Faculty Research Grant Final Report

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“The Trauma, memory, and narrative: Rewriting History in Brian Friel’s Plays
Description of Grant-Supported Activity”

Last summer I delved into trauma studies. Since this is a new field to me, I spent a lot of time in Hesburgh Library in the University of Notre Dame and our own Schurz library, collecting and reading materials about trauma from both psychological and literary fields. To name a few, Sigmund Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Cathy Caruth’s *Unclaimed Experience*, Dominick LaCapra’s *Writing History, Writing Trauma* are all classical texts of trauma studies, which inform me greatly about this interdisciplinary discourse and help me to have a solid understanding of how a psychological concept applies to literature and history reading. Meanwhile, I also read extensively about trauma studies in the Irish literature. Robert F. Garratt’s *Trauma and History in the Irish Novel: The Return of the Dead* and Michael L. Storey’s *Representing the Troubles in Irish Short Fiction*, among others, are good showcases of Irish trauma studies, which mainly focus on the Troubles. Literary criticism related to Brian Friel’s plays *Volunteers* and *Living Quarters* is also indispensable to my research. I accumulated a lot of useful materials about Friel criticism, interview, diary, etc. to build my argument on. All the preparations paved the way for my project of reading Friel’s plays as trauma literature to broaden and diversify the current Irish trauma studies.

**Completion of the Project and Project Results**
I completed a draft of an article “The Trauma Narratives in Brian Friel’s *Volunteers* and *Living Quarters*” last summer, and I used part of the fall semester to refine it for publication. By now I have submitted this article to New Hibernia Review, the top journal in my filed. I also plan to present it at a major conference in my field, the 2014 meeting of the American Conference for Irish Studies and the Canadian Association of Irish Studies at University College Dublin since my proposal has been accepted.

The time and focus this grant gave me also made it possible for me to start examining other Irish works, especially by Irish women writers, in relation to trauma. For example, both Mary Beckett and Jennifer Johnston have written about the Troubles in Northern Ireland in very different ways. Ultimately, I plan to write another article in this direction for publication.