

Dramatic Allusion and Referencing Literary Tradition in Jez Butterworth's *The Ferryman*

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Abstract

The present paper seeks to demonstrate how T. S. Eliot's concept of "literary tradition" can be revealed through the device of dramatic allusion in Jez Butterworth's *The Ferryman* (2017). To date, this play has not been investigated through the theoretical lens of dramatically alluded literary traditions despite the fact that the text abounds in a great many complex references to various predating works of art; such references have proven to constitute a whole allusive spectrum of literary traditions. Thus, the main question addressed here can be formulated as such: In what way is the device of dramatic allusion revealing of literary traditions in Jez Butterworth's *The Ferryman*? Towards answering this question, the paper has reached and discussed two main findings. First, literary tradition has been achieved in *The Ferryman* via two main levels of allusion: explicit referencing and implicit referencing. Second, Butterworth's typology of referencing into different types (political, historical, poetic, dramatic, and classical references) has enabled him to detect "the historical sense" in his play.

Keywords: Dramatic allusion; *The Ferryman*; Jez Butterworth, referencing; T. S. Eliot's literary tradition

التعريض الدرامي والإشارة إلى التقليد الأدبي بمسرحية *المعداوي* للكاتب "جز باترويرث"

المستخلص

يهدف البحث الحالي إلى تتبع مفهوم التقليد الأدبي للناقد "تي إس إليوت" من خلال آلية التعريض الدرامي وذلك بمسرحية *المعداوي* (٢٠١٧) للكاتب البريطاني "جز باترويرث". فرغم أن النص المسرحي يزخر بالكثير من الإشارات المعقدة للعديد من الأعمال الأدبية السابقة، لم يسبق تناوله حتى الآن من خلال العدسة النظرية للتقاليد الأدبية من طريق التعريض الدرامي. وقد نجحت هذه الإشارات في تكوين شكلاً تلميحياً كاملاً للتقليد الأدبي. ويمكن بلورة السؤال الرئيس الذي يتناوله البحث هكذا: كيف يمكن لآلية التعريض الدرامي الكشف عن التقليد الأدبي بمسرحية *المعداوي* للكاتب "جز باترويرث"؟ وسعيًا للإجابة عن هذا السؤال فقد توصل البحث إلى نتيجتين رئيسيتين. أولاً، تم تحقيق التقليد الأدبي بمسرحية *المعداوي* من خلال مستويين رئيسيين للإشارة: الإشارة الصريحة والإشارة الضمنية. ثانياً، لقد تمكّن الكاتب بفضل تصنيفه للإشارات، إلى أنواع مختلفة (سياسية وتاريخية وشعرية ودرامية وكلاسيكية)، من كشف "الحس التاريخي" بمسرحيته.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعريض الدرامي؛ *المعداوي*؛ "جز باترويرث"؛ الإشارة؛ مفهوم التقليد الأدبي لـ "تي إس إليوت"

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Introduction

Although the relationship between allusion and T. S. Eliot's concept of literary tradition is so close, it has not been studied properly as a literary device especially in the field of drama through the tool of referencing. The studies tackling allusion in literature can be classified into four categories. First, studies tackling the term purely shying away from its association with Eliot's concept of literary tradition, such as Laurin Porter's "Musical and Literary Allusions in O'Neill's Final Plays" (2006); second, studies tackling the term from an intertextual perspective, such as Juliya Nikitina's "Allusion as a Feature of Intertextuality in Newspapers and Publicistic Discourses" (2018); third, studies connecting the term theoretically with Eliot's concept without applying it to literary works, such as M. Sangi's "T S Eliot and the Concept of Literary Tradition and the Importance of Allusions" (2012); and fourth/finally, studies associating the term with Eliot's concept but confining their scope to his own poetic heritage, such as Saad Alkafaji's "The Use of Allusions in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*" (2018). However, such and other studies have literally failed to connect the concept of allusion with Eliot's literary tradition except by recourse to the poetic domain of literary studies. Hence, the present study is an attempt to see how the gap between allusion and literary tradition as presented by Eliot is bridged in a contemporary dramatic work. In other words, the current study is an attempt to answer the following question: In what way is the device of dramatic allusion revealing of literary traditions in Jez Butterworth's *The Ferryman* (2017)?

Addressing the foregoing question entails conducting a systematic analysis of a literary work that is rich in broad-based referencing as a concrete realization of the holistic concept of *dramatic allusion* in the theoretical framework outlined below. This literary work, falling within the ambit of drama, is a play written by Butterworth under the title *The Ferryman* and is shot through with diverse cases of referencing. That is why, it has been carefully selected as a practical medium of analysis whereby the framework proposed here can ideally operate towards revealing the interface between dramatic allusion and Eliot's "literary tradition." But, prior to presenting the framework, let us cast light on the play itself and its author. Butterworth (1969-), an English playwright,

wrote plays such as *The Night Heron* (2002), *The Winterling* (2006), *Parlour Song* (2008), *Jerusalem* (2009), and *The Ferryman* (2017). Regarded as his masterpiece receiving numerous reviews and winning many awards, *The Ferryman* “became the fastest selling production in Court history” (Healy 188). It is “a rich, serious, deeply involving play about the shadows of the past and the power of silent love” (Billington *para* 1). A three-act epic/saga preceded with a prologue (set in Derry a day or two earlier than the rest of the play) and lasting for more than three hours, *The Ferryman* is a tragedy of politics and family life. It takes place in the Carney home, a farming family led by Quinn Carney, a former Irish Republic Army (IRA) activist. He is married to Mary (a hypochondriac who spends most of her time in bed) and they have seven children. The older generation is represented by Uncle Patrick (a studious drunk), Aunt Patricia (a fierce Republican), and Aunt Maggie Faraway (whose nickname suggests her panicky character). The other members of the Carney house include Caitlin (the wife of Seamus Carney, Quinn’s long-absent brother), her 14-year-old son Oisin, and Tom Kettle (an English orphan adopted by the Carneys). The Carneys are joined by the Corcorans, their cousins, who have come to help in the harvest. The play is well described as a magnificent “mix of revenge action thriller, romance, melodrama, family saga, and a feast of storytelling—ghost stories, fairy stories, stories of Irish history and politics, stories of longing and of loss” (Mandell *para* 1). It abounds in many complex allusions employed via different (political, historical, poetic, dramatic, and classical) references to previously written masterpieces.

A Theoretical Framework

In what follows, the framework adopted in the current study is sketched in a way that lays down the theoretical premises whereupon the dramatic-allusion analysis is built. The concept of literary tradition is referred to by the term “influence” which Martin Gray defines as “a writer’s conscious or unconscious debt to those who have written before, observable in echoes and imitation of subject matter or style, or via explicit statement or allusion” (149). For Eliot, being traditional implies an amalgamation of what one learns from the past writers’ works with one’s own individual talents. Entailing the beliefs and practices of culture, tradition is not derived from a single stable origin. It is the awareness of the meaning and significance of the entire living literature of the past for the present, literature of not one country alone but of others as well. This does not imply that tradition can be inherited or following the ancient writers blindly; *per contra*, it is bound up with “the historical sense” (of a

writer/critic) which involves not only “the pastness of the past,” but also of its “presence” (14). Moreover, “the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order” (*Ibid*). Eliot accentuates that this “historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional” (*Ibid*). Peter Craven argues that Eliot is not erroneous in arguing that “literature was a timeless order that was modified by every subsequent work of literature” (*para* 4). This entails that if we have no living (or subsequent) literature, we shall become more alienated from the literature of the past.

The essence of Eliot's argument is that the past literature *per se* does not constitute “tradition.” The literature of the past which is of significance in the present constitutes “tradition” for the living author. It is not so easy to determine which authors, which forms, and which parts of the literature of the past that have significance for the author writing in the present. A writer must work hard and intelligently to discover the presence of the past. He can achieve this sense only when he is fully responsive to the present literary climate in its affinity with the literature of the past (Eliot 14). The most central point is the awareness of the simultaneity of the past and the present, of that past which is relevant to the interpretation and understanding of the present. Namely, tradition involves not only a knowledge of the past but also a determination to adapt the best of it relating it to the present. However, the importance of tradition for the poet/artist comes to be more noticeable when his work is to be judged. His work should not be estimated in isolation; it should be viewed in the context of the whole tradition: “No poet, no artist of any art has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone. You must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead” (*Ibid* 15). This is the point: to consider a work of art in the context of the tradition to which it belongs and not in isolation.

Eliot further argues that not only the past influences the present but the present also does influence the past. When a new work of art is created, it adds to tradition: it influences “all the works of art which preceded it” (*Ibid*). He elucidates: “The existing order is complete before the new work arrives, for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are

readjusted” (*Ibid*). Thus, tradition is is “not a structure of any sort but is just the historicity of open-ended, intersecting, competing narratives that cannot be mastered by any Great Code” (Bruns 11). This fact is well demarcated by Michael Molino’s argument that tradition is “a palimpsest of discursive surfaces, not something written and then erased, but something written and written again, one layer on top of the other. As each new layer of the palimpsest is written, certain portions seep through or in some way influence the layers that follow” (6).

M. Sangi *et al* approve of Eliot’s view that when the writer presents a new work of art “that is characteristically allusive to his past works, the whole literature of his country/nation is positively affected by it. This kind of creative conformity of an individual’s talent to his past literary works is what is meant by Eliot’s concept of literary tradition” (205). Allusion “may be made to art, music, literature or history. They may suggest an event, a painting, a piece of music, a setting, a famous historical figure, or a myth—in essence, any well-known or presumably recognizable source” (Sangi *et al* 206). Although they define allusion as “a reference in a literary work to a person, place, or thing in history or another work of literature,” they argue that the two terms “allusion” and “reference” are “used interchangeably” (*Ibid*). This argument may be refuted by consulting more than one critic’s definition of the term. While M. H. Abrams defines allusion as “a passing reference, without explicit identification, to a literary or historical person, place, or event, or to another literary work or passage” (9), J. A. Cuddon defines it in this way:

An implicit reference, perhaps to another work of literature or art, to a person or an event. It is often a kind of appeal to a reader to share some experience with the writer. An allusion may enrich the work by association and give it depth. When using allusions a writer tends to assume an established literary tradition, a body of common knowledge with an audience sharing that tradition and an ability on the part of the audience to ‘pick up’ the reference. However, the allusiveness of some poets, particularly those in the modernist tradition such as Pound or Eliot, might be considered to be more specialized, even deliberately esoteric, challenging the reader and critic to untangle multiple references. In this sense, allusion is one marker of intertextuality. (25)

Most definitions of allusion revolve around the same idea, that allusion and reference are semantically and functionally different from each other. Unlike “reference’ which is an explicit and direct identification of a previously published work which is used as a source for a text, “allusion”

is an indirect reference to something supposed to be known, but not explicitly mentioned.

One may further argue that a writer appeals to allusion when the issue he/she alludes to is evident to his/her reader and appeals to reference as a means of achieving allusion when the issue they allude to is so remote and unattainable. "Many Russian linguists consider an allusion as a stylistic figure that contains either a citation, or a reference to a literary, historical, mythological, religious or political situation, a fact, a person, fixed in written sources or in conversational speech" (Nikitina *et al* 3). However, whether direct or indirect references to well-known characters/events, allusions are the writer's literary device/technique for achieving literary tradition: "To understand the preservation and continuation of Literary Tradition, particularly as suggested by T S Eliot, one has to be aware of the use and importance of literary allusions in an author's work. Literary allusions are a great means to uphold something in a current work what has been said years or centuries before it" (Sangi *et al* 206). Thus, references can be regarded as allusion's concrete means of achieving Eliot's literary tradition in a work of art. Such a means operates at two levels in the literary text: explicit and implicit. On the explicit level of referencing, the (literary) author typically resorts to naming or mentioning the literary object of reference, be it poetic, political, historical, or mythical—the all told list of referencing typology as derived from the actual analysis conducted below. On the implicit level, the author's scope of referencing is expressed covertly and subtly by means of adopting an indirect style of invoking the literary object of reference at different levels of representation that correspond to the aforementioned typology of referencing; that is, dramatic, poetic, political, etc.

Further, it should be noted here that the targets of allusion are miscellaneous. By using it, a writer can say much more than is expressed in the allusive words. A writer may tell his epic/metaphor "while adding his or her own interpretation and contribution to an already powerful literary tradition" (*Ibid*). In addition to making connections to establish meaning quickly, a writer can bring to mind other works in part or entirety to pay homage to these works as an influence of inspiration. By means of allusion a writer achieves thematic significance with other works. However, Sangi's article concludes that "Eliot has profusely used allusions to practically uphold his concept of tradition in literary works" (*Ibid*). Hence, this paper attempts to explore how Eliot's concept of literary tradition is achieved by means of allusion in Jez Butterworth's

masterpiece *The Ferryman*. The analysis will focus on the text's most prominent allusive examples.

Analysis

The prologue opens in “[a]n alley in Bogside, Derry,” with the discovery of the body of Seamus Carney (who “disappeared ten years ago” on “New Year’s Day” in 1972, when he “was twenty years old”) preserved or pickled by the acidic peat and “his hands and feet were bound too” (8). It is rumoured that Seamus, who is found “in a bog down by the border” with “a bullet in his head” (78), has been executed as a result of his suspected defection from the IRA as a British informer (8). This incident alludes to the real story of Eugene Simons (the uncle-mother of the Irish actress Laura Donnelly who played Caitlin in the play) and other members of the disappeared (a group of sixteen individuals discretely abducted, executed, and secretly buried by the IRA). The story was suggested by Butterworth’s partner Donnelly while together watching a television documentary about “The Disappeared” when the focus turned to “Simons, whose body was discovered in a bog three years after he’d vanished in 1981” (Green *para* 1). This fact is stressed by S. A. Healy who argues that the idea of the play was controlling Butterworth’s “mind for decades and gained traction in 2012 when Donnelly learned that her uncle, Eugene, had been one of the ‘disappeared’ in ‘the Troubles’” (211). Thus, by alluding to such a historical/political figure like Eugene Simons without even mentioning his name, the playwright helps his reader interpret the episode in question by referring him/her to a real story he himself has been partly influenced by in writing his play. This allusion further gives the play a historical and political dimension.

The prologue dramatizes how the two IRA henchmen Malone and Magennis argue with Father Horrigan, the country priest, about the appearance of Seamus’s body, in a way reminiscent of *Hamlet*’s two watchmen (Marcellus and Bernardo) arguing with Horatio about the appearance of the ghost. The antagonist Muldoon, the IRA commander, and his henchmen blackmail the priest into convincing the Carneys to follow the IRA’s policy of silence about Seamus’s death. Magennis informs/threatens Horrigan: “The bog water turns a body black, but it preserves it. You see, Father, there’s no oxygen down there. The peat is acidic. It pickles you. The years roll by and nothing changes. Did you know, Father, that when they found the Tollund Man, that *his* hands and feet were bound too” (8). In threatening the priest by concisely referring to the Tollund Man, Magennis wants to point out what kind of vengeance the IRA may wreak on him. In other words, Butterworth alerts the reader

to interpret this dramatic situation by going back to Seamus Heaney's bog poems including "The Tollund Man" (1972). The poem "invokes what Heaney calls the 'archetypal pattern' of victimization and has become a symbol of the 'four brothers who have been decapitated in death, as he, too has been decapitated'" (Islam 21). The Tollund Man was "hanged to satisfy mother goddess for renewing and fertility of the land in spring. [...] His body was naked except for the cap and belt. 'The Tollund Man' shapes significantly in the development of Heaney's Iron Age mythology" (Ado 162). Thus, if Heaney has crystallized the Irish history during the Troubles through his bog poems, Butterworth has manipulated the myth recycled in these poems not only to clarify how severe Seamus Carney's end was but also to stress the nature of the threat directed to the priest by means of dramatic allusion.

When Father Horrigan fails to convince Quinn Carney to keep silent about his brother's death, the former indirectly threatens the latter to inform his wife Mary about Caitlin's silent love for him: "Quinn, Caitlin is in love with you. She's been in love with you for years. [...] She's been telling me for years" (115). After keeping Caitlin's silent love for Quinn for years, Horrigan, coerced by Magennis's threat that his sister can be hurt, finds himself bound to coerce Quinn to respond to the IRA: "He showed me a photograph.... My sister. She's all I have" (116). Just as Magennis has used Horrigan's sister as a means for coercing the priest, the latter uses Quinn's sister-in-law, Caitlin, as a means for coercing him. As a result, when faced with Muldoon's question "Have you considered my request?" (123), Quinn, looking at Caitlin and remembering his unburied brother, is so coerced to reply: "I accept that neither you, nor anyone you know, was involved in the disappearance of Seamus Carney. (*Beat.*) That no one from this family will speak on the subject. No one will talk to the press. No one will breathe a word to anyone. It's in the past and it will stay in the past" (123). Quinn's surrender to Muldoon comes not only as a condition for allowing the Carneys "to bury Seamus in peace" and "to grieve in peace" (123) but also as a result of Father Horrigan's betrayal of him. This betrayal is revealed in Uncle Pat's explicit reference to Virgil's *Aeneid*: "Our friend Virgil has it that there's only two types of souls forbidden passage to the beyond. The unburied. And liars. Those that lie to the innocent" (115). Here, Father Horrigan is well depicted as "a tangible example of the institutional insensitivity to and neglect of the family of the Disappeared" (Mikami 123). However, Uncle Pat can easily accuse Father Horrigan of being a liar but he feels he needs to authenticate his accusation against the priest by alluding to a classical masterpiece like *Aeneid*.

Quinn is represented throughout as both a fighter and victim. He is a fighter of politics when he was an IRA member and a fighter of the Carneys, as their leader, against politics after leaving the IRA. He is also a victim of both religion (represented by Father Horrigan) and politics (represented by the IRA and its men). Although he left the IRA long time ago and kept away from its political violence, he still fights as a family leader. The priest has betrayed the family “just like the wooden horse in the Trojan War” (Gunenc 90-1). Butterworth has endorsed Quinn as a fighter by closing the prologue with explicitly referring to a song applicable to him: “‘*Street Fighting Man*’ by *The Rolling Stones*, loud” (10). Moreover, the first act opens with the same song; the stage directions read: “*An old, torn Rolling Stones poster from when the Stones played Belfast in 1965 [...] A framed photograph of Brigitte Bardot in Helen of Troy, another of George Best. [...] A tape playing on a big ghetto blaster. The Rolling Stones, quietly*” (11-12). The “*Street Fighting Man*” is the most political song of the Rolling Stones, a political band in the 1960’s. It is significantly referred to here to indicate how Quinn is entitled to fight against betrayal throughout. In fighting against violence and betrayal, he, by allusion, “represents Aeneas who fought against betrayal and defeat” (*Ibid* 91). Alluding to the Trojan War here adds much to role Quinn plays as a family leader/fighter.

Alluding to Shakespeare’s drama is inescapable throughout *The Ferryman*. At the beginning of the play when Quinn, playing with his kids, lightheartedly argues: “I’m that Julius Caesar fella, so I am” (21), he unconsciously alerts our attention to put him in comparison not only with Caesar (as a tragic hero) but also with Mark Antony. In other words, Quinn may be well echoing Antony who is brought to his downfall by loving a woman, Cleopatra (Caitlin) other than his wife, Octavia (Mary) who is about to leave him for his antagonist Caesar (Muldoon), his past companion in the army. Thus, Butterworth has depicted Quinn and Caitlin’s silent love by alluding (un)willingly to Shakespeare’s drama. Furthermore, his choice of the kitchen to be the centre of Quinn and Caitlin’s dancing is significant. As Jerry Portwood argues, “The kitchen set is a ‘carbon copy’ of Butterworth’s own kitchen in Devon, England, and even contains replicas of props that belong to his daughter which can prove to be uncanny for his family when they’ve come to watch” (*para* 3).

The Ferryman has taken its title from its explicit reference to Virgil’s *Aeneid*. Recalling his nine-year-old niece’s—Mercy’s—questions about her uncle Seamus: “Where has Seamus been all this time? Where has his soul been?” (113), Uncle Pat, unable to find an answer to

the girl's queries, redirects them to Father Horrigan who unsuccessfully replies: "Seamus's soul will soon be at rest" (113). Searching for another answer, Uncle Pat recalls *Aeneid*: "Here all the crowd dreams, hurrying to the shores, women and men, pleading to make the crossing, stretching out their hands in longing for the far shore" (114). Uncle Pat continues reading from *Aeneid*:

"Son of Anchises, true child of the gods, all this crowd, you see, they are the unburied. The ferryman is Charon. He may not carry them from the fearful shore on the harsh waters before their bones are at rest in the earth. They roam for a thousand years lost on these shores, their souls abandoned. Only then are they admitted, and revisit the pools they long for." (114)

The ferryman in *Aeneid* is Charon, who carries the souls of the dead across River Styx. He is the one who determines who is and who is not allowed to be buried. "Those who cannot pay the ferryman's fee or whose bodies remain unburied are left to wander the shores of the river for eternity, to wade between earth and Hades" (Appler *para* 8). The allusion embedded in the reference here is clear enough. In blackmailing the Carneys to keep silent about Seamus's death in order to transport his unburied body over the border from Louth to Armagh in so that his bones can be "at rest in the earth" (114), Muldoon echoes Charon in Virgil's *Aeneid* in acting as the ferryman who is to allow/disallow burying Seamus.

The Ferryman alludes to Brian Friel's *Translations* (1981), which Butterworth has watched with his brother Tom in Cambridge (Zarin *para* 11), in different ways. Like the latter which was set at harvest time in August 1833, the former was set at harvest time in August 1981. When he first appears as a man in his seventies "in his old moth-eaten dressing gown" (17), Uncle Pat echoes *Translations*' Jimmy Jack Cassie, who "sits by himself, contentedly reading Homer in Greek and smiling to himself. He is a bachelor in his sixties, lives alone [...]. He is fluent in Latin and Greek but is in no way pedantic" (2). Moreover, in the first act and on the morning of the harvest day, Uncle Pat calls on Demeter, Goddess of the Corn and Mother of the Harvest (18). Then, in the second act, he refers to an incident in 494 BC in the war between Persia and the Greeks, when Darius, the Persian King, stopped the "war to give the Greeks time to harvest their grapes. Because even a war-thirsty blood-monger like Darius knew the harvest is sacred. The harvest is breath and life and spirit. And hope" (67). These remarks are allusive of *Translations*' Jimmy, who believes in gods and ancient myths: "For Jimmy the world of the gods and the ancient myths is as real and as immediate as everyday

life in the townland of Baile Beag” (2). The dramatic referencing to Friel’s *Translations* here is so obvious that one cannot deny the influence Friel has on Butterworth. Furthermore, the Homer-like figure and storyteller Uncle Pat closes his words on the importance of the harvest by quoting Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), an American naturalist, essayist, poet, and philosopher: “The true Harvest of my Life is intangible. A little stardust caught. A portion of the rainbow I have clutched” (67). He has thus given significance to the harvest by means of allusion, not only by implicitly referring to Friel’s *Translations* but also by explicitly referring to and quoting Thoreau’s words.

Butterworth’s dramatic allusion to Friel further includes his *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990), a two-act memory play set in County Donegal in Ulster in the North of Ireland in August 1936 and based on the lives of Friel’s mother and aunts. The play depicts the late summer days when love seems possible in the Celtic harvest festival of Lughnasa. However, Shane Corcoran, the Carney’s seventeen-year-old drunken cousin from Derry, attends the Carneys’ harvest and falls for Seamus’s widow, Caitlin. The Carneys and the Corcorans of *The Ferryman*, like the Mundy sisters of Friel’s play, dance together: “Huge whoops. The children are ecstatic. Everybody gets up” (72). Shane dances with Caitlin putting “on ‘Teenage Kicks’ by The Undertones. [...] Quinn watches, as Caitlin starts dancing wildly with Shane. [...] The music throbs. Caitlin dances with Shane” (73). This scene echoes Friel’s piece where Agnes asks Kate: “How many years has it been since we were at the harvest dance?—at any 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” (22). This allusion to Friel’s play significantly shows Shane as a “portrayal of naïve wannabe terrorist” (Curtis para1). In other words, unlike *Dancing at Lughnasa* where love was possible, *The Ferryman*’s milieu is not allowing such love. More evidently, when Shane persuades Caitlin’s son, Oisín, to shoot Kettle (the English man who too falls for Caitlin) on sectarian grounds, the latter later wrings Oisín’s neck killing him. Moreover, dancing with Caitlin, Shane assures her his love and alludes to Peadar Kearney by referring explicitly to his song sung by The Wolfe Tones: “I’ll sing you a song of a row in the town,/When the green flag went up and the Crown flag came down...” (74). In referring to and quoting Kearney’s song (which tells the story of an uprising in Ireland and the courage displayed by the Irish fighters), Shane likens his love for Caitlin (who is beloved by another) to a war in which he fights.

Butterworth has been influenced by Harold Pinter: “I know and admire [him] enormously. He has a ginormous influence on me. Conversations with him have inspired my work” (Piepenburg *para* 6). Hence, to find echoes of Pinter in Butterworth’s play is not novel. *The Ferryman* alludes to Pinter’s *The Birthday Party* (1959), his first full-length play, to a baffling extent. The opening of Butterworth’s piece where two ominous visitors—Magennis and Muldoon—meet Father Horrigan inquiring about Quinn Carney (a former IRA soldier) turning the harvest festival into a tragedy echoes Pinter’s where two sinister strangers—Goldberg and McCann—arrive unexpectedly meeting Meg inquiring about Stanley Webber (an erstwhile piano player) turning his birthday party into a nightmare. The party in Pinter culminates with the game of blind man’s buff when Meg suggests: “I want to play a game!” (42) and Lulu, “*tying her scarf round Meg’s eyes,*” explains her: “Haven't you ever played blind man's buff? Keep still, Mrs Boles. You mustn't be touched. But you can't move after she's blind. You must stay where you are after she's blind. And if she touches you then you become blind” (42). Echoing Pinter, the harvest in Butterworth begins with Caitlin’s words to Quinn: “Sure, I could beat you with a blindfold on. [...] *He gets up, fetches a tea towel. And blindfolds her*” (13). Just as the party ends in Stanley attacking Meg, the harvest ends with Quinn’s attacking Father Horrigan. The end of *The Ferryman* echoes *The Birthday Party*’s finale. Just as both Goldberg and McCann bring Stanley and seat him in a chair (55) bombarding him with a list of faults and promising him with a number of benefits (55-7) if he surrenders to their influence, Muldoon and his men do the same with Quinn asking him to yield to their orders if he wants to live in peace. Like Stanley, who does not surrender and hence is forced to leave with the two men in a car to an unknown future, Quinn follows suit and avenges himself and his brother’s death against Muldoon and his men, and hence is left to an unknown fate. Furthermore, *The Ferryman* has such Pinteresque elements as the ambiguous identity (of the visitors and their victim’s unknown future) and the dark political symbolism represented by the pistol which has become “a physical manifestation of enmity being passed from one person to another” (Gilbert *para* 8).

Dramatic allusions to the poetic tradition is well employed throughout by Maggie who fills the silences kept within the Carneys. When Aunt Pat refers to Seamus’s body by alluding to “Kevin Lynch’s body [which] is buried fifteen miles from here” (32), Maggie sings the first stanza of William Allingham’s poem, “A Dream,” “I heard the dogs howl in the moonlit night/I went to the window to see the sight/All the

dead that I ever knew/Going one by one and two by two” (32). Since Allingham’s poem shows his nostalgia for his fellow countrymen, schoolmates, his mother, “and his perception of life and death with his peculiar imagination and mysterious artistic conception” (Shanshan & Su 28), Maggie refers to it implying that she feels the same nostalgia for Seamus Carney. Though motionless most of the time, Maggie is always there to summon the past for interpreting the present. When asked by Nunu and her sisters “What happened to Uncle Seamus?,” Maggie, breaking the silence surrounding his disappearance, tells the children that he “is in the ground” (60). Moreover, she foresees Oisín’s near death by singing the 1st stanza of the Irish W. B. Yeats’s “The Stolen Child” (1889) which ends in “Come away, O, human child!/To the waters and the wild./With a fairy hand in hand./For the world’s more full of weeping than you can understand” (33). Yeats has been fascinated in his poetry in general by folklore, superstitions and myth about the Irish peasantry. The stanza quoted here by Maggie points out how the fairies allure the child to leave hand in hand with them for the fairy island because the world is full of weeping and miseries he cannot cope with. All this is indicative of Oisín. Yeats’s poem, “which was one of ‘the first major works of the Irish literary revival based on Gaelic mythology, shows how myth, recycled for political purposes, appears to hold an ‘unchanging wisdom’ (Teraie-Wood 73). This is how Maggie draws on poetic tradition based on myth for both political and personal ends.

The Ferryman is full of allusions—via explicit and implicit references—to politics and political figures. Aunt Pat puts her transistor on the middle of the kitchen table and “turns it up full” insisting that everybody should “stop what [they]’re doing and listen” (36) to Margaret Thatcher’s rejection to grant political status to IRA prisoners or hunger strikers in the Maze prison: “There can be no question of political status for someone who is serving a sentence for crime. Crime is crime [...] and there can be no question of granting political status. I just hope that anyone who is on hunger strike for his own sake will see fit to come off hunger strike, but that is a matter for him” (36). Including Aunt Pat’s vengeful words on Thatcher: “If she was standing here I’d fuckin’ take a knife from that drawer and I’d disembowel that smirking, sanctimonious, stone-hearted sow right here on this table, so I would. Then I’d show her what a fuckin’ crime is” (37), this dramatic allusion to Thatcher is indicative of the Prime Minister’s aggressive attitude towards the hunger strikers on the one hand and of Aunt Pat’s vengeful nationalist as a fierce Republican suffering from a case of imbalance on the other hand.

Although Aunt Pat refers to a number of hunger strikers (74), the third act focuses on Bobby Sands, a member of the IRA and the leader of the 1981 hunger strike who died while imprisoned at Prison Maze. Sands' words are quoted by both Diarmaid and Shane Corcoran to comment on political power: "They have nothing in their whole imperial arsenal that can break the spirit of one Irishman who doesn't want to be broken. I am hungry only for justice" (92). Carole Di Tosti argues that in 1981 when Sands and others, imprisoned, went on a hunger strike and died, "global censure helped to turn the tide. From August to October of that year, during the action of *The Ferryman*, the hunger strikes ended. Not only was Bobby Sands elected to Westminster, a platform opened for the rise of Sinn Fein, the IRA's political wing" (*para* 5). Dan Friedman closes his article on the play by arguing: "The past is yearning to be told, but the present is not strong enough to take it. Bobby Sands is dead. Long live Bobby Carney. A slainte to his world, whatever that world turns out to be" (*paras* 17-18). That is to say, Quinn has named his baby "Bobby" after Bobby Sands to continue Sands' national message against the British criminalization policy.

Among the themes crystallized and supported by dramatic allusion to poetic tradition is silent/unspoken love. It is demonstrated throughout by such characters as Maggie, Kettle, Shane Corcoran, Quinn Carney, and Caitlin. Maggie, for instance, confesses her unrequited love: "I loved a man who loved another. His name was Francis John Patrick Maloney. The son of a house painter" (57). The yarns spun by Aunt Maggie while immersed in her unspoken reveries feature her "erotic longing for the golden lad she once loved from a distance, now long disappeared" (Brantley *para* 5). Maggie's account of her unconsummated love not only echoes/foresees the fruitless yearnings of other characters, but also alludes to such American literary figures as "Whitman, Thoreau, [and] Emily Dickenson" (57) who have undergone similar instances. However, Maggie's silent love is supported by Tom Kettle. Named after Thomas Kettle (1880-1916), an Irish journalist, writer, war poet, soldier, and politician, Kettle is a daft Englishman brought up by the Carneys and working on their farm. He recites Sir Walter Raleigh's poem "The Silent Lover" to both pave the way for confessing his silent love for Caitlin and stress the play's central theme. He is regarded as "more of a plot device than a rounded character" (O'Hagan *para* 16). Kettle reads the whole poem starting with "Passions are liken'd best to floods and streams" (71). As soon as he is informed that Seamus is dead he expresses his love for Caitlin. In a way very much reminiscent of Hamlet when Claudius sends him Ros and Guil to make sure whether he is really mad or feigning

madness, Kettle confesses his love to Caitlin: “I know north from south. ... I only smoke at Christmas time and that’s one Hamlet. It’s many a night I’ve thought of you. ... The long and the short is, ever since that day I loved you, Cait. I will love you until your final breath, and a thousand years beyond. And now all I ask is, give me your answer do” (86-7). Thus, the explicit referencing to Raleigh’s “The Silent Lover” confirms the meaning and significance of silent love which is supported not only by Caitlin’s love for Quinn but also by the play’s forty-nine silences written into its stage directions (Teraie-Wood 72). Moreover, alluding to *Hamlet* here signifies Kettle’s uneasy character in falling for Caitlin and being obsessed with her love.

Like Seamus’s death which has been kept silent, Quinn and Caitlin’s love has been kept unspoken throughout. But after Father Horrigan divulges Caitlin’s silent love for Quinn, the latter accuses the former of betrayal for having “broken the Sacrament of Penance” (116). As a result, Caitlin feels at ease to both hear Quinn’s “I feel exactly the same” and reply: “All we have to do is run away together” (120-21). Caitlin’s love for Quinn reaches its utmost when she agrees with him to respond to Muldoon’s request that “Seamus just vanished” (122) and was not killed by the IRA. She wishes if “there is another world, a secret world” to live with Quinn who “built the only happiness [she has] ever known” (122). Holding his face, she admits: “Know this, Quinn Carney. I love you more than the future. Because in the future we cannot be. So kiss me, and then it is the future [...] *They kiss*” (123). Caitlin’s words to Quinn recalls Rose’s to Agnes in *Dancing at Lughnasa*: “I love you, Aggie! I love you more than chocolate biscuits! (*Rose kisses Agnes impetuously, flings her arms above her head, begins singing ‘Abyssinia’ and does the first steps of a bizarre and abandoned dance...*)” (22). As in Shane’s case, the allusion here to Friel’s *Dancing at Lughnasa* is significant. Butterworth points out Caitlin and Quinn’s impossible love by alluding to an opposite case—the possible love depicted in Friel’s piece.

However, to keep his love, Quinn surrenders to Muldoon’s request and accepts that the IRA is not “involved in the disappearance of Seamus Carney” (123). No sooner had the protagonist Quinn surrendered than the antagonist Muldoon added insult to injury by further attempting to separate the two lovers from each other. When Muldoon suggests that “There’s the maisonette there in the Bishops Road in Derry” that “Caitlin and her boy [must] move in there under his protection” (124), Quinn replies: “The answer is no” (124). Here, Muldoon becomes more decisive and threatening:

I'm not canvassing your opinion, or seeking your wise guidance. I'm informing you. [...] And you will capitulate. You will do exactly what I require of you, or you will give me no option but to reverse my policy of goodwill towards this family. I suggest you do it. For Honor, Mercy. Shena. Nuala. James Joseph. Michael. Bobby. (*Beat.*) Mary. (124)

Aware of the crimes such cutthroats may commit against Quinn's children, Caitlin thanks Muldoon accepting his offer: "I accept your offer" (125). At such a moment, Shane enters "*from outside. He sings the first couple of lines of 'Teenage Kicks' by The Undertones*": "Are teenage dreams so hard to beat?" (125). Although Butterworth sees that the song referenced here is so "earthy and connected, serious and passionate" that he "needed the music to be more emotional and connected to that identity" (Qtd in Portwood *para* 2), O'Hagan argues that Shane "disrupts the general Oirishy by blasting out" that song "to the bewilderment of his country cousins" (*para* 10). However, it is not strange for Shane, Quinn's rival in loving Caitlin, to allude to such a song to corrupt the atmosphere for them all.

Soon after the death of Caitlin's son in the finale, everything turns upsidedown. Shane has egged Oisín on shooting Kettle for both sectarian and emotional reasons; and, as a result, Kettle has "wrung his neck" (127). Therefore, the stage directions show:

Caitlin picks up the razor from the shelf with the stereo on it. Behind her back. [She] rushes at Muldoon. Quinn stops her, at the last moment. [...] *He takes the razor from her. Quinn turns. Quinn slashes Muldoon's throat. Blood spurts to feet. Muldoon begins very quickly to bleed to death. Quinn turns, grabs the pistol and fires it at Magennis, hitting him in the forehead. His blood spurts all over the wall of family pictures.* (127-8)

Only now and in a way very much reminiscent of and alluding to the dying Hamlet who tells Horatio: "Thou livest; report me and my cause aright/To the unsatisfied" (V. ii), can Quinn refer to Malone informing him: "Go back to town. Tell whoever you need to tell, that this day, Quinn Carney has exacted revenge for the murder of Seamus Carney. Husband to Caitlin. Father to Oisín" (128). By designing the end of his play in such a way, Butterworth has, in fact, upended the Aristotelian prologue as a theatrical convention placed at the beginning of a play. Although the play's prologue has convinced the reader to conclude with Quinn as a victim passively capitulating, its finale shows him as a tragic hero avenging not only his brother's death against the IRA but also his own dignity as a protagonist and family leader against his antagonist

Muldoon. In this instance, Butterworth may be hitting the point: “Aristotle allows you a prologue! The best thing that can happen is that the play plots against you. It *hoodwinks* you. My plays aren’t intent on making things clear” (Qtd in Zarin *para* 13). Thus, the playwright has indirectly alluded to Aristotle by using his “theatrical conventions to circumvent expectations” (*Ibid*) and, hence, break his canons.

The tragedy of *The Ferryman* swarms and ends with banshees. Each act ends with a form of unsettling noise culminating in the finale: “*Outside, the Banshees scream*” (129). The play refers to these banshees everywhere. Maggie argues: “There were the *Banshees*. Everywhere. And they were all screaming. Screaming in unison. Screaming and pointing at the sky” (59). Moreover, she informs Father Horrigan that she is so “scared” that she hears them “coming closer. I know that sound. I heard it long ago. They’re coming” (112). Her tales of silent love that have ended tragically, the death of Caitlin’s Oisin by Kettle, Quinn’s slashing Muldoon’s throat and firing at Magennis “hitting him in the forehead” (128), and hence the whole family’s tragedy all substantiate Maggie’s point. However, banshees have their place in Irish drama, but they belong to the world of Yeats, who argues that banshees wail before death and “When more than one banshee is present, and they wail and sing in chorus, it is for the death of some holy or great one” (110). The allusion to Yeats is obviously indicative. The play ends with Caitlin kneeling “over Oisin’s *body*” and “*the sound getting closer. Screaming*” (129). This tragic end is well endorsed by “*the banshees scream*” outside (129), banshees which accentuate *The Ferryman* as more tragic than Shakespeare’s tragedies wherein the downfall of the tragic hero may be substantiated as a result of his own *hamartia*. It is noteworthy that Butterworth’s love for Irish sources is not confined to the Irish figures but goes further to include the banshees which are closely related to Yeats the Irish. Moreover, his strong interest in Irish drama may be related to having two Irish grandparents who settled in England (Healy 210). This fact vindicates not only Butterworth’s writing *The Ferryman* but also the many allusions and references with which the play is studded.

Conclusion and Findings

Butterworth’s *The Ferryman*, a three-act tragedy of politics and family life, has been influenced partly by the real story of Eugene Simons and other members of The Disappeared. Butterworth’s erudition and his veneration of the literary tradition synthesized by his artistic predecessors have enabled him to create (and stud his play with) a web of allusions that hold it together. Hence, *The Ferryman* abounds in many complex

allusions, employed *via* different explicit and implicit (political, historical, poetic, dramatic, and classical) references, echoes, and parallels to previously written masterpieces. The playwright has skillfully, by employing the device of dramatic allusion, demonstrated his masterpiece as part and parcel of literary tradition as depicted by Eliot. Without such a device, many books and articles would be needed inside the play. However, the paper has reached two main findings.

First, literary tradition has been achieved in *The Ferryman* via two main levels of allusion: explicit referencing and implicit referencing. Butterworth appeals to implicit referencing when he alludes to sources he feels familiar to his common reader. For example, he has implicitly alluded to well-known dramatic sources such as W. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, B. Friel's *Translations* and *Dancing at Lughnasa*, and H. Pinter's *The Birthday Party*. He has also alluded to the historical and political figure of Eugene Simons without even mentioning his name since his readers are familiar with him as the maternal uncle of Laura Donnelly—the Irish actress who played Caitlin. Sometimes, he explicitly refers to and/or quotes poems/songs by Irish poets such as W. Allingham, W. B. Yeats, S. Heaney, and P. Kearney without even mentioning the names of the poets. With half an eye the reader can identify and recall these poets through their familiar poems. But when he alludes to novel/unfamiliar sources his reader cannot easily identify or recall, he appeals to explicit referencing by concretizing the references and/or including entire quotations. For example, he has explicitly referred to and quoted the English poet W. Raleigh, the American poet H. D. Thoreau, the classical Virgil's *Aeneid*, and the political figures of Bobby Sands and Margaret Thatcher.

Second, Butterworth's typology of referencing into different types (political, historical, poetic, dramatic, and classical references) has enabled him to detect "the historical sense" in his play. *The Ferryman* has mingled personal life with politics culminating both in death. To do so, the playwright has referenced political and historical figures (such as Eugene Simons, Bobby Sands, Margaret Thatcher, *etc.*) to support the political/historical dimension of the IRA and its connection with the Carneys. He has also referenced the poetic tradition represented by Raleigh's "The Silent Lover," Allingham's "A Dream," Yeats' "The Stolen Child," and Heaney's bog poem "The Tollund Man" to accentuate both themes: the theme of silent/unspoken love (crystallized by Maggie, Caitlin, Quinn, Shane, and Kettle) and the theme of politics (represented by Quinn and the IRA). Dramatic allusions to predating dramatic works have been all manipulated by echoing Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Antony*

and *Cleopatra*, Friel's *Translations* and *Dancing at Lughnasa*, Pinter's *The Birthday Party*, and different songs like the political song "Street Fighting Man" by The Rolling Stones and Kearney's song "The Row in the Town" not only to delineate the conflicts reflected between lovers but also to show, by implication, the unknown fate of the Carneys after Quinn's vengeful act against the IRA men. In addition, Butterworth has referenced classical tradition by referring to the Latin Virgil's *Aeneid* explicitly and the Trojan War implicitly to accurately show how the IRA leader, Muldoon, can be identified with Charon, the ferryman who (dis)allows to bury the dead in *Aeneid*. Most of these references have been employed and crystallized by the older generation represented by Uncle Pat, Aunt Pat, and Aunt Maggie, who have been utilized as technical devices manipulating allusions and hence connecting the past with the present.

Thus, the paper has, by reaching and discussing the two abovementioned findings, pointed out that the historical sense as depicted by Eliot has been achieved in *The Ferryman* via not only the two levels of referencing (the implicit as well as the explicit) but also the different types of referencing—political, historical, poetic, dramatic, and classical.

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