News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SCHOLAR OF NORTHERN IRISH LITERATURE PRESENTS "THE LIBERATING FICTION OF COMMUNITY IN BRIAN FRIEL'S PLAY *THE FREEDOM OF THE CITY*"

HOUSTON (Jan. 16, 2006) — Northern Irish literature specialist Dr. Richard Rankin Russell will present the "Liberating Fiction of Community in Brian Friel's play *The Freedom of the City*," at 7:30 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 16, in Cullen Hall, 4001 Mt. Vernon on the University of St. Thomas campus. The University of St. Thomas Center for Irish Studies and The Irish Society sponsor this lecture, which is free and open to the public. Contact Lori Gallagher at 713-525-3592 for more information.

Brian Friel's two perennial themes of potential and community coalesce in *The Freedom of the City* (1973) as the characters trapped in the Derry Guildhall form a provisional community based on a shared humanity rife with potential for the Northern political situation. This provisional community is Friel's answer to another group of provisionals that would swell in numbers after Bloody Sunday—the Provisional Irish Republican Army. British Imperialism had formerly squelched attempts at a true democracy; subsequent events after this turning point in the Troubles would create entrenched attitudes backed up by violence on both sides. There was a moment during Bloody Sunday, Friel suggests, when both sides might have had a chance to engage in constructive conversation, but that chance passes quickly.

Richard Rankin Russell earned his Ph.D. at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and now serves as an assistant professor of English at Baylor University. He specializes in Northern Irish literature, Anglo-Irish literature and 20th Century British literature. He has several books in manuscript form or slated for publication next year.

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