 26 June 1963: 7), which, consequently, boosted a new sense of self among the Irish people, just as what Rosenbloom does to George. No wonder President Kennedy's visit was so warmly welcomed and celebrated. The Irish people treasured every moment of President Kennedy's short visit just as George cherishes every word and action Rosenbloom makes during his short stay. In Dublin, thousands of people thronged the streets to see him; at New Ross, the town's population doubled to cheer the President, and the crowds even broke through the barriers to shake hands with him. It is certain that the visit "will be long remembered in Ireland ... [for it] was a reception which has had no equal in the 40 years of our independence" (*Irish Times* 27 June 1963: 1; 28 June 1963: 7; 29 June 1963: 11). The great repercussion of President Kennedy's visit to Ireland thus echoes the upheaval Rosenbloom's visit causes to George: it seems that neither Ireland nor George could remain the same after the great visit.

However, it is exactly the change these visits are supposed to bring that Friel calls into question: is it a form of myth-making to derive one's identity from association? To begin with, the association itself is tenuous at best. In spite of George's wishful thinking, Rosenbloom comes only for business. That is why he stays with his accountants and checks the books all the time. There is no personal connection at all between George and Rosenbloom, for not only does the former not recognize the latter when he comes in but the latter also knows nothing about the impending retirement of the former. As George admits, "I'm only a small cog in his big wheel" (Friel 1961b: 13). Acknowledgement is nonexistent. George's negligible status is not changed but confirmed by the visit, for he is not even spoken to: the only nice comment Rosenbloom makes about

the place is actually addressed to his accountants, not George. It is clear that no matter how George embellishes Rosenbloom's less-than-a-quarter visit, it does not bring George anywhere closer to greatness, and his newly-found self value is indeed based on an illusion. Friel's criticism of such an illusion is mostly conveyed through George's wife Mary. As a realistic person, Mary knows that Rosenbloom's visit does not change their life — dishes are still washed and friends visited — and George "will get no thanks for killing [himself]" (13). Her clear sight of the "holes" in the great visit makes her impatient for George's fantasy. Therefore, while George is puzzled at his wife's snapping at him sharply, we as readers know that George's myth-making is "what's [really] biting [her]" (13).

While exposing the association as no better than fantasy, Friel goes a step further to uncover the true color of Rosenbloom's greatness. As the representation of greatness, Rosenbloom is oddly related to death. Dressed all in black: "Black top coat with an astrakhan collar. Black suit. Black shoes" with a traditional funeral flower: "a white carnation in his button hole" (Friel 1961b: 10), he looks like going to a funeral; what's more, the mention of his name also evokes an image of shroud immediately, for George's wife looks "as white as a sheet" "as if [she] had heard that ... someone was dead" (9). This ominous image clearly indicates that such greatness is more destructive than benign: "his big wheel" is sure to crash anything on its way to "build up such an empire" (13). Although Friel does not state the setting of the story explicitly, he strongly suggests that it is in England, for the characters have typical English names such as George, Mary, Billy, etc., speak standard English, have a nuclear family, commute in bus and train, and live in suburban, two-story semi-detached houses. The mention of the British Isles, London, and Belfast further anchors the story in England. Given its English setting, the story hints at British imperialism through "The World's Tailor" Rosenbloom. It is thus all the more lamentable to see George, a servant of the empire machine, to have blind admiration for such greatness.

In many ways America in the 1960s was not unlike the old English Empire. Replacing Britain and becoming the new great power after

World War II, America engaged in the Cold War against the Soviet Union in its struggle for world dominance. The arms race and the formation of military alliances on both sides casted the world in a shadow of war. From 1953 to 1962 military tension soared on a world scale and culminated in the Cuban Missile crisis which threatened to develop into a nuclear war. In such a historical context, President Kennedy's visit to Ireland and the glorious halos around him deserve a second look. Unlike George's wishful association with Rosenbloom, Kennedy's connection to Ireland and the Irish people is undeniable but nevertheless exaggerated. In spite of his repeated wishes to visit Ireland, Kennedy made it clear that "[Ireland] could not be a special trip, as it would have to coincide with visits to other countries" and it was after the U. S. Ambassador Mr. Matthew Mcloskey's continuous pressing "for some considerable time" that he finally made the trip (*Irish Times* 18 January 1963: 9). Apparently and understandably, Ireland was by no means the priority on the American President's agenda, and, upon closer examination, the purpose of his visit was far more than a simple, nostalgic homecoming. Although "it is generally agreed that the visit had no serious intent" Kennedy did express his wish to ally Ireland in his campaign against Communism:

There was clear evidence that President Kennedy would like to see this country closer to the U. S. in some ... economic, or political form, but the speech contained no hint ... about membership of NATO. In any case, a visit that was so friendly and that obviously wished peace and not war to his Irish neighbours, could not have been related to NATO (*Irish Times* 2 July 1963: 4).

Like Rosenbloom, President Kennedy was also cloaked in black: the shadow of war, death, and power struggle was never far away. By befriending Ireland, a small and colonized nation, Kennedy also sent a message to the world, and expected that the role Ireland played "for world peace ... was an example to, and could be followed by, other small nations" (*Irish Times* 2 July 1963: 4). In this way, Kennedy actually used Ireland to help America, an imperialistic superpower, to establish a more positive image as a fighter for liberty and a friend of the colonized as well a

to gain more international support in propaganda and in reality. The political intent behind his visit may not cancel their mutual good wills and kinship, but it does complicate the direction such an association leads Ireland to: to glory, prosperity, or to war, destruction? Should Ireland give up its neutrality in the cold war and side with America?

If it is in doubt how much Ireland as a nation would benefit from its affiliation with America, it is also far from clear how much the Irish people as individuals could gain from their tie with Kennedy. Even if they identified with him immediately as their hope of success and source of inspiration, they could not but notice the unbridgeable gap between "this Harvard graduate, connected through marriage with the British Premier" and average Irish boys. Therefore, "it has to be conceded that the President is hardly representative" (*Irish Times* 3 May 1963: 9), and his success could not be duplicated in Ireland: it is no less a fantasy to assume that the life and status of a whole lot of Irish Catholics will be improved dramatically just because of him. In this way, Friel's "The Visitation" serves as a timely and sensible caution against the over-enthusiasm for President Kennedy in Ireland.

"The Visitation" predicts Irish responses to Kennedy's visit, yet it is packaged as an English story so that Friel's embedded satire can be conveyed to the unsuspecting Irish readers without causing much offense. Likewise, "Foundry House" also conceals itself as an Irish story to its American readers although it is really about America's new attitude towards the Irish Catholic tradition after the Presidential election. In "Foundry House" Irishman Joe moves back into the gate lodge of the Hogans in whose foundry his father had been an employee for over fifty years, only to witness the deterioration of the Catholic big house by partaking in their family reunion. If in "The Visitation" an English tycoon parallels an American president in terms of their imperialistic greatness, in "Foundry House," the Irishman's sentimental homecoming equally mirrors the nostalgia for Ireland of Irish Americans who, like Joe in the story, are intent on going back to their homeland and worshipping their ancestors and cultural traditions.

In many ways, Friel tailors "Foundry House"

to his American readers. As Northern Ireland is industrialized just like America, locating the story there enables American readers to identify with the Irish characters who are undergoing the changes industrialization brings to the countryside, evidenced by the appearance of launderette, tape-recording machine, radio, television, housing estate, brassiere factory, etc. (Friel 1961a: 50). To further the connection, Friel even slips in an American perspective among his Irish characters. Moving into the gate lodge, Joe's wife Rita and the children complain that "it was a changeover to a new life. There were many improvements to be made — there was no indoor toilet and no running water, the house was lit by gas only" (50), which implies that indoor toilet, running water, and electricity are already the norm in the country houses of Northern Ireland by 1961. However, the fact is, even in Britain, not so many city houses had an indoor toilet nor did many country houses have running water or electricity in the early 1960s. The living condition in Northern Ireland was even worse: most Irish people were still living in houses without those facilities in the late 1960s, especially the Catholics, for the housing priority was always given to the Protestants at that time. Instead of blaming Friel for historical inaccuracy, we may understand this lapse as natural: Friel, with his American readers in mind, is not describing Irish life but American life instead, for only American readers, whose indoor plumbing and electricity had become a fact of life by the 1930s, will take running water, indoor toilet, and electricity for granted and are surprised at the substandard living condition in the gate lodge in 1961. Therefore, the Irish characters are actually the mouthpiece of the Americans and represent their point of view.

Seen in this light, Joe's nostalgic homecoming and renewed homage to the Catholic tradition also reflect the Americans' changed attitude towards Ireland after Kennedy's election. Although Irish immigrants had been discriminated against in America socially and politically since the nineteenth century, "by the turn-of-the century, Irish valor in the American civil war, the rise of an Irish American middle class, and the Catholic ethos of respectability caused the demise of simian imagery and other sentiments that portrayed Ireland and the Irish

in a pejorative light" (Casey 1998: 220). With the change, however, came a different stereotype, which "[defined] Ireland and the Irish for generations in post-war America" (Casey 1998: 371): "Ireland was transformed from a troubled country of successive famines and political unrest into an idealized pastoral land" while the Irish people "became a witty, genial and sentimental people, who never lost affection for their ill-abused native land, and yet somehow remained loyal and patriotic American citizens" (Casey 1998: 221). As rapid social transformation always breeds nostalgia for what is lost, modern industrial America was prone to idealizing old country life, which was readily found in rural Ireland. While America projected its sentiments onto Ireland, Ireland itself also promoted such a pastoral image due to de Valera's policy to establish a self-sufficient Catholic, Gaelic, and rural-based society: the myth was thus perpetuated in both ways. Small wonder that American tourist brochures described Ireland as a country not ruined by men, full of natural beauty and idyllic life style: "what a blessed relief, to ride in, to walk around a country, to see hillsides, fields, streams, and lakes as God made them ... [and] the people are leisurely-going; never seem to be in a hurry" (*Irish Times* 19 December 1960: 7).

As a matter of fact, Kennedy himself also reinforced the stereotype: with his proud declaration of his Irish heritage and Catholic belief, he became the prototype of the sentimental Irish American, and his several visits to Ireland before he became American President — "he made his first trip in 1938 with his father ... and returned again in 1947 and 1955" (*Irish Times* 22 April 1963: 1) — also testified to the homecoming nature of the Irish Americans. His openly-expressed wishes to revisit Ireland in his presidency prompted more Irish Americans to go back to Ireland even if the trend of root-seeking had started years ago: "Family history — genealogies, coats of arms, and the county origins of surnames — began to interest Irish Americans from the turn of the century. Various organizations, from the American Legion and the Knights of Columbus to the American Institute of Educational Travel, encouraged Irish immigrants and their children to pay a visit to Ireland" (Casey 1998: 256). As a result,

the tourist traffic was no longer dominated by the old immigrants who turned rich but characterized by many young Irish Americans who, following Kennedy, travelled back to keep in touch with their old country and to acknowledge their cultural heritage.

As an important part of the Irish cultural heritage, Catholicism experienced similar shifts in America. Viewed as “a religion that demanded subordination and deference” and thus “antithetical to American individuality and independence” Catholicism was “the Other to mainstream Anglo-Protestant American community” and represented “cultural inferiority and emasculation” (Smith 2010: 95). However, World War II forced America to change its stand in this matter. Since the battle against fascism required a unified front, America needed as many allies as possible and it simply could not afford to alienate its Irish Catholic immigrants, particularly given Ireland’s neutrality and sympathy to Germany at that time. Such an alliance was further strengthened during the Cold War as both America and the Catholic Church condemned communism publically. As a result of the coming of “a new era of Catholic and American unity” with “a shared moral purpose ... to bring justice and democracy to all the people of the world” (Smith 2010: 106), disparagement gave way to affirmation: “Catholic difference in the postwar years became a means of suggesting adventure, youthful vigor, and spiritual renewal. Romanticism replaced alien ethnicity and Old World Catholic power” (Smith 2010: 120-21). Instead of rejecting Catholicism as outlandish and corrupted, Americans romanticized it to be a new, vitalizing spiritual complement to their increasingly secularized society.

Such transition gave rise to the popularity of Catholicism: apart from the extensive coverage of Roman Catholicism in America’s most influential photojournalist magazine, *Life*, which even caused a reader’s complaint to the editor: “When *Life* discusses religion why are the Catholics always given preference over any other church?” (Smith 2010: 122), Bishop Fulton J. Sheen’s national radio programming *Catholic Hour* and prime-time television show *Life Is Worth Living* also fanned so much fascination with Catholicism among Americans

that “*Time* described him as ‘probably America’s best-known priest with an audience of millions ... and a fan mail of 3,000 to 6,000 letters a Sunday’” (Smith 2010: 135). As a major celebrity, Sheen represented “an image of Catholic success both within and outside the Church” ... “[b]etween 1953 and 1958, Sheen consistently made the top-ten lists of the most admired men in America according to the Gallup Poll” which further demonstrated “a new era of acceptance for Catholics in the United States” (Smith 2010: 136-37). Kennedy’s ascendance to presidency thus not only resulted from but also built up such an acceptance. Interestingly enough, both Sheen and Kennedy were young, vigorous, and charming, and they both took advantage of the advanced technology to promote their different courses: Sheen successfully popularized Catholicism through new media such as a national radio network and TV shows while Kennedy made good use of the first televised U. S. Presidential debates and defeated his formidable rival Nixon. Those prominent Irish-American Catholics conveyed a clear message to the Americans: Catholicism was no longer related to the old bureaucracy, corruption, or backwardness; rather, it was actively engaged with modern society and represented a youthful, invigorating force.

By depicting both homecoming instinct and Catholic sentiment in “Foundry House”, Friel addresses his American readers’ romantic attitude towards Ireland. From the start, Friel has made it clear that Joe’s moving into the gate lodge is “a homecoming” (Friel 1961a: 50). As his parents’ house and his old home, the gate lodge is related to Joe only through childhood memory and anecdotes. Therefore, it is for a sentimental reason that Joe makes such a move, just like the Irish Americans travel back to Ireland. However, the gate lodge, far from being the pastoral, soothing haven to this radio-and-television mechanic, is almost uninhabitable, with no running water and the windows too small to let in enough light. Things are not better in the Foundry House: primarily gas lit, it has only one power plug, the drawing room has been deserted, and the carpet is faded and “nibbled away” at the corner (53). Such an inside dilapidation goes hand in hand with an outside isolation: enclosed

by “shrubs and wild rhododendron and decaying trees, ... [t]he residence was not visible from the road or from any part of the town” (50). While American tourist pamphlets boasted of an unparalleled natural beauty and harmony in Ireland, Foundry House, which in many ways could be viewed as a microcosm of Ireland, is yet shown to be throttled by the wild bushes, decaying trees, and smothering leaves (54). The sharp contrast between the idyllic, restorative homeland and the backward, broken-down Foundry House gives American readers a reality check on their romanticizing of Ireland.

Like most Irish Americans, Joe goes back to reconnect with his cultural traditions, which are represented by the Hogans in Foundry House, “one of the best Catholic families in the North of Ireland” (50). However, like the old home Joe attaches himself to, the Catholic family he admires and respects does not fare well in Friel’s story. Mr. Bernard, the large, stern-faced master becomes a trembling invalid, no better than a living dead; Mrs. Hogan still lives in the past, for she knows nothing about modern devices such as radio or power plug and only remembers Joe as a little boy. While the older generation of this great Catholic family has been reduced to relics from the past and completely out of tune with the modern times, the younger generation holds out no great hope either. Both their children enter the religious order and their celibacy “spell[s] the end of the family” (O’Connor 1999: 16). Father Declan is “a nervous, ill-at-ease caricature of a Jesuit” (Miner 1977: 96), who cracks his fingers constantly, makes fluttering and birdlike gestures, and repeats himself unnecessarily in rapid gibberish (Friel 1961a: 52). His “epicene quality” (Cronin 1992: 9) shows the Catholic Church as castrating, which produces not only effeminate priest but also sterile nuns. Sister Claire’s permanent self-exile in Africa dissociates her from the reality of her family and traps her in an outdated memory. No wonder she speaks with rigidity on the tape: “[t]his sounded more like reading than speaking ... like a teacher reading a story to a class of infants, making her voice go up and down in pretended interest” (54). Refusing to acknowledge changes and clinging to a timeless past, Claire cannot have a lively or genuine voice but a reproduction, an

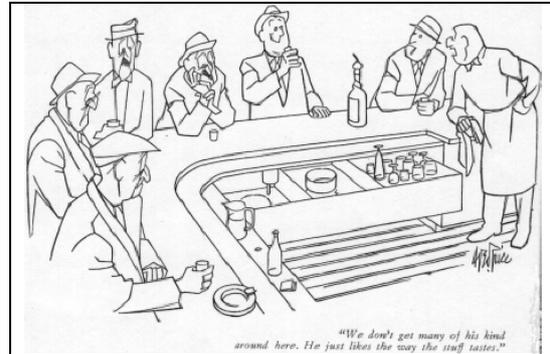
affectation, which, like her recorded violin tune “Mother’s Lullaby” infantilizes her audience and lulls them to dreamy illusions to avoid the growing pains of becoming fully aware adults. In this sense, her tape is not modern but mechanical, grinding out a time that is long gone. Given the senile and useless Hogans and their eccentric, fossilized children, the admired Catholic family is called into question. Instead of the courtesy, benevolence, and hospitality that normally characterized the Catholic big house, the Hogans treat Joe shabbily: they offer him neither food nor drink, shut him up when he tries to help, and completely forget him after his service is done — they don’t even bother to come downstairs to turn off the radio or say goodbye to him before he leaves — which discredits not only the Hogans as the great Catholic family but whichever tradition they may represent. It is clear that the Catholic big house in Friel’s story reverses how the Catholics are viewed in America: opposite to the young, energetic, and modern image of new Catholics, Friel presents an old, disabled, and obsolete world of the so-called good Catholic family in Northern Ireland. By doing so, Friel provides an antidote to the Irish American’s tendency to glorify and idolize their Catholic heritage.

With his sentimental homecoming and habitual homage to the Catholic big house, Joe becomes an easy target of satire in the story. His reluctance to update the gate lodge, his deep-rooted yet senseless fear and awe towards the Hogans, and his obstinate insistence on self-deception in face of the unflattering reality invite more ridicule than pity, especially in contrast with his sensible, down-to-earth wife Rita, who, like George’s wife Mary in “The Visitation”, is the voice of reason to their illusion-indulgent husbands. As the only person who can laugh at Mrs. Hogan’s archaic life and Joe’s dumbfounded, tongue-tied state in face of the Hogans, Rita, like her nine robust children, shows a healthy vitality un-arrested by the debilitating big house myth, while her husband remains enslaved and lifeless. Like many Irish Americans who have no direct experience or contact with Ireland except for family stories, “Joe had never been inside Foundry House, had never spoken to Mr. Bernard, and had not seen Declan since his ordination” (Friel 1961a: 52): his knowledge of

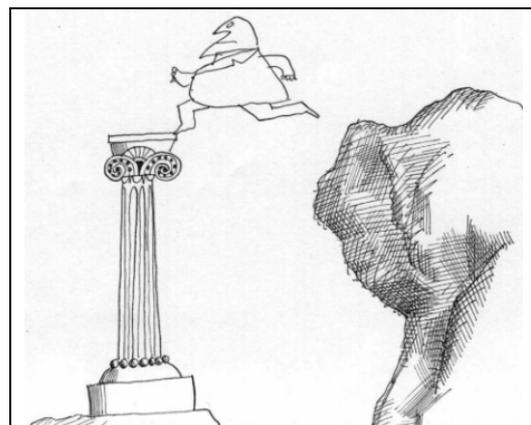
the Hogans mostly comes from his childhood memory and hearsay. This lack in “real, first-hand experience of the family” (Kimmer 1997: 200) magnifies the Hogans so much in his imagination that Joe is no longer able to adjust his “twenty-year-old” fixed mental picture even in face of their actual deterioration and barrenness (Friel 1961a: 53). In this sense, Joe’s inability to “escape the mystique” (Kimmer 1997: 200) is less a result of “social deprivation” (Foster 1974: 64) or a reaction to the “mediocrity” of his life (Dantanus 1985: 66) than a product of the haunting past that “impregnates” the present (Maxwell 1973: 38), which speaks volumes of the Irish Americans’ obsession with their past. If George in “The Visitation” preserves myth with verbosity, Joe seals his sentimental fantasy with reticence to prevent his wife from picking holes in it. Towards the end of the story Joe even degrades into a mimic of a mindless, mechanical tape-recorder, who keeps repeating a few empty words like “very nice”, “fine”, “lovely”, “beautiful”, etcetera, to affirm the Hogans are “[t]he same as ever ... A great family. A grand family” (Friel 1961a: 57). To uphold a falsehood goes against life essentially, for Joe not only refuses to accept the reality himself but also passes down the myth to the next generation by crooning such a lullaby into his baby’s ear. No wonder Friel reduces him from a human to a machine. In this way, Friel conveys his criticism of Joe’s chosen blindness and myth-making, which serves as a timely warning to the Irish Americans who are in the same process of reproducing a make-believe grandeur of their mother country and Catholic traditions following Kennedy’s victory.

If one looks beyond the text itself, one will find that the irony embedded in “Foundry House” is actually made quite clear by the cartoons alongside the story. When “Foundry House” was originally published in the *New Yorker* in 1961, six cartoons came with it. Although they range widely in subject and seem unrelated to the story at first glance, they have a similar theme of bringing out the gap with reality and satirizing sentimental feelings. One cartoon actually stands out as a perfect illustration for Friel’s story: in a bar, a complacent American-like young man is enjoying his drink, surrounded by a group of gloomy, sunken, Irish-looking old men and a

surprised bartender, and the line under the cartoon says: “We don’t get many of his kind around here. He just likes the way the stuff tastes.” Juxtaposed with Friel’s story, the young man could well be Joe, or any returning Irish American, who adores whatever is in Ireland in spite of its drab, depressing reality.



In this way, the cartoon clearly ridicules groundless romanticism. As half of the cartoons deal with travelling (visiting a historic site, leaving home, or boarding a plane), they remind us of Joe’s homecoming trip in the story. The first one depicts a man jumping from a mountain to an elegant Roman pillar: the image of the relic from a glorified, remote past parallels the dilapidated, great Catholic family in the story, while the man’s eager, headstrong jump, with little to support his landing, will only end in crash or tumble, which succinctly brings out the foolishness and danger of blind admiration.



The irony in other two travelling cartoons is subtler: while an angry wife’s home-leaving inverts the homecoming motif in the story, a confusing boarding announcement that asks the travelers to board the same plane for different

destinations humorously undermines the seriousness of these trips by lumping them together indiscriminately. By making fun of the so-called home and travelling, these cartoons seem to question the meaning of Joe's or any Irish American's "homeward" journey.



The remaining two cartoons are no less revealing. If the bitter disillusion is apparently written on the face of the young man who watches the college football team of his choice getting shellacked in one cartoon, just as Joe finds it hard to adjust his mental image of the grand Catholic family to its decayed present, a reciprocal yet different kind of disappointment is implied in the other cartoon: here the little boy is upset because the violin string is not likely to break as he hopes. If Claire lulls the Hogans and Joe into an everlasting past with her "Mother's Lullaby" the concert performer also mesmerizes his audience in the cartoon: the boy's secret hope for a string's breaking is thus not common naughtiness but sensible rejection of the lethargic myth.



Aristocrats, a play depicting the downfall of the Catholic aristocracy through the O'Donnells, whose family reunion for Claire's wedding turns out to be a gathering for Father's death, is closely related to the two short stories. Apart from dealing with the same "theme of disillusionment" (Miner 1977: 920) and sentiments towards greatness — be it a personage, family, or tradition — in spite of its declined condition, the play also "repeats much of the story's situation [of "Foundry House"]" (Bonaccorso 1991: 72) and borrows its characters from their fictional counterparts. Indeed, as both "Foundry House" and *Aristocrats* "[chronicle] a generational shift and the demise of a family home" (Kimmer 1997: 201) in the Big House tradition, the former is often regarded as the obvious "forerunner" of the latter (O'Connor 1999: 16): the family picture of the O'Donnells is "largely drawn from [it]" (Corbett 2008: 97) and the key scene about Father's collapse when listening to his daughter's tape reappears on the stage. The short story's "central situation" is thus used "as the basis of [the] play" (Andrews 1995: 39). The same can be said of the characters. While a clear parallel exists between Father Declan and Casimir given their peculiar mannerism and between Sister Claire and Anna with their tape, Joe seems to survive in both Eamon and Willie, for, like Joe's father, Eamon's grandmother works all her life as a servant in the big house and Willie's uncle keeps the gate-lodge. In a broader sense, Friel's play also continues the same characterization of men and women we see in his short stories: "Friel exposes the separate worlds of men and women. His men are

dreamers” while his women are realists with “no-nonsense attitude” (O’Connor 1999: 16), which can be seen in George’s wife Mary, Joe’s wife Rita, and the hard-headed realist Judith to whom “the old order is simply not worth preserving” (Andrews 1995:155).

Although a clear lineage runs through “The Visitation,” “Foundry House,” and *Aristocrats*, Friel’s play is not a mere development of his short stories; rather, they differ significantly. If “The Visitation” and “Foundry House” respectively mirror the Irish and American responses to Kennedy’s presidential election, *Aristocrats*, a play produced more than ten years later, is more of a self-reflection rather than a reaction to some outside event although it is no less a product of its time, place, and audience. First staged in the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, in 1979, the play is set in the mid-1970s, in the village of Ballybeg, County Donegal, Ireland. Just like Britain in “The Visitation” and Northern Ireland in “Foundry House,” Ireland is not a randomly chosen setting in *Aristocrats*. In the 1970s Ireland witnessed many changes: in 1973, Ireland joined the European Economic Community (EEC), which marked its gradual transformation from a rural, agricultural country to an urbanized, industrial one, for “[b]usiness now had free access to a much larger market, and exports could be diversified away from dependence on the U.K. Moreover, through the EEC’s Common Agricultural Policy, agriculture gained from access to wider markets at good prices” (Dorgan 2006). All these benefits helped to keep the momentum of the economic development since the 1960s and bring out a boom: “The 1970s reversed past trends. For the first time since independence, the population increased, rising by 15 percent for the decade. National income increased at a sustained annual rate of about 4 percent. Unlike previous decades, employment increased by about 1 percent per year” (Dorgan 2006). Emigration and unemployment were greatly reduced and the Irish people enjoyed a more comfortable and prosperous life with a higher living standard. More importantly, joining EEC together with Britain and Denmark also boosted Ireland’s confidence and sense of self worth: “Now it could deal with large and successful states as a partner, no longer burdened by its colonial history”

(Dorgan 2006).

This drastic social change and gradually built-up sense of self are well reflected in *Aristocrats*, and also account for the striking differences with the precedent texts. If “The Visitation” and “Foundry House” define self by either associating with others or lingering on a bygone past, *Aristocrats* clearly departs from those tendencies: it shows that identity is actually derived from relying on oneself and severing oneself from the past. Therefore, unlike the two stories which end with a sad continuation of illusion that leads the characters nowhere, *Aristocrats* ends in the certainty of change, a difficult yet necessary change that brings hope and a new start. If Friel saw the need to clear off the old sites, that is, to examine “[t]he collapse of institutions and codes, [and] the aridity of myths and slogans” in the Republic to make room for changes as Sean Lemass and Jack Lynch made efforts to replace de Valera’s Catholic, Gaelic, rural country with an industrial, modern one, in Northern Ireland, the Troubles in the 1970s and the bloody, slow breakdown afterwards also stimulated Friel to break away from “that ready-made appeal, that fixed audience, that commercial success” he enjoyed before the mid-1970s and to write about his immediate past, to examine “a whole history of failure” of “a doomed community or group,” especially “the disintegration of traditional authority” (Deane 1996). Therefore, *Aristocrats*, as a product of both a socioeconomically reformed Republic and a deteriorating Northern Ireland, is not a mere dramatization of Friel’s old stories but a fresh representation of the conscious self-examination of the bankrupted traditions by modern Irish people. That is why the play was raved in Dublin as “a powerful and exciting play ... a revealing metaphor for the way of we see ourselves” (Muldoon 1979) with “sth. more penetrating about the state of affairs here and now” (Deane 1978), yet it was accepted poorly in America: “one suspects that *Aristocrats* had greater impact on audiences of his countrymen, who brought a sense of the play’s social context into the theatre with them. Here, this chronicle of the passing of the old order seems very distant” (Feldberg 1989: 17).

Since its successful debut in Dublin in 1979, *Aristocrats* has been staged and restaged in Britain, America, and Ireland. Although

audience responses and critical reviews vary a lot, they unanimously complain about the American scholar Tom. Not only Irish critics find it hard to justify Tom's presence in Ballybeg Hall — Seamus Deane (1978) even suggested that Friel should change Tom to an Irish historian or a guy from the National Museum — but English and American critics also chime in with similar opinions: the review of the 1988 English production held that “only two things seem out of place — a huge baby alarm ... and a tall, lanky Californian” (Cairney 1988: 24), while in the American production Tom was regarded as an “intrusive role ... not really needed” (Seligsohn 1989: 11). Given the fact that Tom is an unrelated outsider awkwardly placed in an Irish Catholic big house, all these questionings seem valid, but why must Friel include this American in every production of his play and what could be his crucial role in an Irish saga? Tom's significance comes to surface once we study the play side by side with the two stories in light of the relationship between America and Ireland. By portraying Kennedy's influence on how the Irish people (immigrants or not) view themselves, their traditions, and their country, “The Visitation” and “Foundry House” show that Irish identity is heavily relying on an outside association and very much shaped by its relationship with America. In *Aristocrats*, however, the Irish-American relationship takes a different turn: it becomes a reversed dependence. Unlike the great visitor Rosenbloom to George in “The Visitation,” Tom, the visiting American professor, no longer exerts any intimidating power or influence on the O'Donnells; rather, he is at the mercy of them for family records, papers, diaries, lore, and reminiscences to carry out his research on the Roman Catholic aristocracy. Nor is Tom the source the O'Donnells draw on to establish their identity, for the outward quest for proof and evidence of who they are has turned inward: no matter whether it is through Judith's self-reliance, Casimir's self-fabrication, or Eamon's self-criticism, the O'Donnells cope with their changed situation in various ways and try to find their new identity. Tom's much criticized irrelevance to the O'Donnells is exactly what the play wants to present: the Irish characters have ceased to seek external association, especially America's

influence, to establish themselves, which demonstrates the leap Aristocrats makes from “The Visitation.”

The O'Donnells not only get rid of their predecessor's needy dependence but also put an end to an era that their predecessors persistently pay tribute to. As heirs to the Catholic big house, they witness its collapse and the inevitable closure of their times. Instead of indulging in wishful illusions or self-deception to prolong the myth of an everlasting greatness like George in “The Visitation” or Joe in “Foundry House” do, they choose to let go their past and look into the future: by burying their authoritative father, the ultimate symbol of Catholic aristocracy, abandoning Ballybeg Hall, and playing no more nostalgic Chopin, they make clear gestures of severing themselves from the old times and heading for a new start. Although “[to] start afresh is the play's greatest challenges, and the promise, however tentative” (O'Brien 1990: 95), “[the] possibility of renewal and continuance — even heroism — is affirmed” (Andrews 1995:155), for the characters are not only able to articulate their problems (father's tyranny, Judith's love child, Alice and Eamon's unhappy marriage, etc.) but also ready to deal with them, not afraid of taking risks or exploring the unknown. Their spontaneous, collective singing of “Sweet Alice”, the “vulgar rubbish” condemned by the Father (Friel 1996: 308), declares their unified desertion of the old order and testifies to the youthful, fresh life in them, which contrasts sharply with Tom's sterile note-taking and myth-making. With his chosen blindness to the obvious inconsistency in Casimir's story-telling, Tom resembles Joe from “Foundry House”, yet the difference is that he has receded from the foreground to the backdrop and become a foil to the O'Donnells in *Aristocrats*: if the American still romanticizes and mythologizes the Catholic tradition, the Irish have moved forward, which clearly sets *Aristocrats* apart from “Foundry House”. Therefore, the presence of Tom in *Aristocrats* is not unwarranted or extraneous; rather, it is an extension of the Irish-American concern from the previous stories, and it shows how *Aristocrats* connects to as well as departs from its predecessors.

Friel's plays have overshadowed his short

stories for years and their relationship is more often than not simplified or dismissed. It is time now to reorient them not only in their distinctive historical and audience contexts but also in a more comprehensive and nuanced correlation that uncovers their contradictions,

discrepancies, or gaps underneath their surface similarities. Only in this way can we understand Friel's works as cultural and historical products and view his growth as a writer accordingly.

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Chu He got her Ph.D. from University of Miami in 2009, with the dissertation "Postcolonial Performances in Brian Friel's Plays". She is currently teaching in the Department of English at Indiana University South Bend as an Assistant Professor, and her main interests are Irish studies, drama, and post-colonialism. She has published the article "The Dilemma of Colonial Hybridity in Brian Friel's *Translations*" in *Etudes Irlandaises (French Journal of Irish Studies)* in 2010.