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# “THOSE FIVE GLENTIES WOMEN”: ECHOES OF LORCA IN *DANCING AT LUGHNASA*

By Inés Praga-Terente

Universidad de Burgos

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**Abstract:** This essay will attempt to show the numerous points that Lorca’s *La casa de Bernarda Alba* and Friel’s *Dancing at Lughnasa* have in common. Both plays create an intense rural atmosphere in their respective countries –Ireland and Spain– with echoes of the tragic days of 1936; and both introduce us to the rarefied community of five single women dominated by sexual repression and enclosed in the narrow confines of domestic space. The role of women at home was strongly emphasized by the papal encyclicals *Castii Connubii* (1930) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), highly influential in both countries. Interrogations and redefinitions of the female domestic space have been a central issue in gender studies, and so from this perspective we approach both plays as evidence of feminine oppression and its representation in the house, which stands for the five women’s honour. The strict law of space will prove an obstacle for their sexuality, marriage and motherhood and its transgression will be severely punished. The sexual morality imposed by the Catholic Church will make the five women lifelong prisoners and will preside over the claustrophobic society they belong to.

**Key Words.** Women, rural atmosphere, Catholic Church, morality, sexual repression, domestic space, transgression.

When an author achieves the excellence of Brian Friel it is by no means strange that we seek connections beyond the boundaries of his work. Various studies, for example, link him to Anton Chekhov, but hardly any suggestions, and much less proof, exist of any type of parallelism between him and Lorca. Elmer Andrews is perhaps the only voice that affirms that

Over Lorca’s drama, as over Friel’s, there broods a similar sense of tragic fate, the question of how far the characters are victims of dark, irrational forces, how far of a more prosaic and realistic determinism in the form of local custom and convention. (1995: 220)<sup>1</sup>

However, the testimony that arouses genuine interest is that of Friel himself who, in one of his rare interviews, highlights his great

admiration for George Fitzmaurice, a little known Irish playwright, “very close to Lorca”, and the undeniable influence of Fitzmaurice in his work. (Murray 1999: 134) It would truly be an immense task to dissect the components of the tragic determinism which defines the work of both playwrights; consequently our assignment in these pages will be much more limited, concentrating on two dramas: *Dancing at Lughnasa*, first performed in The Abbey Theatre in Dublin in 1990 (hereafter referred to as DL), and *La Casa de Bernarda Alba* (hereafter CBA), which Lorca finished just two months before his death in 1936.<sup>2</sup>

Even a superficial reading of these plays exposes numerous points in common, in spite of the fact that they are separated by 54 years and a linguistic and cultural barrier: they both create an intense rural atmosphere in two countries –Ireland and Spain– with echoes of

the tragic days of 1936; they both introduce us to the rarefied community of five single women dominated by sexual repression and enclosed in the narrow confines of domestic life. They are, on the other hand, both inspired by some autobiographical episodes of their respective authors, a fact which is stated in the moving dedication in *Dancing at Lughnasa* “to those five brave Glenties women”, in reality Friel’s mother’s seven sisters who played a very important role in the playwright’s life. Thomas Kilroy remembers how once, while walking in London with Friel, he was told about the journey Friel had made to London when he was a boy to look for his aunts, who had left Donegal years before in search of a better destiny; and how it was Kilroy himself who encouraged Friel to write about it: “I made the obvious, if cold, remark that he would simply have to write about them.” (1999: 83-99)<sup>3</sup>

But it must doubtlessly be the date of 1936 which opens a spiral of echoes of Lorca in DL through its leading male character, Gerry Evans, who decides “to go to Spain ... to do a spot of fighting with the International Brigade”, although he seems not to know much about Spain:

Not a lot. A little. Enough, maybe. Yes, I know enough. And I thought I should try my hand at something worthy for a change. Give Evans a Big Cause and he won’t let you down. It’s only everyday stuff he’s not successful at. (31)

He also seems to lack ideological reasons for doing so: “Maybe that’s the important thing for a man: a *named* destination, democracy, Ballybeg, heaven.” (51), although Spain, and more specifically Barcelona, inflicts him with lifelong injuries. The tragic conflict of 1936 seems far from Gerry’s jovial and comic character. He, when asked by the Frente Popular, describes his enlistment in the following way:

The Spanish government that I’m going to keep in power. ‘I take it you are a Syndicalist?’ ‘No.’ ‘An Anarchist?’ ‘No.’ ‘A Marxist?’ ‘No.’ ‘A Republican, a Socialist, a Communist?’ ‘No.’ ‘Do you speak Spanish?’ ‘No.’ ‘Can you make explosives?’ ‘No.’ ‘Can you ride a motor-bike?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘You’re in. Sign here.’ (50)

However, the jocular tone of Gerry’s words is a contrast to the condemnation –which is quite a bit more dramatic– made by Kate, the

eldest of the Mundy sisters, a national primary school teacher and the family’s real economic and moral support:

It would be on my conscience if I didn’t tell you how strongly I disapprove of this International Brigade caper. It’s a sorry day for Ireland when we send young men off to Spain to fight for godless Communism. (52)

Because the Spain for which Gerry Evans is going to fight is apparently very far from Ballybeg and from the Mundy sisters’ house. It is obvious that the ideals of the Frente Popular were not those of the Ireland of De Valera, a country of oppressive Catholicism, on the verge of the birth of a new constitution that would define the family as the fundamental unit of society and the church as the true guardian of national faith. It must be remembered that the constitution did not recognize divorce, contraception and abortion in any way, shape or form and that, furthermore, the 1937 constitution firmly establishes that

By her life, within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved. This State must ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home.

Consequently, a patriarchal society was canonized where matrimony was the goal of all women because it guaranteed survival and dignity of status whereas single women were pitied by men and sometimes scorned by women themselves.<sup>4</sup>

A brief approximation to the Spain of the 1930s reveals a decade of contrasts and of an acknowledged social and ideological restlessness which would result in the Civil War.<sup>5</sup> It must not be forgotten that the beginning of the 1930s –the era of the Second Republic– was a period of great advances for women. For example, in 1931 they attained the right to vote and the 1931 constitution established equality for both sexes. Other aspects such as civil marriage, equality between the rights of legitimate and illegitimate children or the divorce law, which was passed in 1932, all pointed to very open social perspectives. All this, however, collided with movements of great influence such as “Acción Católica” or “Sección Femenina de Falange” founded in 1934. After the war, the victor’s ideology adopted and reinforced the feminine model of submission, obedience and

dedication to the home, very similar to the ideas of De Valera. In a widely diffused message –in April 1939– Pope Pius XII defined Spain as the nation chosen by God as the instrument to convert the world and as the expugnable bastion of the Catholic faith. But what is truly important to point out for our analysis is that both countries –Spain and Ireland– were ardent followers of the encyclicals *Castii Cannubii* (1930) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) which resoundingly established the role of women: “Home is the only frame for female task. The fact that some women have a job to earn a salary is a dreadful abuse we must put an end to by all possible means.”

There are, therefore, points of confluence between the two playwrights and specifically in these plays. However, in our title we chose the word “echoes” instead of influences because we aspire to detect reverberations, rather than expressed traces; to transcend, definitively, the socio-cultural frontiers which separate and unite the two plays in order to show the universality of certain human dramas, something that Declan Kiberd states about DL and Friel:

The great global debates of the next hundred years are anticipated in *Dancing at Lughnasa*. He will be read not just in this country but increasingly widely. He will be watched by countries whose names we don't even know now. (Ní Anluain 2000: 78)

All this, obviously, without abandoning the very specificity of the culture in which each author is inserted and which constitutes an inexcusable frame of reference.<sup>6</sup> For the objective of a comparison of literary works should not try so much to verify the existing debts as to reach a better understanding of the individual works based on the dialogue which is established between the different literary and cultural traditions.<sup>7</sup> In this setting, and with these estimations, a brief analysis of DL and CBA will be carried out, with feminine sexual oppression and its representation in domestic space as a common nucleus.

“Modern Ireland is obsessed with issues of space [...] Irish people seem to have become fixated with issues of individual, local and private space” Gerry Smyth states correctly (2001: xiv-xv). There is no doubt that nowadays space is an analytical category of singular importance although, as Foucault observes, it has been neglected in comparison to others.<sup>8</sup> On

the other hand, it would be impossible to summarize the immense contribution of gender studies in redefining and negotiating the meaning and distribution of masculine and feminine spaces and, in the case at hand, the interrogation of domestic space as a woman's zone *par excellence*.<sup>9</sup> In the case of DL, the restrictive role of the domestic setting –the kitchen– which acts as a “strict framing of a play about overly-framed lives”<sup>10</sup> has been emphasized.

The house, therefore, as a feminine refuge *par excellence*, as a life-like stage which we propose to “read” in an exercise reminiscent of Gaston Bachelard. Let us not forget that the “topoanalysis” which he proposed in *The Poetics of Space* (1958) aspires to a new topography of the territory of our private life, examining the corners of the house, the doors, the windows.<sup>11</sup> However, what is most interesting for us here is his idea of an “exasperated” frontier between outside and inside and that we accept as the law of space and its transgression. This idea is illustrated by Michel de Certeau when he states:

Stories are actuated by a contradiction between the frontier and the bridge that is, between a (legitimate) space and its (alien) exteriority [...] The bridge is ambiguous everywhere: it alternately welds together and opposes insularities. As a transgression of the limit, a disobedience of the law of place, it represents a departure, an attack on a state, the ambition of a conquering power, or the flight of an exile; in any case the “betrayal” of an order. (1988: 149).

The idea of transgression is explicitly reflected in DL when it is stated that “*a sense of order being consciously subverted*” exists in one of the culminating moments in the drama, when the Mundy sisters join in the frenzied dance. And this idea of transgression, of overstepping forbidden boundaries, is continuously present in both plays, where the inner world of the women –symbolized by the house, the feminine space– is continuously bombarded by the outer world –the masculine world, from where danger and sin come in the form of provoking desire. Let us not forget that, as Gerry Smyth indicates:

The hearth constitutes the heart of the dwelling, the still centre around which both movement and emotion is organised, in a typical patriarchal society the male's life is measured in terms of the increasing distance

from the hearth he shared in childhood with his mother. (2001: 154)

In the same way, the basic frontiers between domestic space and the outside world are clearly defined. In CBA the window and the grille are what separates the house and the street whereas in DL it is the road that separates the house and the town of Ballybeg. On the other hand, the domestic spaces present significant differences: the house in CBA is dark, it has concentric and obsessive interiors, frozen, silent and severe spaces. It is not in vain at the beginning of the play that “el poeta advierte que estos tres actos tienen la intención de un documental fotográfico” (The poet advises that these three acts have the meaning of a photographic documentary). On the contrary, the Mundy farm is full of colour, open to the country, noisy, expansive, it has wide horizons if we take into consideration that from there the sisters moved to Ballybeg and even to London. It is important to visualize the spaces just as the playwrights indicate in their directions or how they have emphasized the most representative interpretation: in CBA, the space is claustrophobic, a kind of prison, a closed, kaleidoscopic universe where there is nothing beyond the walls or no more morning than the oppressive summer’s day. In DL, on the other hand, the representations in 1990 and 1999 at the Abbey Theatre offer more spaciousness, given that nothing separates the interior of the house from the green, poppy filled fields which surround it.

But in spite of all these differences, and the theoretically more idyllic and more open atmosphere of DL, it is important to highlight that neither of these plays seems to have a common space for both sexes. On the contrary, these places are condemned to be used for clandestine encounters –be they nocturnal in Lorca or diurnal in Friel–, and in the best case, for encounters which substitute a true amorous-erotic relationship as would be the dance in DL. Whatever the case may be, they are always forbidden encounters because they happen outside the physical space, the house, which at the same time represents the only legal space for sex, which is marriage. Only this would legitimise the disappearance of the physical and moral barriers and the transfer from one space to another but instead we shall bear witness to a succession of moral assaults which attack and desolate the house from the outside.

“Son mujeres sin hombre, nada más” (190) (they are women without a man, that’s all) says Poncia in Lorca’s drama, whose subtitle “dramas de mujeres en los pueblos de España” (plays about women in the villages of Spain) adds nuances of universality to the play by suggesting feminine collectives without an expressed localisation or expiry date. Five women without a man in both dramas, isolated, prisoners within domestic walls, destined to suffer repression and misery, even death. Five women with a clear hierarchy which reproduces, within the narrow walls of the house, a perfect patriarchal microcosm. Because even in such a reduced community an assignation of the masculine and feminine roles is produced: in this way Bernarda and Kate assume in both plays the masculine “autoritas” and the Calderon-like supervision of honour reinforced by a repressive and intolerant ideology. For their part, the masculine characters –Pepe el Romano in CBA and Gerry Evans and Father Jack in DL– are diluted in a far-off remoteness and distant universes which makes them act as the counterpoint of young woman’s desire impossible. Pepe el Romano is more like a shadow, a dilated absence which makes its presence felt in Adela, Martirio and Angustias, “ese fuego que tengo levantado por piernas y boca” (that fire I have got risen along my legs and mouth). Regarding DL, the two above-mentioned characters have no other mission than to incite, provoke and confuse the chaste existence of the Mundy sisters of whom only one, Chris, has known a male and consequently conceived a son, Michael, who is at the same time the pride and dishonour of the family. Gerry Evans, who would come to the Spain of 36, is the cock of the farmyard controlled by poverty and routine, a dandy which comes and goes, which dances with one girl or another, and which always promises to return to marry the mother and buy the son a new bike. Father Jack, on the other hand, is a peripheral character whose sanity degenerates and who holds a provocative defence of paganism and polygamy which rocks the Mundy house and its moral foundations.

On the other hand, the house in both plays bubbles with desire and repression. “Malditas sean las mujeres” (Damn women!) says Magdalena (129). “Yo no puedo estar encerrada. No quiero que se me pongan las carnes como a vosotras. Yo quiero salir”, says

Adela (142) (I cannot be enclosed. I do not want my flesh to get as yours. I want to go out). Agnes, on the other hand, wonders:

How many years has it been since we were at the harvest dance? [...] And I don't care how young they are, how drunk and dirty and sweaty they are. I want to dance, Kate. It's the Festival of Lughnasa. I'm only thirty-five. I want to dance. (13)

Which clashes abruptly with Kate's response:

Look at yourselves, will you! Just look at yourselves! Dancing at our time of the day? That's for young people with no duties and no responsibilities and nothing in their heads but pleasure [...] Do you want the whole countryside to be laughing at us? –women of our years?– mature women, *dancing*? (13)

But all the Mundy sisters state explicitly their desire for a male: Chris wants to put on lipstick and see Gerry Evans, Rose lives sighing for a secret encounter with Danny Bradey and Maggie dreams about adding the pleasure of a man to the pleasure of smoking: “Wonderful Wild Woodbine. Next best thing to a wonderful, wild man.” (23); “We are all in the same boat, Jack, we're hoping that you'll hunt about and get men for all of us.” (40)

It is interesting to verify that in both plays two borderline insane characters are added to the uneasy murmuring of women without men: María Josefa, Bernarda's elderly mother and the aforementioned Father Jack, the Mundy sisters' missionary brother who returns from Africa in a cloud of disgrace. They both verbalize and voice the secrets, the deficiencies and the cravings that the two communities of women guard carefully: the absence of sex, the frustration of motherhood of the always-failed attempts at marriage. Because sex prowls around the houses over and over again and it envelops them in a veil of intense desire which makes them all want to be seen at the grille –in the case of CBA– or to go to the dance, as in DL. And because temptation, sin, sex without masks always come from beyond the walls: in CBA there are clear allusions to prostitution “los hombres necesitan estas cosas” (159) (men need those things) or to raw sex as in the character of Paca la Roseta. And in DL the utterly intense erotic siege which envelops the whole play –and in particular the Mundy sisters– with the celebration of the Lughnasa festival is obvious.<sup>12</sup>

Marriage and motherhood –fundamental for the morality of both houses and natural destiny

of their women– never seem to be achieved, for different reasons. In CBA, the sisters fight for the same man and, although Angustias was supposed to marry Pepe el Romano, (because she was the one with the best dowry) her sister intervenes and causes the death of the male. The panorama in DL is one where Chris, the single mother, does not accept Gerry's marriage proposals because, obviously, she does not trust him. It is very interesting to observe the two “planes” of morality that exist in Friel's play and which we could define as the promiscuity that Father Jack defends and the strict observance of the papal precepts which Kate defends.

The following dialogue illustrates perfectly these two positions:

MAGGIE: If I had to choose between one Wild Woodbine and a man of – say -fifty-two-widower-plump, what would I do, Kate? I'd take fatso, wouldn't I? God, I really am getting desperate.

Maybe I should go to Ryanga with you, Jack.

JACK: I know you won't but I know you'd love it.

MAGGIE: Could you guarantee a man for each of us?

JACK: I couldn't promise four men but I should be able to get one husband for all of you.

MAGGIE: Would we settle for that?

CHRIS: One between the four of us?

JACK: That's our system and it works very well.

One of you would be his principal wife and live with him in his larger hut-

MAGGIE: That'd be you, Kate.

KATE: Stop that, Maggie!

JACK: And the other three of you he'd keep in his enclosure. It would be like living on the same small farm.

MAGGIE: Sure enough, girls, isn't it? And what would be – what sort of duties would we have?

JACK: Cooking, sewing, helping with the crops, washing – the usual housekeeping tasks.

MAGGIE: Sure that's what we do anyway.

JACK: And looking after his children.

MAGGIE: That he'd have by Kate.

KATE: Maggie!

JACK: By all four of you! And what's so efficient about that system is that the husband and his wives and his children make up a small commune where everybody helps everybody else and cares for them. I'm completely in favour of it.

KATE: It may be efficient and you may be in favour of it, Jack, but I don't think it's what Pope Pius XI considers to be the holy sacrament of matrimony. And it might be better for you if you paid just a bit more attention to our Holy

Father and a bit less to the Great Goddess ...Iggie. (62-63).

In relation to motherhood, in CBA there are various references to illegitimate children such as when Poncia announces that “la hija de la Librada, la soltera, tuvo un hijo no se sabe con quien ...y para ocultar su vergüenza lo mató y lo metió debajo de unas piedras ... Ahora la quieren matar.” (175) (Librada’s daughter, the single one, had a baby, nobody knows by whom, and she killed it and put it under some stones in order to hide her shame ... Now people want to kill her). Bernarda’s daughters seem to be drowning in a sea of frustrated yearning where María Josefa is again the only one to verbalize these maternal aspirations, although her manner is nostalgic and whimsical. The panorama is much more tolerant in DL with the figure of Michael, Chris and Gerry’s illegitimate son, whom all of the Mundy sisters love and protect, even though they see in him the frustration of their own maternal dreams. On the other hand, we should not ignore the unusual and doubtlessly demonised character of a single mother in De Valera’s Ireland.

As we have already stated, it is María Josefa and Father Jack who voice the crimes of the two houses, of the two honours, because the house, we must not forget, is here the symbol of family honour as already indicated by Lorca in the very title, *La Casa de Bernarda Alba*. The silence which Bernarda tragically constructs at the end of the play in order to confine lost honour “nos hundiremos todas en un mar de luto –silencio– silencio he dicho” (we all will sink in a sea of mourning –silence– silence I have said) echoes in the words of Kate Mundy when she remarks on Father Jack’s delirium: “This must be kept in the family, Maggie! Not a word of this must go outside these walls –do you hear?– not a syllable” (49) or when she finds out about Rose and Danny’s secret encounters: “What has happened to this house? Mother of God, will we ever be able to lift our heads again...?” (59)

But the silence will by no means be enough to hold up these houses enough because it has to compete with one element, music, extraordinarily rooted in the culture and work of Lorca and Friel. In CBA the women, in spite of the enclosed nature of their environment, are aware of the signs of life beyond the walls by means of the bells and the meaningful songs of

the men returning home from work: “Abrir puertas y ventanas / las que vivís en el pueblo / el segador pide rosas para adornar su sombrero.”(161) (Those who live in the village/ open doors and windows/ the reaper asks for roses/ to adorn his hat). These are only occasional musical auditions but they are enough to unchain a tragedy. It is at this point, however, where faced with the schematic nature of CBA –mourning, whiteness and silence, together with the slight sound of bells ringing and murmurings from the street– that the extensive musical spectrum which pervades in DL is revealed. Friel attests to the importance of music in his work: “Since words did not seem to be up to the job it was necessary to supply the characters with a new language. And that is what music can provide in the theatre: another way of talking, a language without words.”<sup>13</sup>

The place of honour corresponds, without doubt, to the radio –which reaches the Mundy household in the summer of 1936– and which is the epicentre of the sisters’ emotional and erotic quakes. In the three weeks of August in which the drama unfolds, the radio introduces the outside world into their small universe, which receives Kate’s resounding condemnation: “D’you know what that thing has done? Killed all Christian conversation in this country.” (66) And it is by means of the radio that *ceili* music arrives and makes them dance until they are exasperated and the domestic orgy that ensues is echoed in the licentiousness of the dance at Lughnasa. But, above all, the radio broadcasts songs, which at the same time resonate in Gerry Evans, as he himself is a gramophone salesman, dancing teacher and consummate dancer. Through this character DL is replete with hints of Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Shirley Temple or Mae West, Hollywood figures that are very distant from the Mundy sisters’ flagellated morality. For example, during one part of the play the song “Anything Goes” can be heard. Gerry takes advantage of this to dance with Agnes and Maggie while he himself is singing it. The lyrics, as we shall see below, have nothing to do with the house or the decency of the Mundys:

In olden times a glimpse of stocking  
Was looked on as something shocking- [...]  
If driving fast cars you like,  
If low bars you like,  
If old hymns you like,

If bare limbs you like,  
 If Mae West you like,  
 Or me undressed you like,  
 Why, nobody will oppose.  
 When ev'ry night, the set that's smart is in-  
 truding in nudist parties in  
 Studios,  
 Anything goes [...] (64-5)<sup>14</sup>

Therefore we do not find Kate's apocalyptic words, which summarise her spiritual and ideological unease, strange: "Control is slipping away, the whole thing is so fragile it can't be held together much longer. It is all about to collapse." (35)

Two houses, ten women and one tragic destiny for all of them. In both plays the women's offence is the same and this offence is none other than the transgression of the law of domestic space, coffer and guarantor of public and private morality. Consequently, the more daring the attempt to demolish barriers and to back new horizons the greater the punishment will be. Lorca encloses his women forever in the house which they desecrated with desire. Friel, for his part, shows how the transgression always brings misery and converts the sentence into an expansive wave which imprisons them in the house forever, it chains them to lifelong work or it hurls them into exile in London:

Agnes and Rose vanished without trace. And by the time I tracked them in London Agnes was dead and Rose was dying in a hospice for the destitute in Southwark. They had worked as cleaning women in public toilets, in factories, in the underground. They took to the drink. Slept in parks in doorways, on the Thames embankment. (60)

Maggie took on the tasks Rose and Agnes had done and pretended to believe that nothing had changed. My mother spent the rest of her life in the knitting factory and hated every day of it. Kate got the job of tutoring the young family of Austin Morgan of the Arcade. But much of the spirit and fun had gone out of their lives. (70 – 1)

The destiny of the Mundy sisters may seem even more tragic than that of Bernarda Alba's daughters bearing in mind the hope of liberty and openness which is falsely created in Friel's play; DL can be considered a more cheerful and more hopeful version of CBA, with light and sound, open countryside, poppies, wide horizons; a CBA in which its women join the world of work, instead of preserving their position as *señoritas* dedicated to sewing and

whispering; a CBA in which the severity of silence explodes in songs and dances; a CBA, definitively, in which Chris Mundy challenges the rules by producing a son "out of wedlock" and by declining a proposal of marriage and therefore, of "legitimacy". But, in spite of all this, in the two dramas the factor that structures and homologates them is imposed in a definitive and strong way: the sexual morality of the Catholic Church, owner of the destiny of numerous women, both Spanish and Irish, who were denied their own space by their respective countries. For them there was no redemption or hope; neither was there any for the women of these plays who, being women without men, should never have transgressed the space of their houses, of their laws and of their honour.

### Notes

1. Andrews puts Lorca and Friel on the same level, "both trying to reform the theatre as well as society, combining the illusion of reality with an interest in poetic myth, fusing traditional and popular elements with original and cultured ones. "We should not forget their contribution to claiming theatre platforms, Field Day Theatre Company in the case of Friel and Lorca's *La Barraca*, an attempt to make classical drama accessible to rural Spain by means of a travelling university theatre group. See Sáenz de la Calzada (1998).
2. The premiere of *La Casa de Bernarda Alba* took place at Teatro Avenida, Buenos Aires, March 1945, Margarita Xirgu starring; not until 1954 was the play published. After Lorca's death another 28 years were needed for the play to enter the mainstream in 1964 with Juan Antonio Bardem. (An amateur group named *la Carátula* had put it on in 1954). All the quotations of the text belong to the following editions: Josephs, Allen y Juan Caballero (Eds) (1998), *La Casa de Bernarda Alba*, Madrid: Cátedra. Friel, Brian (1990), *Dancing at Lughnasa*. London: Faber and Faber.
3. Lorca's play is also inspired and nourished by autobiographical memories. Carlos Morla Lynch has collected the playwright's own words: "era una aldehuela en la que mis padres eran dueños de una propiedad pequeña: Valderrubio. En la casa vecina y colindante a la nuestra vivía Doña Bernarda, una viuda de muchos años que ejercía una inexorable y tiránica vigilancia sobre sus hijas solteras, prisioneras privadas de todo albedrío; jamás hablé con ellas pero las veía pasar como sombras, siempre silenciosas y siempre de negro vestidas [...] había en el confín del patio un pozo medianero, sin agua y a él descendía para espiar a esa familia extraña cuyas actitudes enigmáticas me intrigaban.

Y pude observarla. Era un infierno mudo y frío en ese sol africano, sepultura de gente viva bajo la férula inflexible de cancerbero oscuro”. Morla Lynch, Carlos (1959): *En España con Federico García Lorca (Páginas de un diario íntimo 1928-1936)*, Madrid: Aguilar, pp.90. (“There was a very old village, Valderrubio, where my parents owned a small property. Our next door neighbour was Doña Bernarda, a rather old widow who exerted and inexorable and tyrannical watchfulness over her single daughters, prisoners deprived of any free will. I never spoke to them, but I used to watch them pass like shadows, always silent and always dressed in black. There was a boundary, waterless well at the corner of the courtyard and I would go down to it to spy that strange family whose mysterious attitudes intrigued me. And I could watch it. It was a mute and cold hell under that African sun, a tomb for living people under the rigid domination of a dark goalkeeper”.

4. Among the extensive bibliography the following can be consulted: Innes (1993); Beaumont (1999); Byrne (1997); Richards (1993); Barros (1999).

5. Cf. Morcillo (1988). See also Alcalde (1976) and Martín Gaité (1987)

6. Cf. André Lefevere (1994): *Translating Literature. Practice and Theory in a Comparative Literature Context*, New York: MLA: 8b: “texts are not written in a vacuum. Like language, literature pre-exists its practitioners. Writers are born into a certain culture at a certain time. They inherit their culture’s language, its literary traditions, its material and conceptual characteristics [...] In a word its “universe discourse” –and its standards. This is not to say that writers are the captives of the culture they write in; on the contrary they can write within the parameters set by that culture or they can try to blend them or even go beyond them. Neither the poetics nor the ideology of a culture is monolithic”

7. An excellent summary of the different approaches can be consulted in Morales (1999)

8. Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time on the contrary was richness, fecundity, life dialectic”. Foucault (1980: 70).

9. Martin (1997): “Women were associated with the farmhouse, especially the kitchen, which was the central living room of the house and with the haggard (or farmyard) where they tended chickens, collected water, etc [...] the proto-typical Mother was a metonym of the House and the authority of the proto-typical Father was enshrined within a heteropatriarchal Law that guaranteed him control over the economic and political realm of the “outside”

See also Blunt and Rose (1994); Nash (1994); Boland (1995); Gray (1999).

10. Cf. Cuttlerbuck (1999): “Friel demonstrates that this dangerous limitation of the domestic zone operates on dramatic levels. The first most obvious level is that of plot proper – the practical restriction of the voices of the five women through identifiable, external, socio economic forces [...] exploring how five women have their spiritual and economic livelihood severely curtailed in nineteen thirties Ireland”.

11. Bachelard (1994: xxxii): “a close study of the human encounter with space and more specially domestic space. Topoanalysis focuses upon the space we love [...] To discover the ways in which humans use the house and to consider what emotions, practices and memories are associated with its various aspects and features: secret rooms, cellars, garrets, wardrobes and so on. There is ground for taking the house as a tool for analysis of the human soul, for by remembering houses and rooms we learn to bide within ourselves.”

12. Peacock and Devine (1992: 113-14): “This occurred in the first Sunday in August, the one Sunday in the year when the mulberries (the local name for bilberries) would, as if by magic, be ripe for picking. Family parties could be seen taking their walk in the direction of the nearest hills to pick the berries and tales of how, in previous generations, all the young people used to go to the hills for Mulberry Sundays and then to dance in the evening would be passed down from parent to child. ... As we discover from Maire Macneill’s *The Festival of Lughnasa* the rituals observed on Mulberry Sunday, or Bilberry Sunday, as it is variously termed, were survivals of rites associated with the Celtic God, Lugh. In much the same way the characters in Friel’s play, firmly located in the realistically portrayed social world of Ballybeg in the 1930s, play out the same double-level kind of experience.” For further information see Macneill (1962).

13. Friel, Brian, “Words” in *Friel Festival Programme*, April – August 1999, p. 15.

14. For a better understanding of the meaning of dancing in the play see Fusco (1996), Rollins (1993) and MacMullan (1999).

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