

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

**Irish Pagan Dance as a Redemptive Force for the Celebration of Life: A Study of
Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa***

**A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English,
Tribhuvan University, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Arts in English.**

**By
Fanadhar Dangi**

**Central Department of English
Kirtipur, Kathmandu
June, 2008**

Tribhuvan University
Central Department of English

Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled **Irish Pagan Dance as a Redemptive Force for the Celebration of Life: A Study of Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*** by Fanadhar Dangi has been submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University. It has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee:

Internal Examiner

External Examiner

Head
Central Department of English

Date: _____

Acknowledgements

This dissertation has highly profited from the valuable suggestions of teachers and friends who proposed changes and additions, enhancing the usefulness of my research work. I welcome this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Rajendra Kumar Panthee under whose guidance this dissertation has been prepared.

I am also indebted to the Central Department of English for providing me an opportunity to conduct this research work. I am grateful to my Department Chief, Dr. Krishna Chandra Sharma for his efficient management of the department.

Mention must also be made about help received from my Parents, my life partner Sunita Karki (Dangi), Yogendra Guragain and to all my friends of the English Department for helping me one way or the other.

Thanking everyone,

Fanadhar Dangi

June 2008.

Abstract

Dancing at Lughnasa, is Brian Friel's beautiful, spirited, powerful stage play about five sisters living in a house in County Donegal, Ireland. In the turbulent times of 1936, the five unmarried Mundy sisters live in a modest croft at the heart of a rugged farm outside Ballybeg, a small town in Donegal. The imperious teacher Kate, the irreverent big-hearted keeper of the hearth Maggie, the serene familial rudder Agnes, the sweetly eccentric and simple-minded Rose, and the lonely romantic Christina, has creased the family reputation with an illegitimate son, all are heavenly bodies revolving around the 8-year old love child, Michael. Set against the pagan ritual of an offering of the first-cut corn to the god Lugh, Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa* vividly depicts the frustrated but animated Mundy sisters and other male characters. By reacting impulsively to the sudden music that blares out through their radio set, they break into a frenzy of uninhibited wild dancing as their tribal festival of Lughnasa. The Mundy sisters other male characters take resort to the Irish Pagan Dance as it offers them the energy to overcome their frustration from the burden of life and convention of society.

Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	iv
Contents	v
Charter One: General Introduction	
Brian Friel and His Works	1
Chapter Two: Carnival: A Theoretical Modality	
Carnival and the Celebration of Life	11
Chapter Three: Textual Analysis	
Irish Pagan Dance as Redemptive Force for the Celebration of Life	29
The Mundy Sisters and their Dance	35
Chapter Four: Conclusion	50
Works Cited	53