

Carnavalesque Border-Crossings: The Fluidity of Identity in Marie Jones' *A Night in November*

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Marie Jones, a famous and prolific Northern Irish playwright, whose plays are celebrated for their theatrical carnivalesque spirit. Jones stresses that her plays are about the people of Belfast and she listens to the people on the streets. She also declares that "If I lived somewhere else, I couldn't hear these rhythms, how people verbalize their emotions, their humour, their anger. That's what I hear and write" (Foley 2003, 36). Thus, she focuses on their 'Troubles' directly and indirectly, giving voice to the voiceless. Accordingly, she is widely recognized in the words of *The Irish Times* editors as "the voice of the ordinary people" (1999) and the "bard of Belfast" as runs the title of *The Guardian* exposé of her theatre (Gardner 2004). In an interview, Jones emphasizes that:

The people I write for are the people in my plays. They are really just ordinary people who are really are powerless; who really don't have a voice. I've always felt that I have this huge responsibility, because the background I came up in nobody had any power, nobody had any voice. (quoted in McMullan 2000, 36)

It will be clear that the plays by Jones cross borders and speak to and about the various voices and creeds in Northern Ireland.

Jones portrays different and varied characters in her plays. Linda Burkhardt states that the characters in Jones' theatre "are Irish, Northern Irish, Catholic, Protestant, Presbyterian, nondenominational, working class, middle class, nationalist, unionist, apolitical, male, and female" (Burkhardt 2011, 173-74). Moreover, she is obsessed with the psychological borders that divide unionists and nationalists in Northern Ireland, the physical borders that divide Northern Ireland from the Republic, and the borders that divide both countries from the rest of the world. Jones crosses traditional theatrical borders as well: she has worked both in community and professional theatres (2011, 174). She prefers to

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be labelled as the playwright of the people not as a feminist, though her collaboration with the Charabanc Theatre Company regarded by critics as feminist. The comic and carnivalesque theatrical plays by Jones skilfully display the absurdity of Northern Ireland and its 'Troubles.'

Initially, Jones collaborated with Charabanc Theatre Company and this helped her to challenge the stereotypical perception of Northern Ireland people, especially women. Jones also worked with Dubbeljoint Theatre Company which helped her to move away from a woman-centred drama to the masculine world of Northern Ireland. This paper analyses Jones' later 'Troubles' with Dubbeljoint in *A Night in November* (1994) and shows how in this monodrama Jones moves freely into the realm of the carnival. *Night in November* introduces the carnival which according to Bakhtin, "is a place for working out, in a concretely sensuous, half-real and half-play-acted form, a new mode of interrelationships between individuals, counterposed to the all-powerful socio-hierarchical relationships of non-carnival life" (1984a, 123). In this monodrama, Jones creates new interrelationships between the one character of the play and the different voices he impersonates, between stage and audience, and in fact between spectators themselves. As such, she generates a space of opportunities and faith. Thus, the question raised by this paper is: how Jones implements carnivalesque techniques in order to introduce alternatives for the Northern Irish people and identities beyond the traditional binaries and labels that preserve and characterize the 'Troubles.'

Marie Jones and the Ambivalences of the Carnival

The carnival reflects the multiplicities and inconsistencies of Northern Ireland that Jones deals with in her plays. The carnivalesque nature of her plays, however, has resulted in the description of her repertoire as low comedy which she regards as popular. She said, "My plays get accused of being low art all the time [...] Even by the arts establishment in my own city. But what's wrong with being popular? I sometimes feel that people want to keep the theatre as some kind of special preserve for people like them, educated, cultured people; they don't like it when a play packs out the theatre with ordinary people having a good time" (quoted in Gardner 2004). Jones prefers to use the language of the people, the "frank and free," varied "forms of marketplace speech" (Bakhtin 1984b, 10). Consequently, her plays have a prevalent and widespread appeal because it is about the common man, and the collaborative work with theatre companies like Charabanc and the varied voices and diverse experiences of company members headed to the creation of communal plays. Jones' plays

display various individuals and diverse communities; that is, they reflect the heterogeneous nature of the people of Northern Ireland and reach wider audiences and appeal to different senses.

The variety of Jones' plays evokes Bakhtin's theories of polyphony (many-voices) which is central to his theory of the carnival. The carnivalesque theory is broad, complex and thought-provoking, and Bakhtin's ideas of the carnivalesque are based on the writings of Rabelais. Bakhtin perceives the carnival as a way of life beyond classification. All the variations keep the carnivalesque in a state of flux. Thus, the interpretation of such varied aspects is difficult because the carnival is participatory. Bakhtin highlights that the carnival is not "contemplated and, strictly speaking, not even performed; its participants live in it, they live by its laws as long as those laws are in effect; that is they live a carnivalistic life" (1984b, 7). This is the inclusive nature of the carnivalesque theory that is all its participants interact according to the rules of the carnival, the roles of individuals and their interactions.

Laughter is fundamental within the carnivalesque theory, for it is both a rejuvenating power and unofficial truth. That is the writers use laughter to uncover hidden realities and resuscitate, as it were, the people participating in the carnival. The tone of the carnival is different from the sanctioned serious tone; and in order to evoke laughter, its language includes of curses, vows, songs and exaggerations. This is done in order to create a parallel life that is not constrained and controlled by the unbending social laws that the church imposes upon society. Bakhtin criticized the seriousness of the strict life and described it as authoritarian, combined with "violence, prohibitions, limitations and always contain an element of fear and intimidation. These elements prevailed in the Middle Ages" (1984b, 90). Bakhtin believed that laughter thwarts such rigidity and overcomes "fear, for it knows no inhibitions, no limitations. Its idiom is never used by violence and intimidation" (1984b, 90). Thus, laughter opposes the authorized and official insensible life, and by so doing rejuvenates the people who are lost because of the imposed restrictions.

The nature of laughter is not confined by any regulations or structure. It is a special language and its intention was specific. In Rosemary Johnston's Bakhtinian pivot to laughter, it is observed that "carnival laughter and mockeries are corporate play. Carnival depends on common senses of the ridiculous, in jokes, and knowledges" (2003,139). Humour mirrors official practices but in a very bitter and satirical way. That is, parody and satire are used to undermine the seriousness of orthodoxy by being able to accentuate the implausible aspects in many ways. Writers and performers are able to move beyond the norm, the cliché

and the negligible to question and criticize all aspects of society. One example of resisting the master narratives of culture is to give voice to the “fool” who is viewed by Rabelais as a performer, though with a different purpose than other characters. His role is to highlight and expose the truth. Bakhtin proclaims that the fool for Rabelais

presupposes freedom from personal material interests, from managing family and personal affairs; but the language of this foolish truth at this same time is earthy and material. This principle did not have however, a private selfish nature, but a wide popular quality. (1984b, 262)

In the carnival, the fool is the mouthpiece of the writer, and he is free to give voice to the voiceless reality as the writer perceives it. He usually reflects those beliefs of the society he parodies. In the upside-down world of the carnival, the fool opposes the well-established order of life where conventions and roles are distrusted. Thus, through the contemplation of the truth and its subsequent laughter that disproves authority and autocracy as performed by the fool, society is indulged in a carnival. Besides, the loose conventions of carnivalesque are observed through the role and message delivered by the fool which can be regarded as farce, satire, parody or political comment.

Thus, in such a carnivalesque context, the fool speaks “the laughing truth” and highlights the social order of the sanctioned life represented in the crowd. Therefore, he has the support of the crowd because he speaks about their burdens and gives voice to their agony and fears. The fool does not represent an individual or a specific pampered stratum in society, but he represents all the repressed people whose voices are ignored or silenced. The multi-voiced and polyphonic role of the fool is fundamental as far as carnivalesque theory is concerned. In polyphonic literature, the author offers his characters a great deal of freedom to interact. Hence, the characters in such a polyphonic work could argue with each other, with their author and possibly with the audience. Keith Booker suggests that the “juxtaposition of various voices allows for a polyphonic dialogue that highlights the differences among social groups and generally calls into question the assumptions that would hold certain groups to be ascendant over others” (1996, 34). Hence, in a polyphonic literary work, different ideologies are allowed to interact, and borders and boundaries exist to be crossed.

Jones' *A Night in November* is a polyphonic literary work in which the paradoxes and absurdities of the 'Troubles' are highlighted. Jones portrays the multi-voiced Northern Ireland and challenges the rigid authoritarian resolution to all the problems of life. By doing this and by means of using the idea of the carnival, Jones offers hope and suggests diverse possibilities to one's own troubles. In *A Night in November*, Jones deals with the opportunities of the carnival in which real and imagined borders are crossed. Bakhtin comments on the free autonomy of the carnival which celebrates the "temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and established order" (1984b, 10). Bakhtin highlights the importance of the carnival and claims that it is invoked "to liberate from the prevailing point of view of the world, from conventions and established truths, from clichés, from all that is humdrum and universally accepted" (1984b, 34). Accordingly, the carnival, according to Bakhtin, transgresses social ills which are parodied; in the carnival, these ills and troubles are carried to extremes and eventually laughed at. Jones' carnivalesque work exposes and attacks these social mischiefs; besides it brilliantly provokes laughter. Consequently, it is in the more carnivalesque moments of Jones' plays that hope is most fully realized. Burkhardt claims that Jones "develops her uses of carnival through a strategic intersection of polyvocality and liminality to explore the limitations and possibilities of Northern Irish identity(ies)" (Burkhardt 2011, 210).

***A Night in November* and the Polyvocality of Theatrical Monodrama**

Jones' monodrama *A Night in November* questions the different ideologies that exist in Northern Ireland. It sheds light on the borders that segregate different sects. Here, Jones criticizes the long-lasting animosity that divide Protestant and Catholic communities in Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland from the rest of Ireland. In the one-man performance in *A Night in November*, Kenneth McCallister, is given the chance to break the chains of prejudice and intolerance in and against Northern Ireland. Jones gives Kenneth an eloquent voice to deconstruct the primordial preconceived idea concerning the different rigid religious communities in Northern Ireland. The play portrays Kenneth's quest to have a personal or psychological identity. Kenneth recalls the reasons why a football match he attended in November 1993 inflamed him to distance himself from his Northern Irish Protestant background, environment and family. More than a spectator at a match between Northern Ireland and the Republic, Kenneth witnesses a demonstration of the sectarian hatred that has plagued Northern Ireland for innumerable years. Moreover, he is himself an actor who

gives voice to a series of other characters. That is, one can say that Kenneth plays the role of the Rabelais's fool who gives reality a voice.

Jones has chosen the theatrical device of monodrama to set Kenneth free from a predominantly challenging social, economic and political environment. Monologue is a device Jones uses to facilitate Kenneth's awareness and transformation, but also to establish a confidential link with the audience whom he fascinates with his most profound thoughts. Monodrama, Ken Friedan notes in *Genius and Monologue*, can be traced back to the theatres and mono-dramatic speeches of ancient Greece and Rome. Friedan asserts the rebellious nature of the monodrama theatrical convention which reveals a "history of creative deviations" (1985, 19). He states that

Monologue may be understood either as a static opposition to communicative dialogue or as a dynamic swerve away from prior conventions of discourse. In the first case, monologue is the factual solitude of speech that is not addressed to another. More significantly, monologue signals the active break from norms of ordinary language and is thus allied with innovation, deviant discourse and creativity. (1985, 20)

Thus, the revolutionizing attitude of monodrama suits Jones' intention in *A Night in November* in which Kenneth publicizes the private by expressing his deep personal thoughts as well as those of his family members and friends.

This play represents the power of monodrama in which the private and the public spheres overlap. Deborah Geis notes, in *Postmodern Theatric(k)s*, that both Bertolt Brecht and Samuel Beckett "changed the ways we look at theatrical monologue to a greater degree than any other twentieth-century dramatists" (1993, 23). She maintains that monologue in modern and postmodern drama, and most notably in the work of Beckett, "explores the realm of private speech, but that private speech is ultimately narrated and theatricalized" (1993, 27). The implication is that the traditional realist theatre is transformed and renovated through monologue into the narrative mode where the character recounts and dramatizes his private life. Moreover, Geis highlights the importance of the audience in monodrama. She stresses "the presence, in the theatre, of the audience" who participates in the production of meaning in the theatrical monodrama performance (1993, 7). They interact with the character on stage by laughing and sometimes with their comments. First, they are affected by the character's performance and point of view; then, they react and reinforce or

disappoint the character with their feedback. In consequence, the presence of the audience is essential to the reception and interpretation of the monologue performed by the character.

In *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, Keir Elam notes that “[i]t is with the spectator in brief that theatrical communication begins and ends” (1980, 96-7). The spectators observe the thoughts that the character wants to convey in his monodrama. Besides, the spectator is involved more in the carnivalesque monodrama because of the bitter laughter caused by the deconstruction of master narratives. The spectators are involved because they witness their own problems. The character on stage gives voice to their queries and is concerned with their marginalized voices that challenge the dominant ideology.

In oppressive places such as Northern Ireland, people are fed up with their struggles and the hatred among different sects and ideologies. The theatrical performance of monodrama, therefore, empowers the ostracized and gives them voices to become an integral part of the dominant discourse. Monologue resists the domination of those who are in an authoritative position and maintain power over the marginalized; it challenges the seclusion of the “others” who are silenced because they are different in terms of religion, class, race, or gender. Nevertheless, monologue sheds light on the powerless common people; consequently, there is a bond between the main character and the audience who is drawn into the character’s inner world and reactions to the surrounding dilemmas and ‘Troubles’.

The Fluidity of Identity and Carnavalesque Border Crossings

In Jones’ monodrama, the middle-class Protestant Kenneth McCallister recognizes and rejects the prejudice and racist intolerance of his community and family. At the beginning of the play, Jones focuses on Kenneth’s isolation from his Protestant background and even from his identity. His marginality and static understanding of his identity as a Protestant man are underscored. He conveys his feeling under siege from all fronts, including republican paramilitaries:

That day started out like every other day starts out [...] check under the car for explosive devices [...] you have to be a step ahead of them bastards [...] they keep advancing their technology, gone are the days of the good old fashioned learnt at their mother's knees trip wire attached to the ignition, now they can blow up a device no bigger than a box of matches [...] they'll not get me. (Jones 1995, 7)

Under-siege Kenneth's mindset is disturbed by the arrival of his wife's distressing footsteps, which he sees from under the car, "advancing on me, like two great black patent rottweilers, I watch them as they come to rest just in my eyeline, I glare at them, they glare back, I take them on [...] look them straight in the eye and wait" (7). Comparing his wife's feet like those of rottweilers clearly shows Kenneth's fear of a possible attack from outside his community and within his own family. He is irritated by his wife's response to his actions: "For dear sake Kenneth, who would want to blow you up [...] You're only a dole clerk, Kenneth, will you catch yourself on" (7). When his wife makes fun of him, his sense of isolation is sharpened because of the social gap between them. He is originally from a working-class background which is different from the Protestant middle-class that she represents.

Nevertheless, Jones situates Kenneth as the central, controlling, and pluralistic voice in the play. He controls the narrative and content as he gives voice to different identities; this polyphony leads to his ultimate physical and psychological transformation which deconstructs the sectarian status quo in Northern Ireland. This target is achieved by the use of comedy to ridicule and challenge the seemingly authoritative dominant voices in the play. Gail Finney, in her introduction to "Unity in Difference?", proposes that comedy itself is double-voiced weapon as it mingles the self's and other's different discourses as a means of empowerment. It "interweaves elements of a subversive discourse into the language of the status quo - the discourse of power and control - using the former to ridicule, subvert or deconstruct the latter" (7). Jones, behind the mask of comedy, disclaims the power of the status quo in order to give voice to the marginalized. Closely related to the constitution of double-voiceness, Theresa O'Connor muses about the comic tradition in Ireland in its entirety. In her introduction to *The Comic Tradition in Irish Women Writers*, O'Connor highlights that comedy has at its core "a dual-gendered trickster figure" (1996, 2). As a reaction to his wife's rudeness, Kenneth mimics her, for one, to diminish the power she has over him.

You're only a dole clerk Kenneth, only a dole clerk, Kenneth, only a glorified charity worker, pen pusher, not even a real dog, a bloody poodle or one of them other skittery wee mongers that only shit in litter trays, not even a real dog, not even important enough to be on a real hit list [...] bastards. (1996, 7-8)

Kenneth imitates his wife's insolent attitude and perspective about him/her husband. This extract from Kenneth's monologue reflects his position in society; nevertheless, once he utters such a rude opinion, he is partly empowered. Thus, this mimicry has a dual purpose: by subverting his wife's admonitions, Kenneth disrupts her power over him. He manages to shake the rigid boundary between him and his wife, between their different social classes and between Kenneth and himself.

Multiplicity and the Fluidity of Identity

Kenneth's monologue is exemplary of the double-voiced comic scene in which Jones highlights his deficiency, the rudeness of his wife, the social gap between the couple, and most importantly, the urgency to face oppression. Additionally, Jones extends this double voiced by having Kenneth play the role of the other "characters" in the play. The polyvocality of Kenneth juxtaposes his initial isolation and displacement; the multiple voices he gives to the other characters alter his rigid identity shaped by his sectarian troubled surroundings. Amusingly, Kenneth, in his heterogeneous monologue, crosses various boundaries; he addresses antagonistic religious sects, opposing political ideologies, disparate social classes, and even genders. Thus, Kenneth's polyphony creates a carnival on stage which the audience experiences and laughs at. Alongside laughter, the spectators think about the grand statues that Kenneth deconstructs through his various voices and characters. In addition, their static understanding of any fixed identity is challenged. Kenneth impersonates his class-conscious wife, his racist father-in-law, a Catholic colleague, and the celebratory Republic of Ireland football fans. Thus, by presenting multiple and different communities, Jones confronts the inflexible nature of rigid communities in Northern Ireland, and she as Burkhardt postulates "mounts several challenges to sectarianism, the 'Troubles,' and their intransigent, static definitions of identity" (Burkhardt 2011, 216).

Kenneth revolts against the sectarianism and intolerance represented by his father-in-law and fellow loyalist supporters at a football match between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland during the 1994 World Cup qualifying round. Although Kenneth was brought up with the fanatic ideology that discriminates the Catholics, yet he does not feel that he belongs to this racist community. Thus, his estrangement and confinement push him to question his identity, as well as that of his family and community. Kenneth asks his loyalist and racist father-in-law, Ernie, who took him to watch the Northern Ireland World Cup qualifying match: "Is this a football match Ernie, or a crowd of lions waiting for the

Christians [...] what's going on here." (Jones 1995, 13). Ernie who despises the Irish Catholics, praises the Northern Irish Protestants with his violent frightening answer:

They've got blood in their nostrils Kenny, Fenian blood, worse than that foreign Fenian blood and what's even more despicable than that, mercenary Fenian blood [...] here they come, here's our boys [...] (Chants). Northern Ireland Northern Ireland, come on lads, show them Papish bastards how to play football [...] luk, luk [...] there's billy [...] (Shouts). [...] Luk at them, luk at them dirty Fenian scum [...] BOO! (Ernie Sings.) God save our gracious Queen etc. etc. (14)

Ernie adds "it makes you proud to be British when you hear that" (14), a racist utterance that refers to the aggressiveness of the Northern Irish supporters. Ernie's racist comments highlight the division between the Northern Irish who feel British deep inside them and those who feel Irish and support the Southerners. However, Kenneth, a Protestant from Northern Ireland, does not agree with his father-in-law; rather, he feels ashamed and disgusted to be among the supporters of Northern Ireland. His response to his father-in-law's prejudice and intolerance focuses on the ignominy he feels: "I felt sick, I felt such shame [...] ashamed of him, ashamed that I'd married someone who came from him, ashamed of standing in the same place as men like him [...] it's beyond words, it's beyond eeling [...] I'm numb [...] surely to God these are not the people I am part of" (14-15).

The idea that Kenneth is aware that he is numb and announces it is a moment of revelation. This numbness halts him from supporting the animosity embraced by his father-in-law and the Northern Irish football fans at the match. On the contrary, he starts to experience some compassion with the Catholics, who silently watch the game. This match symbolizes the chasm between his Protestant private sphere and that of the Catholics and is an eye opener in his journey of rejuvenation. Nevertheless, he felt furious and despised all racist people around him: his wife, Ernie and even himself at some point: "I hated my wife [...] I hated her so much, because she had echoed what I'd always thought, so I hated myself [...] before that awful night in November I accepted myself, put up with myself but what does a man do when he loathes himself?" (28). Along with numbness, shame, and disgust, Kenneth experiences an indispensable identity crisis that initiates an existential journey towards a more tolerant and hybrid identity.

Kenneth cannot stand bigotry any longer, he is curious to cross the bar and explore the realm of the Catholics. His profound desire to understand the life of Catholics stimulates him to see the environment of his Catholic boss, Jerry, whom he accompanies to the Falls Road, the Catholic nationalist area of Belfast where Jerry lives. Thus, Kenneth goes into an undisclosed space, a place which is forbidden and hazardous for Protestants. Astoundingly, he describes this “lift” as a bright journey to an unknown country where no Hoganbody pays attention to him, his identity or his religious community:

I drove up the Falls road with Jerry, I had never been on the Falls Road in my life, never [...] the sun was shining, the road was hiving with black cabs and women and children and army tanks and normality and I was nervous, like a stranger to a foreign country, not sure of the territory, feeling like they were all looking at me, knowing I was a stranger, knowing I was the enemy, but no one paid a blind bit of notice, I fitted into the normality just like the soldiers.
(24)

What he is exposed to in Falls Road is in contrast with the “pictures of deprivation and filth and graffiti and too many kids and not enough soap” (25) that he has always been told. Kenneth discovers that Jerry’s environment is different from what he was led to imagine. Inside his bigger house, Kenneth complains about the fact that his wife buys classics she can display on the shelves and forbids him to buy any other books he wanted to read. Additionally, Kenneth is wholly traumatized by his wife’s leaving him on his own from time to time. He recalls the pitiful conversation; “Wife not here, Jerry. No, she’s left a note on the kitchen table, she took a notion to take the kids to the pictures, so I’m to get on my own” (25). Kenneth unswervingly addresses the spectator to gain his pity and recognize how lucky Jerry is: “Oh, God, what freedom, what wonderful unpredictability [...] and then at the bottom of the note which I strained my eyes to see, what Jerry never bothered to read out [...] Love you” (26). Kenneth lastly concludes that his Catholic boss’s life is better and worth living than his; he contrasts it “with the values underpinning his own home and upbringing” (Maguire 142). Through Kenneth’s monologue, Jones shatters the stereotypes of the Catholics and portrays how Kenneth is envious of his boss’s freedom.

It is after this revelation in this night in November that Kenneth acknowledges the sufferings that the Northern Irish Catholics must have undergone over the

years. He recalls the day when he met for the second time the jobless Catholic he had not taken seriously. Kenneth acknowledges that:

I looked into his eyes and I saw the years of acceptance of people like me treating him like dirt [...] years of accepting that he had to put up with my pathetic bigotry [...] years of knowing that he was a Catholic, an out-of-work Catholic that he must accept being treated like he was nothing, of no worth and I looked into his eyes and I had to get up and walk away [...] he was right. (1995, 17)

Kenneth's discernment changes drastically when he converses with Jerry about Northern Ireland World Cup qualifying match. Kenneth is disturbed to hear Jerry's views on the match; Jerry, supported the team of the Republic on that night in November, confides to Kenneth that even if the Republic qualified, it was a pity to witness the antagonism of the Protestants:

We all expected that, Kenneth, we were prepared for that. Were you, Jerry? Oh aye. Were you scared, Jerry? Well, I wasn't exactly laid back about it, but as I say, we expected it [...] terrible pity, like, because it spoiled it for the players, they couldn't perform so it spoils it for everybody [...] pity [...] awful shame. (19)

Kenneth shares Jerry's opinion, though he finds himself utterly surprised by the fact that Catholics may pity Protestants. He had never thought about it, just as much as he would never have believed that he could envy a Catholic someday.

Clearly, Jones exhibits the fact that Kenneth crosses psychological borders after he admits that Jerry was right (18). Kenneth's confession is challenging for any Northern Irish Protestant brought up to detest, or disregard, the Northern Irish Catholics. Nonetheless, Kenneth's psychological metamorphosis is harshly in contrast with the events at the beginning of the play when Kenneth shows his interest to become a member of the Belfast golf club. At that time, he could not wait to tell Jerry who will never be able to be a member of this prestigious club (9), but after attending the football match, Kenneth changes. From that moment onwards, Kenneth feels "something happening" to him (17). It started at the football match during which he said, "I felt sick" (10) and this continues with his assertion that his "head was spinning" (16). Thus, Jones depicts Kenneth's dilemma by portraying him at the centre of the stage facing the audience with his overlapping conflicting spheres: private vs. public and Protestant vs.

Catholic. All four are intertwined. Indeed, it is not only Kenneth's dilemma, but it is the trouble of all people who live in Northern Ireland and suffer from animosity between Protestants and Catholics. "Protestant" and "Catholic" are identity markers as John Whyte explains in *Interpreting Northern Ireland*:

In most parts of the world [the adjectives "Protestant" and "Catholic"] mark a purely religious difference, between two kinds of Christians. But in Northern Ireland, where religion is so closely linked to other differences, the terms have wider associations. As a psychologist, EE O'Donnell, has put it (Northern Irish Stereotypes, Dublin: college of industrial relations, 1977, 5), in Northern Ireland these terms "involve a combination of historic, national, tribal, social, economic and other differences, all subsumed under the heading of religious allegiance." (1990, 105)

Jones sheds light on Kenneth's inner suppressed antagonism which is turned into loud confessions to the audience who is aware of his identity crisis and the drift that separates him from his community. Kenneth deconstructs his Northern Irish Loyalist Unionist Protestant identity so as to start again on a better basis devoid of rigidity. His encounter with the life of his Catholic boss which constitutes a crucial phase of his journey. He is heading towards a reformulation of his identity.

What contributes to this accomplishment is that Kenneth returns to the area where he grew up, East Belfast, where most Protestants live, and where he meets the son of an old friend, Norman Dawson. The son meets him to check who he is and to get some money:

Are you lookin for touts or somethin'?
[...] The kid had wheeled his bicycle right up to the driver's window and was leaning it and himself on the car and poking his wee face in at mine.
No, I'm not the Branch [...] I used to live in this street ...
N° 34. [...]
Do you live here?
Aye [...] over there [...] my da was born in this street too, you know, and so was his Ma.
What's your Da's name?
He's dead.

Sorry son.

My Da is a hero, he got killed trying to blow up a Fenian pub [...] see, when I'm his age I won't get killed [...] I'm not gonna miss, so I'm not.

What was your Da's name?

Norman Dawson [...] his photo's up on the wall of the club [...] he's dead famous [...] have ye any money on ye mister? (23-4)

The way Kenneth narrates Norman Dawson's son's story is different from the way his boss does. He is fascinated by Jerry's life, yet he becomes sick of the kind of life that his friend Norman Dawson used to have and consequently his child. At that moment, Kenneth realizes that it is necessary to escape this vicious circle.

Through the border crossings between East and West Belfast, Kenneth said, "I couldn't go on pretending that I lived in the middle of England" (26). The reality is that although he considers himself British, he lives on a larger island that many of his Belfast contemporaries view as Ireland. His realization underscores a mounting recognition of alternative views and experiences. Kenneth reminds me at this moment of Stephen Dedalus in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* when he recognizes the artist in him and takes decision not to be bound by any chain, even religion.

The soul is born, he said vaguely, first in those moments I told you of. It has a slow and dark birth, more mysterious than the birth of the body. When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets. (1992, 228)

Thus, Kenneth apprehends the urgency to escape this fate; he realizes that the atmosphere pervading the Protestant area is neither convivial nor hospitable to him any longer and differs from the pleasurable atmosphere on the Falls Road where Jerry lives. Kenneth decides to break the chains and fly out of the nets of his wife and his relatives.

Kenneth McCallister's Carnavalesque Journey across Borders and Identities

As a result of his recognition, Kenneth goes to New York City to support the Republic team which scored a goal and won in Belfast. He liberates himself by

spending the money of the golf club membership to fly to America. This flight designates the last stage of his identity quest at which Kenneth discovers and rejuvenates his true self. This carnivalesque journey is “the most exciting, totally outrageous crazy mad thing” that he has ever done (Jones 1995, 37). By leaving Northern Ireland, he not only liberates himself from the incarceration imposed upon him by his wife and children, his relatives and his Protestant background, but he also discards the part of his identity which he is ashamed of. Kenneth remembers when he is driving down to Dublin airport, he never looks behind him, and he is so delighted to arrive to a place where joy prevails. Kenneth does not even think about returning neither to Belfast nor to his past, and as he walks to the plane, he waves to his former self. When a fellow traveller asks him if he is “waving to the wife,” Kenneth responds, “[n]o just someone I knew [...] Kenneth, his name is” (40). He and the other men who have “escaped” to the World Cup men are disguised in order not to be recognized: “[m]y wife thinks I’ve gone to Lough Derg [...] But I have my face paints and a wig in case I’m caught by the cameras [...] bleeding RTE are everywhere” (40). Kenneth joins the carnivalesque exodus and becomes “one of the lads” (40). He escapes the confines of his Northern Irish Protestant middle-class identity. Burkhardt states that “Kenneth’s initiation into a larger community of “lads” is reminiscent of the integration and belonging central to the festive space of carnival and further complicates any static definition of identity” (Burkhardt 2011, 224).

He crosses the physical border into the Republic and the psychological border between Protestant, unionist Northern Ireland into the Catholic, nationalist Republic. The atmosphere at the airport when Kenneth arrives reflects the community and celebration of carnival; he relates his excitement as follows:

Dublin airport 10 kilometers, yes [...]
I drove into the car park [...] it was a sight I'll never forget [...] the whole airport had been taken over by a green, white and gold army [...]
there were check-ins going on in the car park [...] people were singing [...] at nine o'clock in the morning, they were singing and laughing and chanting “Olé, we're on our way, we're on our way to the USA” (*A Night in November* 1994, 38).

Amazed at the inclusive songs in the carnival space of Dublin airport, Kenneth feels they accentuate integration, belonging, and renovation. The songs are different from the fanatic and intimidating chants at the November qualifier match in Northern Ireland. The contrast between the songs highlights the two

opposing extremes in the play: Protestant vs. Catholic, unionist Northern Ireland vs. nationalist Republic and more importantly the two aspects of Kenneth's identity whose excitement is delivered to the audience through the numerous short sentences that are flowing spontaneously and signifying his freedom. He gets rid of all his prejudices with which he grew up and acknowledges that they are all based on fear:

I crossed the border for the first time in my life. It just never occurred to me to do it, we were taught to be afraid, to be afraid of the black magic, the dark evil, the mysterious jiggery Popery that will brainwash us. But is that what it is? Is that what our leaders are really scared of, or is it that if the tables are turned they are afraid that we'll be treated the way they've treated the Taigs and we'll be second-class citizens. (40)

Tom Maguire states that *A Night in November* confirms the indeed "loyalist fears of republican aspirations for an all-Ireland state" (2006, 154). Nevertheless, Kenneth destroys the chains of his fear and prejudices and crosses the borders to New York City where he finds what he has been looking for. He physically discards his Northern Irish, Protestant identity by wearing an Irish football jersey and joining the thousands of Irish soccer fans on their journey to the World Cup. Kenneth realizes that his "Dunnes menswear gear" was making him "[stand] out in the thousands like a sore thumb" (Jones 1995, 38), so he changes into a Republic of Ireland "green, white and orange shirt with a tricolor on it" (39). Kenneth feels free and forgets his fears "I was jumping up and down like a kid" (40). He is not imprisoned by his inflexible environment anymore; on the contrary, he declares "as I walked across the tarmac, my feet were not even touching the ground" (42).

Kenneth gains his freedom and challenges the traditional binaries that support sectarianism, division and hatred in Northern Ireland. In the carnival of *A Night in November* Jones celebrates Kenneth's freedom from intolerance; Jones's carnival echoes Bakhtin's conceptualisation, which:

celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order, it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed. (*Rabelais* 10)

Kenneth's carnivalesque casts off the fixed, completed identities and labels that inform sectarianism. His performance changes from one character to the other; Patrick Lonergan in "Marie Jones" comments on Kenneth's transformation: "Kenneth rejects sectarianism while maintaining his Irish Protestant identity - and this transformation is mirrored in the style of performance, with the actor's movement from one role to another, enacting the notion that identities need not be fixed" (165). His wife's monologue is different from Ernis', and ultimately contrasts Jerry's. Each monologue is vital in Kenneth's identity quest; each highlights a trouble that he must get over.

Kenneth breaks down the prejudices held against Catholics and gets away from his unionist/loyalist environment. He leaves Belfast behind, to be free and whole, and he is gradually encouraged to align himself with the nationalist Irish community. As the play draws to an end, Kenneth transforms; he does not include himself among the people who wronged the Catholics. Kenneth now definitely feels different from the members of his tribe, and states "these are not the people I am part of" (42). He even adds, "they don't speak for me" (47). Nevertheless, by the end of the play, Kenneth has reached his goal. He repeats to this new Protestant friend whom he met in New York, "I absolve myself [...] I am free of them Mick, I am free of it. I am a free man, I am a Protestant man, I am an Irish man." (47). Kenneth's rejection of his tribe does not mean that he abandons his Protestant identity, and instead, he embraces a more inclusive one.

A Night in November creates a space in which anything might and could happen. Bernadette Sweeney questions, "[i]s there a higher level of theatrical experimentation in comic theatre?" and suggests, "not necessarily, but perhaps audiences are more kindly disposed towards experimentation and direct engagement when laughed into it, perhaps even seduced into it" (17). Llewellyn-Jones notes in *Contemporary Irish Drama and Cultural Identity* that the performance of "hybrid identity" at this point in the initial performances in Dublin received "a long, standing ovation" (145). Kate Bassett notes in her Review of *A Night in November*, "[t]he audience in Kilburn cheered" (263). While the applause may speak specifically to Kenneth's final declaration of his Irishness, it may also have spoken to an Irishness that is no longer fully defined by religion or border. The audience's cheers the identity that crosses the traditional divisions between north and south, Catholic and Protestant, and Irish and British. Moreover, *A Night in November* is stimulating; Carole Woddis, in a review of the London premiere, writes that:

It's one helluva evening out, jam packed with emotion, full of laughter and tears with a solo performance from Dan Gordon of quite mesmerizing delight and force" and suggests that, at the time of the play's production in 1995, "[t]here [were] few more engaging sights on the London stage". (1995, 263)

Kenneth's transformation, both metaphorical and hopeful, is all the more engaging and "believable" because Jones comedy addresses the common man's needs. Kenneth's change may become as Imelda Foley argues, "a metaphor of political possibilities. The suspension of disbelief is paramount" (2003, 51). Jones dramatizes Kenneth's ability to transcend and challenge the static, binary definitions of identity that characterize Northern Irish communities. That is, towards the end of the play, Kenneth is empowered and regains his true identity. His shame and dissatisfaction lead him, Burkhardt assumes, on a "psychological and physical journey away from his community, across borders and various identities, and into the liminal, transgressive space of carnival" (Burkhardt 2011, 221).

To conclude, Jones's monodrama contemplates Kenneth's state of isolation and confinement which leads him on a physical and a psychological quest to explore his own identity. He travels into the working-class Catholic neighbourhood of West Belfast, to Dublin, and finally to New York. Kenneth shares with the public his profound longing to break free from the Northern Irish ancestral antagonism, a decision which was triggered by attending the football match between the Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland teams. In Kenneth's memory the supporters of Northern Ireland's team, mainly Protestant loyalists, are portrayed as pure savages, while the Republic's fans, Catholic nationalists, watch the game unobtrusively and peacefully. Accordingly, Kenneth abandons the limitations of a fixed Northern Irish, Protestant identity for a more fluid self and disguises himself in the colours of the Republic of Ireland football team. Thus, he crosses the rigid boundary which segregates the Protestant and Catholic ideologies. Moreover, Kenneth crosses the borders that separate Ireland from the rest of the world and joins the carnivalesque journey to the World Cup match between Italy and Ireland in New York. He discards the confines and boundaries of a fixed Northern Irish Protestant identity and welcomes his new exuberant self. Finally, Jones ends the play with the carnival in which Kenneth joins thousands of Republic of Ireland football fans on the streets of New York in the wake of the Republic of Ireland victory. He cheers the Catholic football team, and the play ends in New York. The finale is an

impeccable proof of Kenneth's resistance against his inflexible status quo of Northern Irish society and the rigid Protestant identity. He escapes from the confines of labels and stereotypes and eventually embraces his new diverse identities.

A Night in November is a luxuriant space of unconventional possibilities. The monodrama enables Jones to penetrate Kenneth's inaccessibility and the idea of roaming between spaces. She crosses the inner and outer boundaries that segregate Kenneth from himself and the surroundings. Moreover, Jones goes beyond Ireland and crosses the borders and confines that separate Ireland from the rest of the world. By doing so, Jones creates, in her monodrama, divergent possibilities that are presented by polyphony. Kenneth gives voice to different identities and characters: Protestants, Catholics, Northern Irish, Irish from the Republic, men, and women. He crosses identities, borders, and genders, and his passages are crowned with his physical and psychological journeys into the Republic and the carnival space of the World Cup. Thus, Jones's carnivalesque border crossings accentuate the volatility of oneself, challenge the static identities of Northern Ireland, and renovate one's faith in transformation.

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