

RESURRECTIONS: THE USE OF FOLKLORE THEMES AND MOTIFS
IN MARINA CARR'S WORKS

by

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A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Department of Theater Arts
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

March 2008

“Resurrections: The Use of Folklore Themes and Motifs in Marina Carr’s Works,” a dissertation prepared by Eric-Michael MacCionnaith in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Department of Theater Arts.

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An Abstract of the Dissertation of

Eric-Michael A. MacCionnaith for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in the Department of Theater Arts to be taken March 2008

Title: RESURRECTIONS: THE USE OF FOLKLORE THEMES AND MOTIFS IN MARINA
CARR'S WORKS.

Approved: _____
Dr. John Watson

This study explores and demonstrates how Marina Carr uses Irish folktale motifs in her plays to bring the audience to a state of mind where they viscerally, as opposed to intellectually, engage with Ireland's search for a cultural post-colonial identity.

The analysis of Carr's works focuses on four of her post-*Mai* plays: *The Mai*, *Portia Coughlan*, *By the Bog of Cats*, and *On Raftery's Hill*. The focus is on the connection between these plays and Irish folklore, and explores Carr's use of folklore motifs within her plays. The analysis uses the folkloristic research approach, which classifies items or stories in the folktales by identifying distinguishing characteristics or specific items within a tale genre. The indices used in the analysis are *Aarne-Thompson Index*, Tom-Peete Cross's *Motif-Index of Early Irish Literature*, and Sean O'Sullivan's *Motif-Index of Irish Folklore*. The plays were searched for motifs that correspond with those of the folktale motifs, and were then compared with those found in the indices.

A second analysis showed that, within these four plays, Marina Carr mainly uses Irish folktales from before England's colonization. She modifies the folktales within her plays, specifically around the issue of agency for her female protagonists. The concluding chapter offers a Jungian explanation of Carr's use of these folktales as a means to engage the Irish national discussion of the development of a cultural identity.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A handful of words at the beginning of this dissertation seems entirely inadequate for the task of thanking those who I wish to acknowledge for their contributions to my success in the completion of this writing. However, since words of thanks are all I have now, I did not want the moment to escape without sharing with the world (or perhaps rather whoever might happen unsuspectingly to pick up this dissertation when they were looking for, say, *The Great Gatsby*) the wealth of assistance, support, caring, and patience that were afforded to me in earnest altruism.

First and foremost, and beyond all words, I cannot imagine this work having been completed without the patience, support, and loving threats of my wife, Katie. And although he is only two years old, Sage, my son has been a driving force behind the completion of this project. Nothing is more motivating than having a beautiful, hopeful child ask: “When are you going to be done, daddy?”

I owe special thanks to my committee members, Dianne Dugaw (who has been a kind and guiding hand with her wisdom and insight both in the field of folklore and in her personal advice throughout my program), Robert Barton (whose publishing advice early on in my career was an inspiration, especially as the process drew out), John Schmor (whose clear, challenging questions helped to both broaden and deepen my thoughts) and to John Watson, my chair (for, well, far beyond what I can acknowledge here. Thank you so very much).

And Laura Bennett, you are a goddess. I’ll kiss you later.

For Katie and Sage, and my mom, Andrea

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As a body of works, Marina Carr's plays can be described as persuasive, provocative, rich in poetry, fused with gentle humor and harbored rage. People who are cursed as a result of distrustfulness, lies, and betrayal, and thus are eternally bound to their combined ill fates inhabit the worlds of her plays. Aching beauty and horror hauntingly cohabit in her plays, grotesque melding with an almost religious sublimity. The so-called "normal" people who happen to wander into her landscapes often seem to be lost and misplaced therein.

Many scholars and reviewers have compared Carr's tragedies to those of the Greeks. There is an epic, larger than life itself quality to her works. Characters seem locked into a fate that drives them forward, despite their futile attempts to resist. In Carr's works, as in the Greek tragedies, karmic bonds exist between characters that cannot be broken. Love is the largest emotion for her characters, though not the Romantic notion of love, but a bone-deep, primal love that damages those who experience it fullest. Also like the Greeks, Carr latches onto archetypal myths and builds her stories around them. Reviewers often note the similarity of the stories to particular Greek plays: *Ariel* as *Iphigenia*, *By the Bog of Cats* as *Medea*, *Portia Coughlan* as *Antigone*. While there is strong evidence for a connection between Greek tragedy and Carr's work, such an analysis leaves many of Carr's images, such as animal mutilations, fratricide, humans eating live mice, burning livestock, family curses, and twins having sex in the womb unexplained. An analysis that connects Carr's plays to Irish folklore will make sense of the seemingly senseless aspects found in her plays.

BIOGRAPHY OF MARINA CARR

Marina Carr was born in 1964 in County Offaly in Ireland's midlands, an area that features prominently in her work. She was a self-described "scut" (a worthless contemptible person) who built her first theater with her brother in the backyard shed. Much like the work she has shared with the theater community at large, her earliest dramas in that shed were "bloody and brutal" because "scuts know instinctively that morality is a human invention, fallible and variable as the wind, and so our dramas were strange and free and cruel" (McCavana 2005).

She attended University College Dublin and graduated in 1987. Following graduation, she became writer in residence first for the Abbey Theatre and then at Trinity College, Dublin. She was appointed Heimbold Professor of Irish Studies at Villanova University in 2003. She has won numerous awards over the years for her work including the Susan Smith Blackburn Award in 1997 for *Portia Coughlan*, and the Irish Times/ESB Award for Best New Play in 1998 for *By the Bog of Cats*, as well as a Macauley Fellowship, a Hennessey Award, and the EM Forster Prize from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She was recently inducted into the prestigious Irish Aosdána, an organization honoring Irish artists whose works have greatly contributed to Irish culture and art.

Her works include *Low in the Dark* (first performed at the Project Arts Centre in Dublin in 1989), *The Deer's Surrender* (Andrews Lane Theatre, Dublin, 1990), *This Love Thing* (Project Arts Centre, 1991), *Ullaloo* (Abbey Theatre, Dublin, 1991), *The Mai* (Peacock Theatre, Dublin, 1994), *Portia Coughlan* (Peacock Theatre, Dublin, 1996), *By the Bog of Cats* (1998), *On Raftery's Hill* (Druid Theatre, Galway, 2000), *Ariel* (Abbey Theatre, Dublin 2002), and *Woman and Scarecrow* (2006).

IRISH IDENTITY AND ENGLAND

The theater of Ireland, of which Marina Carr is a part, has historically focused on the issue of national identity. In order to understand why this issue is so pervasive in Irish theater, one must understand the historical struggle that Ireland has had with the constant threats to its perception of identity, and where Ireland is currently within its own process of forming its post-colonial identity. A timeline that correlates key political events in Ireland with major theatrical events is provided in Appendix A. This timeline spans the events from 1171-2001.

One of the main issues involved with the formation of an Irish identity is Ireland's relationship with England. Edward Said, a renowned literary and cultural critic, laid forth a definition of the actions of Britain over the past four hundred years, one that points to its clear status as a colonizer of Ireland and its desire to maintain the colonizer/colonized relationship through social, political, and economic domination, a relationship that lasted well into the 20th century. Said notes that one of the key components of colonialism is the designation of a conquered people as "other" (Said 325). This 'other' status remains far after the initial conquering of the area, as the cultural distinctions between the groups not only remain intact, but more importantly, the distinctions become more emphasized. Thus, colonization is less about a physical

domination of another culture (though this does enter into it) than it is about an ontological and epistemological distinction that is drawn between cultures with an implied superiority of one over the other. In the years following the Peace Accord of 1998, a seminal moment for Irish autonomy, Ireland has begun to restructure itself as an independent state within an international context. Ireland is moving into its role as a post-colonial state, and as such, is in search of an identity. A brief discussion of the history of this process between England and Ireland will more fully explain both Marina Carr's theatrical commentary on the problem of Irish identity and the application of Jungian analysis to this identity process.

According to Said's theory, England colonized Ireland while other invaders settled. Ireland as a country had waves of immigrations that occurred before England's arrival. The first main immigration was in the early medieval times by the Ui Ne'ill dynasty who traced their origin to King Niall of the Ninth Hostage. The second main immigration took place in the ninth century by Viking raiders who eventually integrated themselves into Irish society, establishing trade towns, most notably Dublin. In the late 12th century the Anglo-Norman invasion came to Ireland. While many assimilated into the Irish life, they never came to see themselves as Irish, calling themselves the 'English of the Land of Ireland'. Most wars and tensions of the last four centuries are a product of this dimension. In the 17th century Ulster was planted with English and Scottish settlers, which furthered the colonization of Ireland.

Colonization and the Penal Laws

Finally, and most important to our discussion of England's colonization of Ireland, were the penal laws against the Irish Catholic majority, which involved property rights and social order. Unlike the Ui Ne'ill, Vikings, Picts, Celts, and Gaels before them, England set about to 'other' the Irish. Throughout history, England exploited Ireland's natural resources and its work forces for its own economic betterment while degrading the quality of life for the Irish people. Ireland's tax revenue was also used to increase English wealth lending little or no benefit to the Irish people. Beyond economics, England frequently called upon the Irish people in times of warfare, not as citizens, but as volunteers. Socially and politically, the Irish people were largely disenfranchised as citizens; English law ensured that the Irish had little or no political, social, or economic freedom. These are not the acts of a government towards its own people, but acts of a government towards a colony.

In 1361, English parliament passed an edict declaring that pure-blooded Irish could not hold any positions of power either in England or Ireland. Such positions included mayor, bailiffs,

or clergy who were serving the English crown. In 1366, this edict was quickly followed by laws forbidding intermarriage of Irish and English inhabitants of Great Britain. Subsequently this second edict forbade any Englishman from using the Irish language, engaging in Irish customs, or enforcing any extant Irish laws that were not endorsed by the throne of England.

Cromwell rose to power in 1651. Cromwell redistributed Ireland's primarily Catholic-owned land among those who were loyal to his cause; Protestant, puritan loyalists who were the soldiers and investors who had helped to bring him to power in England. Not surprisingly, these were the same settlers whose descendants later sparked disputes about high taxes and unsustainable land rent rates. These land use disputes that began with Cromwell were at the forefront of both countries' frustrations and anger, and remained a foundational issue upon which later were piled issues of religion, culture, and governance. Throughout the Cromwellian period, what appeared to be a Protestant/Catholic dispute was primarily over the right to own land, a dispute that was brewing and finally brought to a head by Cromwell when he rose to power in 1651. By 1656, over 60,000 Irish Catholics, primarily women and children, had been sent to Barbados and the Caribbean to serve as slaves on English sugar plantations and by 1658, under Cromwellean rule, Ireland's estimated 1.5 million inhabitants had been reduced to less than 500,000, through slavery and murder.

The Irish saw a relaxation of many of the penal laws under the rules of James II and William of Orange, and with the Treaty of Limerick in 1691, many of the human and religious rights of the Irish people were restored. English parliament restored to the Irish people all the lands that had been confiscated from them since 1641. But throughout the next one hundred and fifty years, England established a series of laws that were intended to strip native Irish Catholics of their power in Ireland. In 1704, the first of the enforced penal laws was passed, followed by numerous others, all designed to abject the Irish in a process of "othering" through differences in religion, socio-economic status, class, and culture. Edmund Burke summed English parliament's penal laws as

well fitted for the oppression, impoverishment and degradation of a feeble people and the debasement in them of human nature itself as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man (82).

While many of these penal laws were directed at the Catholic clergy in Ireland, it was not long before the general religious and civil rights for the Irish populace were also trod upon. From

1558 to 1760, the penal laws addressed nearly every aspect of Irish life in one form or another, serving both to subjugate and “other” the Irish population. Irish were not allowed to sit in parliament, ensuring Protestant rule of the Isle. The Irish could not work for English corporations in Dublin or any English corporation outside the Pale, ensuring that the peasantry remained poor. They were not allowed to join the English army or navy. This act was two-fold in that it at once kept the Irish from gaining any substantial power and kept weapons out of the hands of the Irish peasantry. They were excluded from practicing law or any other civil service job, allowing English and/or Protestant control of the legal system and the day to day operations of the government of Ireland. They could not take positions of any power within the government, including sheriff, constable, or juror, presumably for the same purpose. An Irishman could not head the Bank of Ireland, ensuring that wealth again be kept out of the hands of any Irish. And if an Irishman was a business owner, he could not employ more than two Catholic workers (including apprentices) at any one time. With such a law in place, it ensured that money was not concentrated in any hands but the English. The Irish were forbidden to own a house, could not buy or acquire land, could not hold the mortgage on land, and were excluded from living in many of the major metropolitan areas of Ireland.

Because of the Penal laws, many of which remained in effect throughout the bulk of the 1700s, both landlords and wealthy merchants were strongly represented in parliament. The bulk of the Irish population, who were native Irish and largely Catholic, were completely unrepresented in Irish government. With such an unbalanced representation and with little chance that any legitimate power would shift to the native Irish, violence seemed to be the only meaningful recourse. In addition, the American Revolution during the later part of the 18th century fostered thoughts in the Irish of an Irish independence movement. Throughout the end of the century, “the relationship between the native parliament and British officials increasingly turned on the question of the limits of Irish autonomy” (Pašeta 5). Many within the Irish parliament believed that the Irish independent government, even if still connected with England, should have a great deal more power in regards to decisions pertaining to its people.

The Act of Union

Following a quelled Irish uprising in 1798 the English passed the Act of Union, which established the Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Typically, this moment marks the beginning of modern Irish history for most scholars and forms the foundation of our discussion of Ireland’s reckoning with its status as an English colony. “The Act of Union between Great Britain

and Ireland which came into effect on 1 January 1801 presents (us) with a convenient but far from straightforward starting point for a survey of modern Irish history” (Pašeta 16).

This moment in Irish history began demands for the repeal and reform of the relationship between England and Ireland and was a key point in bringing together the Irish in a single cause. The Irish people’s demand for the repeal of the Act of Union coalesced in their free-floating frustration about the many years of English oppression. This was the beginning of the movements that marched into the 20th century, dividing the country into those who supported the Act (the Unionists) and those who did not (the Republicans). The Unionists were largely Protestants of English decent, while the Republicans were largely Catholic of Irish decent, thus forming another category of distinction for the focus of the violence that was to follow.

Political Violence and Irish Identity

In 1823, Daniel O’Connell, an influential Irish Catholic leader of the 19th century, had rallied the Irish behind a plan to change England’s involvement in Irish affairs. Despite the progress made in Ireland without the use of force, O’Connell, like Parnell who followed, was only able to force England’s hand with the *threat* of violence (Pašeta 24). O’Connell’s success relied heavily on the support of both Republicans and Unionists, both of whom believed that O’Connell was acting on their behalf. The threat of violence, coupled with broad public support and the active involvement of the Church in politics helped Westminster to recognize the need to act on the Irish problem. Influenced by the American Revolution, some Irish believed that the best way to dissolve the relationship was through violence. In 1846, as no significant progress had been made through O’Connell’s nonviolent means, the Young Islanders split from O’Connell’s Association to pursue physical political force. And in 1848, the Young Islanders staged an armed rebellion that was quickly put down by British troops. The Young Islanders failed primarily because they supported a very broad range of demands in addition to the repeal of the Act of Union. While the uprising of the Young Islanders was not a success, they set a precedent of violent change in Ireland and were broadly imitated throughout the island for the next hundred and forty years.

Movements Towards Self-Sovereignty and Identity

From the ashes of the failure of both O’Connell’s and the Young Islanders’ movements to repeal the Act of Union, and following the destruction of the Great Famine, arose the Fenian movement. Based on the legends of the Fianna, a mythic army of unstoppable Celtic warriors,

the term 'Fenian' over the next decades came to describe any organization founded in either Ireland or America that supported Irish independence. Even though the Great Famine was largely responsible for the mass exodus of Irish from Ireland, in order to raise funds for continued fighting with the British, the Fenian movement suggested that the real cause of emigration was British malevolence (Pašeta 49). In this way, the Irish began the process of 'othering' themselves. According to Said, this 'self-othering' process is one of the first steps towards a post-colonial state. Self-othering can best be described as the initial steps that any people take in their search for individual societal identity, involving a conscious and willful disconnection process against an oppressive culture.

Socially, many changes took place in Ireland during the 19th and 20th centuries as the Irish tried to counteract centuries of English colonial domination. Throughout the English occupation, the English influence was perhaps most pronounced in terms of religion, but it was also reflected in the day to day civil and social freedoms of the Irish people. While English colonization was a relatively quick process, the dissolution of its structures was a slow and painful process. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, slowly, the English-installed Protestant parliament began to soften the Penal Laws, decrease trade restrictions, and restore civil rights to the Catholic majority of Ireland. Once the Irish began to gain more privileges and status within the Irish government, laws more favorable to the Catholic majority began to be enacted. Numerous acts were repealed allowing for the teaching of the Irish language, the reintegration of the Catholic faith into society and reinstatement of land and liberties taken away during the preceding centuries.

Ireland Today, the Celtic Tiger, and Identity

Ireland's official independence is often tied to the 1916 uprising and the establishment of the Republic of Ireland. Conflict both within and among the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland continued for many more decades, however. Today, as Ireland is emerging from centuries of British occupation, becoming both an economic and political world power, playwrights are continuing to write about, discuss, draw from, and otherwise engage with Ireland's identity search. The Celtic Tiger is at once an economic and social revolution. The economic aspect has emerged from Ireland's connection with the European Union and its positive effect on the Irish economy. Ireland is currently at the forefront of a technological revolution, becoming a center for computer technology production and programming. Its economic growth during the 1990s was unprecedented and moved Ireland from its poor, agrarian roots to a world

economic power. During the 1990s, Ireland was purported to have had the highest growth of per capita income for any nation in the European Union.

In addition to major economic changes on the Isle, many established institutions of Ireland have been quickly changing as well. Politically, Ireland has gained more and more autonomy and freedom to make decisions regarding its people. Power sharing between opposing and previously warring groups has become a key element in the success of the government of Northern Ireland. The peace process has made substantial gains throughout both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Religion is changing in the Republic as well. Catholicism is no longer at the core of many life decisions for the vast majority of people. As a result, many of the religious division lines between the Irish people drawn in times past are fading. The Celtic Tiger is a movement both economically away from the peasant market into the world market, as well as a social movement that has spawned many day-to-day changes in the lives of the Irish people.

As Ireland moves away from its past identity as both a part of Great Britain and a poor, agrarian economy, and towards a self-governed, economically viable entity, many are asking "who are we as a people?" Many have shrugged off anything of the past, instead turning to a complete overhaul of Ireland's image. As a major world class city, Dublin is beginning to look more like any other city in the world, with McDonalds and Kinkos tucked into the centuries-old buildings along O'Connell Street. Dairmud O'Giollain wondered "Are these the uncomfortable compromises with modernity that an ancient folk culture has to make in order to survive in an unsentimental world?" (4).

As Ireland addresses its Celtic Tiger transformation, theater is a key player, as a catalyst as well as reflection of this change. "Theatre is part of a broader cultural conversation, about who we are, how we are in the world and who and how we would like to be" (148-9). If theater truly is a reflection of life, of course it would be a dynamic element in the formation of Ireland's new identity.

MARINA CARR'S PLACE IN THE IRISH PLAYOGRAPHY

Carr's work can be placed within a long lineage of Irish dramatic literature writers who, like her, seem to explore, in various ways, an Irish national identity through the plays they write. In the twilight years of the 19th century, three Irish visionaries came together to form the Irish National Theatre Society (later the Abbey Theatre). W.B. Yeats, Lady Gregory, and Edward Martyn had a vision for an Irish national theater that would bring together the Irish people and

help rediscover Ireland's identity. The theater immediately became a central tool in the establishment of Ireland's national identity. Yeats and his contemporaries viewed Ireland's national identity in fairly modernist terms, believing in an absolute national identity, i.e. they believed that there was a singular identity and theater was going to find it. As Nicholas Grene states in, *The Politics of Irish Drama*, "Ireland, from at least as far back as Bouccault, was a marketable phenomenon: A space, a place that needed to be represented and represented truly" (2). While Bouccault used the stage to create a "marketable" Irish image, other Irish playwrights have sought a "truer" identity for Ireland. Yeats thought it was to be found in a lyric, mythical theater. However, this form of theater gave way to the realistic-inspired dramas of J.M. Synge and Sean O'Casey, the socio-political comedies of Brendan Behan, and the earlier kitchen dramas of Brian Friel. Irish audiences seem inherently to understand the power of the theater and its ability to transform the lives of the Irish people by what is represented on its stages, a sort of 'sympathetic magic'. The riots following the premiers of Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* and of O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* were a testament to this understanding of the power of their theater to manipulate identity, as well as Ireland's desire to ensure that it was manipulated correctly. The riots were the Irish audience's communication that the representations seen on the stage threatened to move the discussion of identity in an undesired direction. Later in the century, Brian Friel exposed the power of language to transform a people and their identity in his *Translations*. Like O'Casey, Anne Devlin addressed the price of violence and its effect on the identity of Ireland. Like Friel, John B. Keane wrestled with language and with the role of the female within the Irish psyche, an issue that Carr, too, seems to be exploring with her use of Irish folklore in her plays.

Ireland's national discussion of identity has changed since the time of Yeats. It has moved from a more absolute understanding of national identity to a more complex questioning of being. Irish dramas now seem to be "questions of being, becoming, and belonging [and] are staged as processes emergent in contemporary experience" (Leeney 150). "Becoming" as Cathy Leeney mentions, is not a quiet and peaceful experience. It can be inherently violent, painful, and soul rending, a 'primal becoming', not dissimilar to a Jungian concept of the development of identity. Setting has held an important place in the Irish playwrights' exploration of identity, a tool that Carr also uses. "The West of Ireland (the Gaeltacht) has long been viewed as the 'most Irish' region of Ireland, because it has historically been the most remote and untouched part of the country, largely unmoled by any of the invasions of the past 1500 years (Giollain 3)". This

area, as a result, has the richest folklore traditions and maintains an almost mythic presence in the Irish mind. John M. Synge, W.B. Yeats, and Brian Friel, along with many other Irish playwrights have set plays there in an attempt to recapture 'true Irishness' for theater audiences. Like their earlier counterparts, the playwrights of modern Ireland are setting their plays within the Gaeltacht, an image that is changing from the sacred domain of the honest, hardworking, upright, god-fearing peasant to, as Carr's plays reflect, a dark, primordial ooze. Not unlike the bogs that dominate the landscape, it is a place where the darkest versions of the self exist, mired in magic, incest, murder, and violence. The concluding chapter provides a more detailed discussion of how Carr's work fits into Ireland's historical and present search for national identity, and specifically how she uses Irish folklore.

The plays of the Celtic Tiger playwrights, Marina Carr, Martin McDonagh, Conor MacPherson, Gina Moxley and others (Furay 4) generally resemble the old iconic Ireland of kitchen dramas¹ of the early 20th century in one form or another. They all set their plays, not only in the Gaeltacht, but also in pubs, kitchens, great rooms, and around the hearth of turf fires. To compliment the stereotypical setting, the characters are often seen knitting, drinking tea or whiskey, dancing and singing, and are usually poor and Catholic. The Celtic Tiger playwrights seem to take the marketable image of the early 20th century dramas and expose the darker side.

For playwright, Gina Moxley, this connection is about violent predestination. The young characters in her *Danti-Dan* are all striving toward maturity and find it in the crimes of adulthood. Dan is doomed from the start and, like Iphigenia, she can only exist to meet her fate at the bottom of a ravine, sacrificed at the hands of another child. Connor McPherson's works, *St. Nicolas*, *The Weir*, and *Shining City* all delve directly into the spirit world in a far more direct manner than did any of the middle 20th century playwrights. In *St. Nicolas*, a theater critic's eyes are opened when he is taken in by something much older and viler than he: vampires. The depravity in which the vampires engage mirrors the modern conception of drunken pagan festivals of old. Both *The Weir* and *Shining City* address the realm of the afterworld and its connection to our own reality. Ghosts and memories are indistinguishable in these two plays. Both elements inhabit the space that the characters from these plays share, and these elements help to tie McPherson's works into a darker, less tangible reality than what we like to believe we all share in today's modern world. McDonagh's works are grotesque, ultra violent, and hearken back to imagined notions of what a pre-Christian civilization might have looked like. In his works, mothers, fathers, brothers, priests, wives, friends, and cats are killed in horrible ways. Brains are spattered with fireplace pokers and

guns, bones are crushed with hammers, and eyes are put out, all without guilt. Cats are gutted on stage, cows are maimed, and humans are clubbed, shot, hacked, tortured, and electrocuted. Oedipus' would joyfully choose his fate rather than inhabit a McDonaghian world and face a McDonaghian demise. Marina Carr's work is best placed within this pack of Celtic Tiger playwrights, as her work also twists the brightly lit Ireland into a dark, brutal, and poetic world. How to place Marina Carr and her contemporary Celtic Tiger playwrights into Irish theater is a question explored by many critics, and is discussed in more detail in the literature review.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In contrast with the popular success with Irish audiences, Marina Carr's works have received less notice within academia. The research that does exist on Marina Carr's plays can be easily divided into two types of analysis. The first main area of analysis is concerned with Carr's place within the Irish theatrical tradition. All the analyses of this type seem to agree with the definition of the Irish theatrical tradition that historian, Christopher Murray, provides. Murray claims the Irish theatrical tradition is one that "oscillates always between tradition and innovation. It never occupies one pole for long, but always registers the tension. Irish drama is a long, energetic dispute with a changing audience over the same basic issues: where we come from, where we are now, and where we are headed" (225). Such a definition highlights Irish drama's place within the historical discussion of national identity. Thus, this type of analysis of Carr's work (one concerned with the Irish theatrical tradition), is basically questioning how Carr's work succeeds or fails to contribute to such an identity discussion. While no one disputes that Marina Carr clearly, and often disturbingly, discusses 'where we have been and where we are' some suggest she lacks a discussion of 'where we are headed'. Fintan O'Toole, a critic who writes for the Irish Times, seems to capture such a concern in his review of *Ariel*. "Carr is laying out the ground that the best Irish dramatists of the younger generation must now copy" (O'Toole 188). However, she may leave us without enough of 'where we are going' and "risks the kind of literal overkill that comes when bodies pile up in rapid succession of catastrophes" (O'Toole 189).

Feminism, the second type of analysis, critiques such responses to Carr's work by pointing out that the female experience and voice have been marginalized, at best, and possibly excluded from the Irish theatrical tradition. Many note that female experience, as seen on Irish stages, is limited to the home, either as mother or wife. Such a critique places Marina Carr squarely within the Irish theatrical tradition of questioning national identity by questioning the

female place within such an identity. Many feminist critics claim that she is both crossing and forever changing the boundaries of this tradition. As Cathy Leevy states in “Ireland’s ‘exiled’ women playwrights: Teresa Deevy and Marina Carr”:

If women are already exiles in their own land, how does alienation characterize their work; how might their work be a literature of alienation? The boundaries around Irish women’s realities define containment as a form of exile: exile from self-expression, from self-determination. Only the crossing of a boundary makes a boundary visible (150).

While the feminist analyses help place Carr as an Irish playwright within the Irish theatrical tradition and help to shed light on some images and themes of the plays, almost all the researchers note that Marina Carr does not consider herself to be a feminist playwright. The reality of her admission seems obvious, for while feminist analysis illuminates much of the mystery of Carr’s plays, the analysis does not seem to be able to delve deep enough into the often bizarre images and characters that we see in her work.

Both analytical approaches mention Carr’s use of Greek myth, yet such an analysis falls short of fully understanding her work. Her plays do seem to incorporate many elements of Greek myth. Many of these studies use *Medea* as a comparison point, and find Greek structure, themes, and in some cases, characters in *The Mai*, *Portia Coughlan*, *By the Bog of Cats*, *Raftery’s Hill*, and *Ariel*. This analysis is certainly founded, and at times even offers compelling explanations of the grotesque, violent, and often confusing or disturbing images in the plays. However, many of the images stand untouched by this form of analysis, leaving us without a clear understanding of the most misunderstood aspects of Carr’s plays, namely the folkloric images and tales. More importantly, such types of analysis seem to be unable to connect Carr’s use of folklore with the larger discussion of Irish national identity, which this study hopes to be able to make clear.

Marina Carr and the Irish Theatrical Tradition

As mentioned above, Christopher Murray’s article lays out the basics of the Irish theatrical tradition (referred to as ‘the tradition’ hereto) in terms with which most other writers concerned with the problem of Carr and the tradition seem to agree. In his article “A National Dream-life’: the contemporary drama”, Murray discusses the tradition within the context of the contradiction of the brightly-lit financial and social progress of the Celtic Tiger and the disintegration of the tenuous Irish national identity. He describes this state as a place between

“the bright lights of Europe...and, as Thomas Kinsella referred to it, ‘this untiring, crumbling place of growth’ (223). He compares Ireland and its theater now to the years in Ireland between 1884 and the early 1990s where “metaphysical ‘crumbling’ began to seem more meaningful than economic ‘growth’. “Paradoxically, this climate was more hospitable to the creation of good drama than had been the climate of stagnation in the age of de Valera” (224). He defines the tradition of Irish drama and claims that playwrights such as Friel, Murphy, and Leonard keep to this and what Yeats demanded of playwrights at the beginning of the century. Yeats claimed ‘a play to be suitable for performance at the Abbey should contain some criticism of life, founded on the experience or personal observation of the writer, or some vision of life, of Irish life by preference, important from its beauty or from some excellence of style’ (Gregory 62). Murray claims that Friel, Murphy, and Leonard, along with Yeats, Synge, and O’Casey make up “classic” (225) Irish theater, one that “maps out and defines the uncertain moral climate of modern Ireland” (225). He claims that they are now being succeeded by a second group of ‘playwrights whose status is as yet uncertain’ (225), one that he calls for want of a better term, avant-garde (231). He uses the term avant-garde not in reference to the historical avant-garde movement, but rather as a term to describe a reoccurring phenomenon in Irish theater. Murray claims that Irish theater periodically goes through moments of challenging the traditional notions of the boundaries of Irish theater. He states, “The [Irish theatrical] tradition will renew itself in the avant-garde. It will not do this automatically, however, and so each generation must begin anew to reinvent and restore the savagery of the ‘savage god’ Dionysus” (231). As mentioned earlier, Murray sees a connection between the present Irish drama and that of the 1990s and 1884, as both periods experienced avant-garde theater.

Murray goes on to give a more precise explanation of his use of avant-garde in reference to the tradition. He claims that the avant-garde theatrical moments in Irish theater have two main features: “(1) exploration of dream states or the instinctive and subconscious levels of the psyche and (2) a quasi-religious focus on myth and magic involving ritualistic patterns of performance” (231). Murray claims that “Marina Carr has much in common with the avant-garde theatre”, as defined above (235). He notes that in a programme note for *Ullaloo* (1991) at the Peacock, Tom McIntyre said of her: “She is pointing to the furnace, heeded or unheeded, at the centre of our lives” (235).

Murray’s analysis of Marina Carr’s work focuses on *The Mai* and *Portia Coughlan*. By defining Marina Carr as a contemporary Irish avant-garde playwright, he places her within the

Irish theatrical tradition in a more transitory manner. While his approach places Carr in an exciting position within Irish theater, it often seems to miss some of the complexity of Carr's work. He describes *The Mai* as a play about "a modern marriage, but this 'love thing' now both defines and is the Achilles heel of the woman's role" (237). While this is certainly one aspect of *The Mai*, to claim that this is 'what the play is about' seems reductionist. However, as Murray's main question is Carr's work as avant-garde within the Irish theatrical tradition, he does well in analyzing the play in such terms when he says

The basis of the play is thus quite realistic, as is the setting. The characterization is no longer absurdist but grounded in realism, although with much room left for fantasy and eccentricity. In particular, the portrait of Grandma Fraochlain, aged 100, is a mixture of naturalistic and *cailleach* from folklore: her stories of love and fidelity carry a mythic power and yet she remains a Falstaffian rouge (237).

Murray also views *Portia Coughlan* as being avant-garde, claiming that it "even more points to the paradox that in the Irish theatre the avant-garde is conservative while it is revolutionary" (237). Certainly Carr's work fits Murray's qualifications of avant-garde work, as it both 'explores the instinctive and subconscious levels of the psyche' and 'focuses on myth and magic'. However, his analysis seems limited in its ability to make sense of Carr's more raw images and people, such as the characters Hester and Catwoman from *By the Bog of Cats* and the entirety of *Raftery's Hill*. He misses such images' intent when claiming that they serve to 'employ a political analysis dramatically' (237). He claims "she tends to fetishise the 'story' as access to the wellsprings of passion and wisdom. It is an approach that contains the danger of closing down rather than opening up the possibilities of dramatic conflict" (237). Such a statement matches the tone of O'Toole's "bodies piling up in rapid succession", and highlights a common thread found in the analyses of Carr's place within Irish tradition: mainly that while she is certainly exposing some of the most unspoken aspects of the Irish psyche that she does so at the risk of 'exploding the boundaries', as Cathy Leeney states. Murray seems a bit hesitant to give Marina Carr a more permanent place within the Irish tradition, and even hints at her possible occlusion within the tradition by claiming,

the avant-garde per se is always a transitional moment in the Irish theatre. Fairly quickly, the necessary work done by the experimentalists is either rejected or absorbed. So it is that the current avant-garde is rapidly being assimilated into the establishment. Carr as a

'new voice' ...represents the occasional and necessary reinvestigation of the whole purpose of theatre (238).

In an almost marginalizing way, Murray places Carr within the tradition as a type of necessary but bitter pill to be quickly swallowed and then left behind.

Fintan O'Toole, an Irish critical performance reviewer, provides three smart critiques of Marina Carr's work in his book, *Critical Moments*. O'Toole has his uncertainties about Carr's ability to reach her own goals, yet places her as central to the emerging Irish voice, one that, like Martin McDonough, is "giving us the measure of the new world in which we are to live" (131). In his review of *The Mai* he claims that "the trappings of the well-made play are no more than a rough grounding for the play" that "works by evoking an atmosphere rather than by enacting a story" (130). This is interesting in comparison with Murray, who feels that her 'fetishising the story' compromises an actual dramatic conflict. O'Toole goes on to describe the 'atmosphere' as "doom-laden but not gloomy" and "compounded of myth and memory, of fierce longings and bitter elegy" (130).

O'Toole, like Murray, recognizes the seemingly familiar and almost trite storyline, but goes on to note that "Carr expands this all too commonplace story into the dimensions of myth and archetype, giving the play a generational sweep by balancing Mai with her ancient grandmother on the one side and her daughter Millie on the other. Carr gives us five generations, so intertwined that it is hard to remember which is which" (130). O'Toole goes beyond merely showing how *The Mai* is not as commonplace as it may initially appear to some. He weaves this play into the fabric of the Irish theatrical tradition by showing how it speaks to Ireland's self-knowing journey. He mentions the various countries and cities that are important parts to the story of *The Mai*, such as "North Africa, New York, Paris, an island off the West coast, and a Midlands lakeshore. The Ireland she imagines is a porous place, its people seeping out, stray bits seeping of the world seeping in" (130).

While the focus of O'Toole's review is not one of exploring or illuminating the more unrealistic images of *The Mai*, images such as the Owl Lake being created from a lake of tears, Mai seeking a healing thread and needle at a butcher shop, or Grandma Fraochlain believing herself to be descendent of the Sultan of Spain, he does nod towards the surrealistic aspect of the work and argues that there is a place for it within the Irish tradition, a tradition that is heavily steeped in realism. "The key is an understanding that realism and surrealism are no longer

opposites for Irish theatre, that our reality is so strange that only strange images can encompass it” (131).

The Mai’s “porous nature” leaks into *Portia Coughlan*. O’Toole claims “the landscape of Marina Carr’s plays is both literally and metaphorically watery” (164). O’Toole clearly views the water in *Portia* as more menacing. O’Toole ties the water with Carr’s strong connection to language, one of the defining aspects of the Irish tradition. “The words, like the landscape, are flat and slow, and they suck you down into treacherous depths. And both landscape and speech belong to the wider set of metaphors that hold the play together, images in which clear distinctions keep breaking down” (165).

The ‘breaking down’ and wateriness of Carr’s work is always something that O’Toole mentions in his critical reviews of her works. He views such wateriness as a “terrible unsteady ground for a theatre piece to stand on” (165), but always goes on to note that Carr has “great courage...and great skill to make it work” (165). While O’Toole values Carr’s courageous attempts at deep psychic delving, he usually places the success of her plays on “great direction and acting of extraordinary coherence” (165). The majority of his review of *Portia Coughlan* is spent discussing the met challenges and successes of the performers, designers and director. In comparison with his other reviews of Carr’s work, which certainly mention such important aspects but that focus mainly on the text itself, we gain a glimpse into O’Toole’s discomfort with the play. He mentions that

just in case the audience has any illusions of escape, Carr places the action in the middle of the play, cutting off all hope. What we watch thereafter is a kind of psychic autopsy, a cold delving into the tissues of Portia’s mind to discover and pluck out the cause of death: the knotty, incestuous society of a rural Ireland that has seldom been painted in such dark colours (167).

Such a statement seems to echo many other critic’s concerns that Carr is not leaving us with enough hope or insight into the future course of Ireland, a required aspect of the tradition, and that while she is certainly examining the past and present that the realism of such depictions are unsettling to the sensibilities. While such aspects of Carr’s work are problematic for O’Toole, he does not see them displacing Carr from the Irish tradition. He does, however, see a problem for Carr within the Greek tradition, and this is of importance as so many of the articles on Carr refer to the use of Greek tragedy in her plays. In fact, it is not uncommon for those critics who reject

her fitting with the Irish theatrical tradition to find a justification for praise of her work within a Greek context.

While reviews of all of Carr's premier performances are available, they can be summarized by saying that every review finds her work dark, cruel, poetic, and bold. Beyond that, international audiences give very mixed reviews of her work. The most widely tolerated play is certainly *The Mai* as it has the least amount of confusing images for the international audience. *Portia Coughlan* and *By the Bog of Cats* fall into the second tier and usually draw the interest of those from a feminist perspective. *On Raftery's Hill*, as Cathy Leeney puts it, is the play "no one wants to talk about" (xxvi). While a close and detailed look at each review would highlight the details of the performative aspects of Carr's plays, such information does not serve the focus of this study, that of better understanding Marina Carr's plays, specifically her more odd, bestial, liminal, and at times, cruel images. None of the reviews mention her use of folkloric elements. As Victor Merriman states,

Critics who confine themselves to accounts of performances which privilege categories such as sense of place, ear for dialog, fine observation, quality of star acting/ensemble performances, appropriateness of design and technical precision, do a good job in recording the high production standards of the plays as originally performed. Criticism that goes no further than documenting the quality of the spectacle, is wholly inadequate to critique what these plays amount to as cultural interventions (60).

With the exception of Fintan O'Toole's reviews of Marina Carr, all the other reviews fall into the category that Merriman is discussing, and therefore will not be individually mentioned in this summary.

Druids, Dudes and Beauty Queens: The changing face of Irish Theatre has several articles in it that discuss Marina Carr in relation to the Irish tradition. Vic Merriman, Emily Jean Dumay, Mic Moroney, and Anna McMullan all have articles in this book..

Vic Merriman's article, "Settling for More: Excess and Success in Contemporary Irish Drama" claims, like Murray, that Irish theater can be defined as "a broader cultural conversation about who we are, how we are in the world, and how we would like to be. Theater is a powerful means of constituting and invigorating community" (55). He claims that such views on the theater created the "cultural conditions for the establishment of The Abbey Theatre as a national theatre" (55). He discusses the works of Carr and Martin McDonough as one unit, and places them

squarely within this national tradition. He claims that their plays “stage Ireland as a benighted dystopia” (59) and notes that “dystopic visions of Ireland are nothing new in theatre” (59) citing Tom Murphy’s *Famine* and Johnny Hanaran’s and John Browne’s *Cravings* as examples.

Carr, in *By the Bog of Cats* and *Portia Coughlan*, he claims, takes as her “point of departure the condition of being poor in contemporary Ireland” (59). Of both Carr and McDonough’s work he says “the focus is tight, the performances of violence inherent in the people themselves, grotesque, unrelenting and calibrated to the tastes of an aggressive bourgeois palate” (59). In response to those who place them outside of the historical role of twentieth-century Irish playwrights he says

Equally, it is self-evident that to be a [Irish] playwright is to be a dissenting voice, an outsider. To be oppositional is to expose the persistence of gender inequality and its attendant brutalities. To be oppositional is to ‘have the courage to stage unflattering images of Irishness’. When Irish audiences ‘laugh at themselves’ the play unites the playwright’s ‘outsider’ project with the improbable proposition that mainstream theatre audiences are composed of courageous radicals (62-62).

This insightful article is probably the most clear in drawing Marina Carr into the circle of the Irish tradition. However, Merriman, like many of his Irish contemporaries, fails to address the ground in which Marina Carr harvests her ‘unflattering images’. This ground is not necessarily one of strict realism, of holding a mirror up to the Midlands of Ireland. It rather is the fertile land of the Irish folklore tradition which is so imbedded in the Irish psyche and in the Irish theatrical tradition as well (going back as far as Yeats). This connection remains largely unanalyzed; yet it is what moves the audience to keep Carr as a new light in the tradition.

Memory plays¹, while not taking up a large space within the Irish tradition, are certainly a defining aspect. The article, “Sleepwalkers along a precipice: Staging memory in Marina Carr’s *The Mai*” by Donald Morse explains how *The Mai* is a memory play. He begins his discussion with the defining of Millie as narrator, how we see the events of *The Mai* through her memory which is full of re-membering, non-linear timeline and the mapping of events onto her emotional

¹ The term, ‘memory play’ refers to a play in which the action is driven by the narration of a secondary character’s memory about the events. There are some interesting aspects of memory plays worth noting. First, the secondary character, or narrator, was present and an active participant of the events seen in the play, and is usually the only one still remaining to tell the tale. Also, memory plays are most often found within Irish drama, perhaps reflecting the importance of storytelling within Ireland. Brian Friel’s plays are a significant example.

landscape which Carr mirrors with the landscape of Owl Lake. Morse states “Yeats declared: ‘A deep of the mind can only be approached through what is most human, most delicate’ (7). In *The Mai* Marina Carr approaches such “a deep of the mind” through what is arguably the most human and the most essential of all human properties, memory.” This article, while useful to the discussion of tradition, is one of the least academic and limited in its application to the folkloric question that this study is addressing.

Emily Jean Dumay looks at the Irish tradition and Carr’s place within it from a more international viewpoint in her article “Dramatic Terrae Incognitae: A French Perspective”. She claims

in France, and indeed Europe in general, the Irish stage has for years been highly rated for its plays, performances, actresses and actors, for the poetical quality of the works, their often outlandish features and sanguine characters. Synge’s *Playboy of the Western World* is a significant example being seen on French stages – among others, up to the present day. Marina Carr remains largely unknown although her *The Mai* exists in print (196).

She goes on to explain that “Irish dramatists becoming known in France invite us to join them for a type of exploratory venture – what could be called a topomythical or mytho-topographical voyage” (206). Of *By the Bog of Cats* she claims that Carr’s use of the boundary between land and water is not unlike “forests in Shakespeare’s plays. Of such places it can be said: ‘You are entering the land of freedom!’” (207). Dumay mentions the “amazement as a set of strange creatures are brought on: a black swan, then a sort of witch or freak, the Catwoman who acts as the keeper of the area” (207). She is also confused by the “fact that the play never ventures out on to the bog proper but incessantly reveals or hints at its mystery by the means of numerous stories or legends lost in time that no one will ever bother to check” (207).

The closest that Dumay gets to understanding Carr’s work is to both compare her use of images to that of Shakespeare and to the ‘poetic outlandish figures’ of the Irish tradition as seen internationally. For Dumay, Carr falls squarely within Irish stage tradition.

Mic Moroney’s article, “The Twisted Mirror: Landscapes, Mindscapes. Politics and Language on the Irish Stage” addresses the question of

The extraordinary upsurge in new Irish theatre over the past decade and a half has seen some major additions to, as well as reinventions of the repertoire. Most of the work is very specifically Irish, and yet a great deal of it has proven to be bizarrely exportable. But

what is it that makes the bestiary of the Irish stage so keenly recognizable at home, and yet simultaneously so appealing to international audiences? And what chimaeric image of Ireland is created in the process? (250)

At one point, he humorously ponders the moment American audiences' conceptions of idyllic "true Ireland" are introduced to Marina Carr's miasmal representations:

I would have loved to be a fly inside the skull of an American diplomat or CIA operative, watching the Irish theatrical offerings at the Island Arts from Ireland festival at the Kennedy Centre in Washington in May 2000, as the latest deranged beasts of the Irish imagination reared up in front of them. There was the willfully crazed, routine incest of Marina Carr's *On Raftery's Hill* with that appalling and unforgettable scene in which Raftery climbs on top of his daughter and deflowers her in the best Irish family tradition. Oh, this was the pig-in-the-cabin-stage-Ireland alright, hurling red-hot potatoes out at you (251).

Moroney has no problem placing Marina Carr within the Irish tradition, though he does place her at the cutting edge claiming she "conjures fantastic landscapes out of the vernacular, almost to a Syngian/O'Casey template. Yet despite the archaic idioms, theirs are an utterly contemporary world as they lead you down the back lanes of the bothairins of the Irish psyche" (251). Perhaps then, Marina Carr, as the feminists suggest, can be found within the Irish theatrical tradition of searching for the national identity, but is found walking within its dark back lanes and screaming and bitching about what it is she sees there.

The Feminist Perspective

The feminist analyses of Marina Carr's work share key features. Most claim that the full Irish female experience seems to be missing from the long history of Irish drama. Many plays include women as homemakers only, and thus as supports to the male experience. This is problematic for theater's role in the national discussion of identity, as women are part of this picture. Many claim that Carr, through her plays, seems to be both questioning this omission and offering some representations of a fuller female experience. Another key feature of the feminist analysis of Carr is the questioning of Carr's female protagonists, their romantic relationships, and eventual suicides. Carr's protagonists could be seen as neurotically tied to the men that they love, even when these relationships are no longer alive. In connection with these relationships, are the

suicides of Carr's protagonists, which could be seen as the final moments of disempowered women. Many of the articles offer an alternate interpretation of Carr's females, one that views their suicides, as Bernadette Bourke offers, 'heroine suicides' that fit with the folkloric ideal of returning to the earth as both a "womb and grave" (131). In a similar light, Carr's protagonists are not neurotic in their love relationships, because while it may seem that their identities are tied to these relationships, Emily Kader points out that their identities are found in connection with their land and communities. The last key feature of feminist analysis focuses on Carr's re-appropriation of myths. Many focus on her use of Greek myths, though some branch into her re-use of Shakespeare and, in Kader's study, her use of one Irish folktale. These types of analysis discuss the differences between the original myths and the way that Carr seems to use them. Emily Kader's article, "The Anti-Exile in Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats*", discusses the exclusion of the Irish female experience in the Irish theatrical tradition. She views Carr's re-use of myth as highlighting the female experience of exile as different from the male experience. She claims that the male experience of exile from their community is one of freedom, while the female experience is one of isolation and a loss of identity. Kader seems both to agree with and synthesize the other feminist studies on Carr's plays.

Anna McMullan combines two of the feminist approaches in her article, "Unhomely Stages: Women Taking a Place in Irish Theatre". She, like Mic Moroney, claims Carr is holding up a mirror for the Irish theatrical tradition to show them the place to which the woman's experience and voice have been relegated: the "back lanes" of the tradition, or more specifically, the home. She sees Carr addressing the assumed place of women by taking her protagonists

out of place in the traditional domestic position of wife and mother, in the interior spaces of the kitchen or living room. Even the Mai, who has built her own house...is drawn to Owl Lake, which seems to increasingly invade the interior space, until we see her drowned body framed in the doorway at the end of Act One (82).

McMullan also addresses the issue of the suicides of the female protagonists in *The Mai*, *By the Bog of Cats*, and *Portia Coughlan*. She also addresses issues around the females who are sexually abused in *On Raftery's Hill*. McMullan believes that such issues

present an extremely pessimistic view of Irish womanhood. Alternative futures are stifled at a time when Ireland never seems to have had it so good. Carr focuses on those who are

marginalized from the success obsessed climate of the Celtic Tiger, and confronts us with female difference and deviance (81).

Anna McMullan's article focuses on Carr's freeing of the female experience from the consuming domesticity so often found in Irish drama. For McMullan, the landscapes that dominate the plays of Carr are the "otherworld of death" (83). As McMullan points out, "when their world fails to accommodate them, the Mai, Portia and Hester turn to the otherworld of death" (83). McMullan points to something very prevalent in Irish myth and folklore, which is the interpenetration of the world of the living and the world of the dead. The proximity between these worlds in folklore is always close, and the living routinely enter the otherworld (either willingly or by force), and the beings from the otherworld routinely enter our world. Often, little distinction is made between the two existences. Many Irish folktales make reference to water and watery landscapes as being dangerous to the living, for it is here that one can easily be taken into the otherworld. At times, the water itself is the otherworld. In Diane Purkiss' book *At the Bottom of the Garden* she discusses this concept as it relates to females.

[These watery] spaces are not women's spaces, in the sense that (say) the kitchen or the birthing room are. Rather, they are spaces of femininity, marginal as women are, places out of place, times out of time. Such silent places can become occasions for talking about what is also marginal, what cannot be said (92).

McMullan's explanation of Carr's watery landscapes comes close to investigating the folkloric elements in Carr's work, and provides a very compelling take on Carr's watery landscapes, namely, Owl Lake, Bog of Cats, and Belmont River. McMullan acknowledges the connection of such watery landscapes to the Irish notion of an otherworld that is dangerously close and present. It is in these watery otherworldly places, these places on the margins of reality, that Carr's women live and die. If we interpret Carr's protagonists' deaths as willing visitations to this dark and dangerous otherworld rather than desperate flights from their worldly realities, a reader is left to ponder not the weakness of her characters but rather their strength in willingly risking the unknown, a strength that mirrors the bravery and passion that is so celebrated in the greatest heroes of Irish folklore.

In his article, "Disrupting Metanarratives", Donald Morse asks, "What is it that women's dramatic literature exposes and interrogates?" His discussion of Marina Carr's work and how it relates to the position of place and womanhood resonates with McMullan's article. He adds to

her discussion by examining “how critics receive women versus male works,” placing women outside the Irish tradition and males within. He claims that this happens because the female experience is not easily made into metaphors about national identity.

In so far as theatre has functioned as a 'mirror up to the nation', engaging in the mythopoetic processes of national identity creation, women's writing is bound to remain marginal because its concentration of the dramatic conflict around female characters hampers readings of the texts as metaphorical engagements with the national question. Caroline Williams recalls, 'Yet again the critics were divided, confirming our suspicion that certain thematic concerns were considered "unpalatable" to some'. She quotes the reviewer from the Sunday Tribune:

The themes, with the exception of Clare Dowling's charming escapade about two young women trying to start their own business, are wife-battering, alcoholism, babies and war. Surely the human condition as experienced by Irish women playwrights encompasses other sensibilities ...? (6)

Morse places Carr in the position of using female experience as a mirror to the community that has displaced the woman from the national identity by restricting their acknowledged theatrical presence to the home while the male experience, problematically, has served as the voice for the whole community.

Marina Carr has been seen as incorporating symbols drawn from female experience into her plays. Victoria White discerns 'women's rituals and psychological dynamics sketched for the first time on the Irish stage' in *By the Bog of Cats ...*, where 'wedding dresses and communion dresses and mother-daughter relationships' constitute 'a whole symbolic system' (27).

The similar costumes of communicants and brides signify, for Victoria White, rituals in which the little girl and the young woman are initiated into a society in which they will occupy a marginal position. Morse claims Carr's work undercuts these models to expose their ideological basis and to reveal the inevitable disappointment.

Like Morse, Mary Trotter critiques “when and how women’s voices are heard in contemporary Irish drama and examines one way in which two women playwrights, Marina Carr and Christina Reid, have forced their powerful work outside Ireland’s theatrical margins” (163).

She claims that while female characters have “embodied the desires or responsibilities of male characters” (164), as *Kathleen ni Houghlan* by Yeats and Gregory, to McDonough’s *Girleen* in *Lonesome West*, “they have rarely been authentic, complex, autonomous women” (164). Trotter examines how Carr and Reid subvert one of the tradition’s central tropes of Irish realism which she refers to as “the family memory play” (163). As Donald Morse discussed in his article on *The Mai* and the memory play, Trotter claims that Carr is pushing the female narration and memory to the forefront. In traditional family memory plays she says, “female characters provide the protagonist with emotional support, a source of conflict, or a sexual interest, but the real attention in the family memory drama centers on the matrilineal relationships” (165). Trotter adds interesting insight to Morse’s memory play discussion with her analysis of *Portia Coughlan* as a reflection of Yeats “fascination with the transcendent, liminality, spirituality, myth, and occult” (168). She takes this a step further when she states that the other characters in *The Mai* refer to *Mai* as ‘The Mai’ which Trotter claims is an “adaptation of the Irish tradition of adding ‘the’ before the last name of the male head of the clan” (168). She also claims that the women “make sense of their lives through inventing mythic stories about their experiences by finding parallels in Irish myth and folklore” (168). While the only specific image that Trotter mentions is ‘The Mai’, she certainly suggests that Carr is using folklore as a sense of belonging and power to her female protagonists.

In her essay “Madonna, Magdalen, and Matriarch”, which can be found in her book *Contemporary Irish Drama & Cultural Identity*, Margaret Lewellyn-Jones views the representations of women as polarized between the images of the “virginal Madonna, the sexualized Magdalene (67). She discusses how *Portia Coughlan* both challenges the Madonna/Magdalen stereotypes and “unsympathetically represents the matriarchal hag” (78). Carr does this by combining the two stereotypes within characters. For example, *Portia* is both mother and Magdalene; *Maggie May* is both Magdalene and, as Carr states, with *Senchil* is the ‘humanistic point of focus amid monstrous experience’ (qtd. in Lewellyn-Jones, interview, 79). Jones mentions, as many of the feminist writers do, that when she questioned Carr on her feminist status Carr replied: “You cannot write to an ism...real feminists are quietly beavering away” (qtd. in Lewellyn-Jones, interview, 80).

Cathy Leeney in her article, “Women in Exile”, claims that “when women are alienated from a work of literature their work may become a literature of alienation, and that by crossing the boundary it makes the boundary visible” (150). She asks specifically how Carr and Deevy

both cross boundaries, and how that boundary crossing takes shape in performance (150). She compares the heroines of Carr to that of Deevy and Synge in her crossing of the boundary of female violence, and finds that unlike the heroines in Deevy's and Synge's works, Carr's heroines are "not the victims of violence but the perpetrators, even more surely when they finally turn violence against themselves" (158). Leeney also highlights how Carr pushes the boundary of the Irish tradition with *By the Bog of Cats*. Hester is the female child of a female and has a child who is female who, as she notes,

mourns for her absent mother. This is not only Hester's mother, but theatrically speaking, the mother absent from so many important Irish plays (160).

Leeney places Carr within the tradition as one who expands its boundaries by using those very boundaries. She says "she becomes the creator of representations...and...must negotiate the representational inheritance in relation to which she inevitably works" (162).

In another book edited by both Cathy Leeney and Anna McMullan, *The Theatre of Marina Carr, "Before Rules Was Made"*, are articles by Eilis Ni Dhuibne, Bernadette Bourke. Ni Dhuibne examines Carr's use of narrative and fairytale, which she sees as having moralistic overtones. Bourke explores what she sees as 'carnavalesque' elements within Carr's work, and offers the explanation, often referenced by other feminist analysts, of the 'heroine suicide' as return to the earth as both 'womb and grave'.

Eilis Ni Dhuibne's article, "Playing the story: Narrative Techniques in *The Mai*", claims that Marina Carr is both a dramatist and a storyteller. A storyteller, Dhuibne claims, "relies more on the effects of the language and constructs language to convey meaning, emotion, even catharsis" whereas she says dramatists "rely on the tensions between characters for the creation or suggestion of meaning to the audience" (67). She claims that *The Mai* "exploits narrative technique in two ways. It is told by a narrator, Millie, and uses myth and folklore with settings that occur in fairytales: lakes, bogs, forests, hills and themes that parallel the themes of great folktales" (68-70). Dhuibne takes an almost Structuralist understanding of the themes in Carr's work when she says "the theme of every fairytale is the trauma of the adolescent striving to grow into independence and adulthood, to escape from parental control, and to deal successfully with grief or guilt attendant on this necessary separation. However, Carr's fairytales end with an unwedding, an acknowledgement that excessive emotional abuse of children allows no redemption" (70-71). While such a pattern is true of many fairytales, it is not always true of the Irish folktales,

ones from which Carr is certainly drawing. Perhaps then, Carr's endings are not as moralistic as Dhubne claims that she intends them to be. Certainly though, Carr can be seen as both a narrator and a dramatist, and this insight may explain Carr's pull towards the stories of the folktales themselves.

"Carr's Cut-throats and gargoyles: Grotesque and Carnavalesque Elements in *By the Bog of Cats*" by Bernadette Bourke also takes a look at the lack of closure or happy endings in Carr's work. She explains that the traditional carnival is "a form of transitory madness, a tumultuous world which is real while it lasts, but when it ends, is succeeded by order" (129). Carr's *Portia Coughlan* "enacts the grotesque note through character and situation", while *By the Bog of Cats* "goes beyond the boundaries of grotesque imagery and launches us into the bizarre world of the carnival itself" (129). She notes that Carr's work shares a Rabelaisian "celebration of the resilience of the human spirit, through grotesque imagery and carnival ritual"(131). The term "Rabelaisian" refers to Rabelais, the sixteenth century French humanist who wrote about the European peasantry and, as Bourke notes, "the culture of a thousand-year-old subversive folk tradition of ritual and carnival excess, which existed in an unofficial capacity alongside the official culture of church and state" (130). He claimed that the literature was often "laugh[ing] at fear and death, triumphant, and at the same time mocking and defiant" (131). Certainly, we can easily locate Carr within such a context. Carr's females, especially Mai, Hester, Catwoman, and Portia seem to exist on the margins of 'official culture' and embody the attitude of 'laughing at fear and death' and are often 'mocking and defiant'.

Bourke explores the suicide of heroines and claims that it is a way of life, not death, and that it fits within a certain folkloric ideal of the earth as both "womb and grave". She also claims that Carr does not 'accommodate a critique of the individual psyche, but insists that there are a 'thousand lives in each of us'" (131). Bourke discusses Carr's use of folklore at length, but more in the context of a Syngeian, (an academic, observant, and detailed re-creational) use of folklore. Bourke notes that Carr takes Synge's "grotesque image to its most extreme conclusion" (135). Again, we see how Carr is subverting the traditions and images that she has inherited through, specifically, her endings which "represent a victory over fear, and concurs with theories of carnival by subverting official authority – religious and secular- and by proposing the possibility of renewal and continuity through nature" (144). Bourke's analysis gives by far the most grounded answer to the traditionalists' problem with Carr's lack of hope for the future and provides a very convincing argument for many of the bizarre and grotesque elements in *By the*

Bog of Cats. Unfortunately, her analysis is difficult to apply to Carr's other plays and is therefore limited in its scope.

Emily Kader's article, *The Anti-Exile in Marina Carr's By the Bog of Cats* discusses the difference between male and female exile, and Carr's exploration of this.

Exile is often the final defining moment for many of the male characters of Irish literature who are dissatisfied with their lives and who wish to free themselves of the restrictions of their homeland (167).

In contrast with men, who find their identity outside the scope of land and community, for the Irish woman land and community are the locus of her identity, and to remove or force her into exile is not a freedom but 'a prison (167). Kader goes on to claim that *Bog of Cats* can be seen as being "about an isolated, rural, Pagan Ireland, as represented by Hester, and its struggle to maintain its traditions against the new universal modernity as represented by her community" (167). Against the backdrop of traditionalism and feminism, Kader states: "Carr's subversive traditionalism, through which she criticizes the oppressive conventions of the modern era has made defining her position on feminism difficult for some critics" (168). She reminds us that Carr does not consider herself a feminist playwright, but notes that Catherine Kelly places Carr's work in the "socialist/materialist feminism which can be defined as a matrix of gender, class, race, and ideology" (168). Seemingly anti-feminist are Carr's female protagonists who seem to "fling themselves at their men" and whose "identity seems to rely on her [Hester's] relationship with Carthage" (168). Kader lifts Carr's protagonists from such self dis-empowering circumstances by pointing out that her identity is not to be found in her love relationships but with her land and community. "Hester's connection to the Bog of Cats and not to Carthage is what defines Hester's sense of self. Therefore her refusal to go into exile, as the community wishes, is both an act of self-determination and an attempt to maintain an already strongly defined identity" (169). She further explores this notion of female exile by noting that

oftentimes in Irish literature birds and people associated with them are figured as exiles or symbols thereof. The 'wild geese' are one obvious example, as are the mythological Children of Lir, who after being turned into swans, must remain on the waves and not touch land for nine hundred years. But Carr's swan, like Hester, has become a permanent fixture on the bog (169).

She is able to locate Josie and the Catwoman within the space of, as Carr describes them in the play, song-stitchers.

Kader also discusses the much noted ties between Medea, Greek tragedy, and Carr. She states:

By the Bog of Cats is a mythological tale. The purpose of fate in much of Greek and Irish myth is to enhance the reader's sense of suspense and to signify the importance of otherwise mundane moments. Moreover, without such moments, the inevitable outcome towards which the action of the play hurtles these characters would lose its pathos as well as the reader's interest and compassion (177).

Indeed, the reader is able to maintain suspense, interest, and compassion throughout the play, echoing Fintan O'Toole's amazement at Carr's 'compelling' ability.

While Kader agrees that Carr and Greek tragedy share many elements, she finds the story to be more closely related to the Irish folkloric myth of Dairmud and Graine found within the Finn Cycle². She even notes that Catwoman "plays the part of Finn when she tells Hester 'There's ways round curses. Curses only have the power ya allow them. Im telling ya Hester, ya have to go (1.3.276). Like Dairmud, Hester is equally fixed in her position" (179). Kader also notes the prevalence of witch/folk/herbal healers within the play (179) and notes their placement as outside the community, much like the ones in modern Ireland. Hester's final death is more of a 'returning to the womb' than an exile since she is actually returning to the land of her identity, the Bog itself (184). While this article provides more folkloric analysis of Carr's work than do any other articles written on her, the analysis is limited to *By the Bog of Cats*. It is difficult to determine if Kader's analysis of this play would apply to all of Carr's work. However, it does provide a compelling

² In this Irish folktale, Graine is to marry Finn. The night before her wedding, Dairmud enters her tent, and they fall in love and flee before the wedding. Finn and his men pursue them for seven years, until one night when Finn, disguised as a beggar, enters the house of Dairmud and Graine. He convinces Dairmud that if he gives up he will be safe. Dairmud does this and is killed. Graine is so broken-hearted that she commits suicide. This is also very similar to the story of Deidre of the Sorrows. In this folktale a druid predicts that she will be the most beautiful woman in Ireland, but that she is not supposed to marry a king. Despite this, King Conchabar decides to marry her when she comes of age. Before this can happen, however, she falls in love with one of the King's warriors, Noisi. Deidre and Noise, as well as Noise's two brothers, also flee for seven years. Like Darimud, Noisi and his brothers are tricked into returning. King Conchabar sent a letter offering forgiveness and welcome back into his kingdom. Deidre foresees their death and begs them not to be fooled, but the men want the king's favor and return. They too are killed, and Deidre, who is full of sorrow, also commits suicide.

look at Carr's (and possibly Ireland's) exploration of identity through folklore, an issue so central to the Irish tradition.

METHODOLOGY

The Plays to be Analyzed

Marina Carr's plays before *The Mai* have a decidedly different feel than those following it. For example, her second play, *Low in the Dark*, is described as "highly non-naturalist and metatheatrical," placing it squarely outside the genre of her later works (Leeney 16). However, her later works are not entirely naturalistic. Woven into the fabric of the concrete realist world are elements that are at times unexplainable in a 'real world' setting. Ghosts and witches inhabit her worlds, as do fairies. Family and land curses appear to have real impact on the characters. Bad blood truly flows in the veins of her characters. There are bonds with dead relatives, both seen and unseen. Swans predict misfortune, and collectors of souls wander in and out of the story. This study will focus on four of Carr's post-*Mai* works, *The Mai*, *Portia Coughlan*, *By the Bog of Cats*, and *On Raftery's Hill*, as they seem to be a cogent unit of work. Her later works, *Ariel* and *Woman and Scarecrow* will not be analyzed as they are not part of this unit of plays.

Folklore and Folktales

Folklore, both as a scholarly enterprise and as material of that scholarly study, is a prime source for researchers in history, theater, religion, sociology, psychology, anthropology and other disciplines to locate often-untapped information about a culture and its people. Robert Georges and Michael Owen Jones, authors of *Folkloristics: An Introduction*, define folklore as "an important source for popular attitudes, prejudices, and stereotypes, as well as information about national myths, images, and symbols", allowing researchers insight into not only the formal history of a people, but also its informal history (Georges 85). This informal history is most useful to those researchers who are interested in a glimpse into the inner workings of non-empowered cultures, because this informal history is the one means by which disempowered cultures can write their own histories. Thus folklore is a cultural time capsule that comprises many official and unofficial histories to which any member of a community can contribute.

Thus, the telling of folktales (a sub category of folklore involving the creation and dissemination of folk stories throughout a culture) is a worldwide phenomenon. Cultures from Ireland to Asia all engage in storytelling and use this art to pass along histories, values and

beliefs. Early researchers collected data of such a universal nature that it allowed researchers who followed them to begin to locate specific types and genres from the folklore they collected. Their work contributed to the understanding that folktales reflected and/or represented not only the histories of the people who told them, but also possible interactions between cultures.

Included in folklore studies are examinations of widely shared forms of art (including theater), written literature, oral stories, humor, structural construction techniques, crafts, cultural beliefs and superstitions, customs and behaviors. Folklorists classify and analyze patterns of behavior and the remnants of those behaviors in all their forms. A complete analysis of Irish folklore in all its forms would be well beyond the scope of this work.

Folktales as Used in the Analysis

This analysis focuses on Irish folktales for many reasons. Folktales come directly from the people and are often widely disseminated throughout a culture; there are often folklore forms that have reverberated within a society's psyche for generations. Often the stories that we tell our children are the same that were told to us by our parents and they by their parents and so on. Many artists who create great works may engage these early themes and motifs as a matter of course in order to tap into these "generational tales." Folklorists note that "writers often base their creations on folklore as plots or incorporate folklore as structural devices. Beliefs, proverbs, narratives, and other examples of folklore may set the tone or alter a mood... and stories may serve as a way to communicate precepts and values" (Georges 6). In the case of Irish tales, storytellers and their audiences had and have a shared background, one that was and is "literary in its origin and kept alive among people deeply conscious of their past" (O'Sullivan and Christiansen 7).

Folktales are some of the best documented of the folklore sources, both in availability of source material and in established analyses. These collected, translated, and referenced works are most useful to the analysis because they are significant primary sources in modern folklore studies and also because they have significant characteristics in common with Carr's plays. Chapters two and three show how Carr appears to be using both specific images from Irish folktales and also the tales themselves. Her use of the tales is interesting, in that, she uses them in three distinct ways, often times using more than one method within a play. She mirrors the tales, or in essence, retells them in almost exact detail. Secondly, she contradicts the tale, or tells the tale in an opposite fashion. Lastly, she modifies the tale in some way, keeping parts of the tale true to its nature and changing other parts. The concluding chapter provides a discussion of how

her use of the folktales, and specifically her use of Pre-Invasion Irish folklore, reflects Ireland's sociopolitical discussion of national identity.

Folkloristics

Folkloristics is a comprehensive approach to the research of folklore, and thus, it will be the approach used for this study. In addition to its comprehensiveness, folkloristics has enjoyed the strongest scientific support because of the rigor of its methodology. It has also been used to address the folklore of many cultures throughout the world. Many of the traditional oral histories and stories of Ireland and Gaelic-speaking Scotland have been written down and analyzed using the various folkloristic-inspired indexes developed during the 20th century. The following provides a history and explanation of the rubrics of Folkloristics.

The earliest researchers of folktales collected works through interviews and by going through written documents such as serials, newspapers, and books. Later researchers recorded stories directly from storytellers themselves. These collectors of folktales (the first among them, the well-known Grimm brothers) began to note that many of the tales they were collecting from differing sources were very similar in content and plot to tales they had already heard, though with subtle variations. As a result, folklorists began to examine tales as not only individual stories (as an individual folkloristic datum) but also as a particular version of a specific tale type (Georges 113). Folklorists classify items (or in the case of folktales, stories) by identifying distinguishing characteristics of specific items within that genre. These motifs are then alphabetized and linked to specific tale types, allowing the folklorist to search either by whole storylines (types) or by images and themes (motifs). Because folktales do not have distinguishable physical characteristics as do many other forms of folklore types (structural building techniques, artwork, etc.) intuition, inference, or analogy are used to suggest a generic identity (93-94). In this way, either, thematic or structural information can be compared across tales or sources.

Antti Aarne was the first folklorist to lay out such a system of classification for folktales with the first tale-type index called *Verzeichnis der Marchentypen (Index of Folktales)* in 1910 (Georges 113). His index classified 540 distinguishable types of tales in three major principle subsets: Animal Tales, Ordinary Tales, and Humorous Tales. Recognizing that the work was as yet incomplete, Aarne left room for a total of 1940 specific types to be filled in during his next revision of the text. Aarne passed away before this revision came to fruition. Instead, folklorist

Kaarle Krohn contacted an American folklorist named Stith Thompson who subsequently expanded Aarne's index to 3229 types and opened the generic subsets to two additional categories: Formula Tales and Unclassified Tales in his 1961 *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography*, second revision (113). This index is universally used as a current tool to classify stories by genre and type and to identify specific motifs or images within those stories.

Thompson's seminal work is a key tool in the study of folktales and will be used here to identify common images, types and motifs in the Irish folktales. The Aarne-Thompson Index can be described as a tool for breaking apart specific pieces of a tale and looking at them individually. As such, it will be used to identify specific motifs and images in Carr's plays that correspond with Irish folk literature. Two additional similarly-indexed, Irish specific works will also be employed: Sean O'Suilleabhain (O'Sullivan) and Reidar Christiansen's *The Types of the Irish Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography* and Tom Peete Cross's *Motif Index of Early Irish Literature*. Appendix B provides a list of the major categories of the motif index.

In the concluding chapter, the Aarne-Thompson Index and its accompanying Ireland-specific indices (Cross's *Motif-Index of Early Irish Literature*, and O'Sullivan's *Motif-Index of Irish Folklore*) will be used to show the origin (both place and time) of Carr's images, themes, and motifs. Through specific comparison with Irish folklore, from folktales from both pre-invasion (before the Norman English invasions of Ireland in the 12th and 13th centuries) and post-British invasion (after the Norman English invasions of the 12th and 13th centuries), it becomes clear that Carr's work is drawing largely upon the imagery of Irish folktales, specifically from the older, pre-Invasion, literature. The concluding chapter will include a discussion of why this may be the case.

The classification "Irish" folk literature can be difficult to make because of the historical migrations of the peoples of the British Isles over the past 2000+ years. Based on cultural and folklore studies of the British Isles, it is clear that multiple immigrations have taken place. Similar tales pervade the folk literature of all Gaelic cultures of the British Isles. There have been distinct folklore influences of Scottish Gaels upon the Irish and Welsh, Irish Gaels upon the Scots and Welsh, and Welsh Gaels upon the Irish and Scots. Scholars hypothesized that similarities discernible cross-culturally in examples of folklore could be explained in one of two ways: each society shared cultural heritage or engaged in intersocietal borrowing (Georges 52-54). In some

instances these populations fled English occupation to the safer confines of another Gaelic-speaking area of Britain. As a result, either these cultures' folktales intermingled or shared a common origin. Regardless of the historical origin, there are many similarities between the stories of these cultures. In terms of the distinction between the Irish and the English, folklore is perhaps one of the clearest means to draw that distinction.

The distinction as to what is classified as 'Irish folk literature' in the research material is a bit arbitrary. While the stories are drawn from the many different areas, the folklore research community generally accepts what is included in the two Irish folklore indexes as representative of Irish folk literature and so these will be used as the basis of the definition for this study.

Much of the difficulty in doing a comprehensive analysis of the folk literature of Ireland is that the majority is still left untranslated from the original Gaelic. Some of the oldest stories date from a time in Ireland's history when Irish was the only language spoken. Many of the works that have been translated into English are those that tend to follow a recognizably linear story line. In contrast, many of the stories that have not been translated portray characters who shape-change (assume multiple forms, sometimes simultaneously) and/or relocate to other realms of reality (e.g. the Faery Realm) at different times. Our own modern view of linear time and essence seems to have difficulty following the bulk of these old tales, leaving many of them both difficult to translate as well as "not interesting" or simply confusing to the modern reader. This may explain why modern Irish playwrights who use the Irish folktales do not use tales of this type.

Two distinct eras of Irish literature will be addressed. For ease of understanding, I will refer to the Early and Middle Irish tales as Pre-Invasion Literature (before the Norman English invasions of Ireland in the 12th and 13th centuries) and the late Irish folktales as Post-Invasion Literature (after the Norman English invasions of the 12th and 13th centuries). In the analysis of Carr's use of folklore motifs and images, I will focus on the pre-invasion literature because this is where we find the majority of shared images and motifs between Carr's plays and the folklore.

Pre-Invasion Literature

According to Juha Pentikainen, pre-Invasion literature is best described as "a narrative couched in poetic language... containing hundreds or thousands of verses that present a complex narrative full of wonders and heroism, often centered around the exploits of a main personage" (qtd. in O'Giollion 223). The Celtic tales addressed have been categorized further based on their characteristics such as main characters, topics, or type. These classifications are referred to as the

“cycles.” The earliest and principal manuscripts of the pre-invasion literature that have survived are the *Lebor na hUidre* or *Book of the Dun Cow* and the *Lebor Laignech* or *Book of Leinster*. *The Book of the Dun Cow* is the oldest known manuscript, though it is incomplete. *The Book of Leinster* was formerly known as the *Lebor na Nuachongbala* or *The Book of Noughaval*. *Lebor na Huidre* dates from 1106 CE and contains 37 epic-length stories. *The Book of Leinster* dates from 1160 CE and contains texts of six fully complete epic tales. Included with the *Book of Leinster* are two additional manuscripts: *Yellow Book of Lecan* from the 14th century CE and *Egerton 1782* with the date 1419 on the cover (Gantz 21). Additional texts of the pre-Invasion literature are the *Lebor Gabala Erenn* or *Book of Invasions*, *Rawlinson Manuscript 605*, *the Great Book of Lecan*, the *Lebor Brecc*, and the *Book of Lismore* (Gantz 21). Each of these texts represents multiple manuscripts believed to be text recordings of versions of much earlier oral stories, all dating from well before Norman influence on the Isle. But again, because none of the stories within these texts are dated, researchers can only guess as to the original dates of these works. Many of the works noted above can be traced back to partial manuscripts from as far back as the 8th century CE. Many of these stories, while not documented in dated written manuscripts, have pre-Christian era themes, suggesting even older origins. The cycles, which are explained below, can be found in some of these books, though not in their entirety. Parts of the cycles are scattered throughout these books.

The ancient Irish tales that comprise the pre-invasion literature are often classified into four different categories or cycles: the Ulster Cycle (dealing largely with the exploits of Cuchulainn and his Ulaid, a purportedly historical group of people living shortly before or after the birth of Christ), the Fionn Cycle (which chronicles the life and adventures of Fionn MacCumail and his Fiana), the Kings Cycle (focusing on the historical Kings of Ireland) and the Mythological Cycles (dealing largely with the Sidhe--- pronounced “she”--- or faeries and are regularly set around the burial mounds of the Boyne Valley) (Gantz 22).

Post-Invasion Literature

As mentioned earlier, the analysis in my study shows that Carr predominately uses the pre-invasion literature. Though less frequent, her use of the post-invasion literature is still significant. As such, a brief understanding of this body of literature is important. The post-Invasion Literature (sometimes alternatively referred to as Folktales, Folk Stories or Faery Tales) in contrast to the pre-Invasion epic literature, consists of traditional narratives that, like the pre-invasion literature, were often told in prose. They have been intended primarily for entertainment

or educational purposes, are typically set in indefinite locales and the subjects are general character types. These tales are often very imaginative and even magical in nature (qtd. in Gantz 356). Unlike pre-Invasion literature that was probably written from memory by a scribe, post-Invasion literature stories are more fluid in the details of their retellings (Georges 104). As such, there are more versions of a common storyline in post-invasion literature than is found in the pre-invasion literature. Whether these tales are fictional or non-fictional, their primary purpose is to “educate by illustrating or explaining particular cultural ideas and especially by cautioning against undesirable behaviors” (qtd. in Gantz 356). This purpose of the post-Invasion literature might be said to be to establish a recognizable set of cultural, social, religious, and cognitive behaviors shown to be rewarded and whose transgressions are shown to be punished. Such stories are often used to shape a culture and regulate it. The post-Invasion Literature’s foundation in societal (Christian) morality and control is particularly important to remember for the concluding comments on Carr’s work, as her works seem to be drawing from stories that predate such notions.

Finding the Motifs within the Plays

When one is somewhat familiar with the Irish folktales and the indices, certain images within Carr’s plays seem to jump out as being similar to the tales. This is the general framework of the qualitative analysis of the four plays. The specific method used involved categorizing images and moments within the plays into three groups, which were labeled, Tier One, Tier Two, and Tier Three. Tier One consisted of the images or moments that seemed extremely bizarre, disturbing, or possibly Irish folklore-like. Examples of these would be the inutero brother-sister incest of Portia and Gabriel (*Portia Coughlan*), Hester’s life being tied to the life of her black swan (*By the Bog of Cats*), the destructive cow, Billy the Black (*The Mai*), and Red brutally killing the hares on his land (*On Raftery’s Hill*). Tier Two consisted of images and moments that were obviously nonrealistic and possibly folklore-like. Examples of these would be Catwoman eating mice (*By the Bog of Cats*), singing ghosts (*Portia Coughlan*), and a cursed land (*On Raftery’s Hill*). Tier Three consisted of images and moments that seemed to be folkloric in a more cross-cultural sense, such as swans (*The Mai* and *By the Bog of Cats*), abandonment (*The Mai*, *Portia Coughlan*, and *By the Bog of Cats*), and magical bodies of water (*The Mai* and *Portia Coughlan*, and *By the Bog of Cats*). Appendix C provides the raw results of this analysis in list form, listing the images from the plays and the motifs that match them. A second analysis compared the matched motifs (between the categorized images and moments from the plays and

the Irish folklore indices) with the period of time from which the folklore motifs come. This revealed that Marina Carr mainly uses Pre-Invasion Irish folklore motifs.

Carr's Use of Pre-Invasion Folklore and the Jungian Model of Identity Development

Marina Carr's commentary on Ireland's process of identity formation is better understood by using Jung's theory as a general framework. The concluding chapter takes a closer look at the way in which Carr's use of Pre-Invasion folklore can be understood within this Jungian context. While it would certainly be a mistake to assume that Carr's four plays are Jungian allegories of the process of self-actualization, her female protagonists all do seem to be engaged in this process. In this way, Carr is able to speak about Ireland's process without ever mentioning Ireland directly. This allegorical connection, however, is not the focus of the Jungian analysis in this work. Nor is it attempting to place a Jungian interpretation upon the images Carr is using, through linking the archetypal images of Jung with the archetypal images of the folklore. Such a use would be attempting to describe or understand the question of "what" she is doing. The Jungian analysis here is instead focused upon the larger question of "why;" within her work, why is she using Irish folklore and why is she using largely pre-English invasion Irish folklore? To better understand the analysis, one must better understand Jung and his theory of individuation.

Carl Jung was a student and colleague of Sigmund Freud, and as such, much of his theories contain aspects of the theories of Freud. The most important commonalities between the two men's theories are the categories of personality, the id, ego, superego, and unconscious. For the most part, the two men agree on the definitions of these categories, but differ in their interpretations of the role that sexual expression played. For Freud, the sexual expression and repression of an individual was the driving force of personality and development. For Jung, sexuality was only part of the picture; the driving forces were more broad, spiritual, and humanistic than simply sexual expression. This difference between the two is most highlighted in the way each interpret the unconscious. While Freud viewed the unconscious as a repository for repressed desires and fantasies, mainly sexual, Jung saw the unconscious as being much more complicated.

In Freud's view, the contents of the unconscious are reducible to infantile tendencies which are repressed because they are incompatible with character. According to this theory, the unconscious contains only those parts of the personality which could just as well be conscious, and have been suppressed only through the process of education. The

unconscious has still another side to it: it includes not only repressed contents, but all psychic material that lies below the threshold of consciousness (71).

Jung first created the distinction between the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. The first consists of an individual's own experience, while the second is primitive and inherited memories and images, called archetypes. "The collective unconscious contains the whole spiritual heritage of mankind's evolution, born anew in the brain structure of every individual" (45). Jung notes that within the collective unconscious archetypes are subcategories, namely, the persona (the mask), anima and animus (feminine and masculine aspects), and the shadow (repressed aspects). Jung refers to self-actualization as the main goal for well-being, which is achieved when all the parts of personality are in balance with one another.

A possible goal [is] Individuation, [which] means becoming an 'in-dividual', and, in so far as 'individuality' embraces our innermost and incomparable uniqueness, it also implies becoming one's own self. We could, therefore, translate individuation as 'coming to selfhood' or 'self-realization' (122).

Jung speaks of the need to recognize and integrate the many parts of the self in order to create a stable selfhood.

If we try to extract the common and essential factors from the almost inexhaustible variety of individual problems, we meet in all cases one particular feature: a more or less patent clinging to the childhood level of consciousness, a resistance to the fateful forces in and around us that would involve us in the world. Something in us wishes to remain unconscious or, at most, conscious only of the ego; to reject everything strange, or else subject it to our will, to do nothing, or else indulge our own craving for pleasure or power. Here the individual is faced with necessity of recognizing and accepting what is different and strange as part of his own life, as a kind of 'also-I' (10).

Ireland currently seems to be experiencing this tension between the 'not-I' and 'also-I' as part of the national discussion on identity. This integration of the shadow (initially seen as the 'not-I') into the self is central in Jung's process, thus allowing for the 'also-I.'

We understand the ego as the complex factor to which all conscious contents are related. The ego is the subject of all personal acts of consciousness. The relation of a psychic

content to the ego forms the criterion of its consciousness, for no content can be conscious unless it is represented to a subject. Theoretically, no limits can be set to the field of consciousness, since it is capable of indefinite extension. Empirically, however, it always finds its limits when it comes up against the unknown. This is not related to the ego as the centre of the field of consciousness.

The shadow is a moral problem that challenges the whole ego-personality, for no one can be conscious of the shadow without considerable moral effort. To become conscious of it involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real. This act is the essential condition for any kind of self-knowledge, and it therefore, as a rule, meets with considerable resistance. Closer examinations of the dark characteristics – that is, the inferiorities constituting the shadow – reveals that they have an emotional nature, the kind of autonomy, and accordingly an obsessive, or better, possessive quality (145). I should emphasize that the integration of the shadow, or the realization of the personal unconscious, marks the first stage [of development of the self] (161).

The process of making what is unknown and dark conscious to the ego must be a process that is both emotional and symbolic in order to sneak the information past the defenses of the ego. This is exactly what Marina Carr is doing with her use of the Pre-Invasion folklore within these plays. Jung believed that the language of the unconscious was the symbols found in dreams, mythology, and folklore.

The collective unconscious – so far as we can say anything about it at all – appears to consist of mythological motifs or primordial images, for which reason the myths of all nations are its real exponents. In fact, the whole of mythology could be taken as a sort of projection of the collective unconscious (39).

The psychological conditions of the environment naturally leave similar mythical traces behind them. Dangerous situations, be they dangers to the body or the soul, arouse affect-laden fantasies, and, in so far as such as situations typically repeat themselves, they give rise to *archetypes*, as I have termed myth-motifs in general (42).

Marina Carr's use of the folktale motifs within her plays fits with this notion of the collective unconscious speaking to and warning through the motifs. The individual, the audience, and

Ireland respond to the “primordial images” on a very visceral level, one that is not wholly conscious and certainly not intellectual. For the information that Carr is tapping is to be found in the shadow, and representing such unconscious material must be finessed into consciousness, in order for it to be assimilated into the becoming Self.

As mentioned, Carr’s plays are full of Pre-Invasion Irish folktales, and each play becomes progressively more engaged with the darker aspects of the shadow. As she delves deeper into the shadow, she also brings the Pre-Invasion folklore more centrally into the storylines, in order to allow the ego of audience members to recognize the dark material as “also-I”. As Jung mentioned, this process of relating shadow material to the ego is an emotional process, and one that must allow the ego to recognize itself within the shadow. This is why Carr avoids an intellectual approach to the process of identity building, and instead chooses a more visceral and emotional path, through the audiences connection to the Irish folklore.

Carr changes the details of the folktales when it is needed in order to slip under the intellectualizing radar of recognition, but keeps enough of the foundation of the folktales intact so that the audience is able to intuitively feel its way through the darkness of the plays to the other side. This process of sublimating her imagery is made clearer with an image-by-image discussion of how she mirrors, modifies, and contradicts the folktales in her plays.

CHAPTER II

THE ANALYSIS: *THE MAI* AND *PORTIA COUGHLAN*

THE MAI

The analysis begins with *The Mai* (1994) which is quite realistic and not overly metaphysical. The few nonrealistic aspects within the play match up well with many general Irish motifs found in the motif index, and while Carr draws from just a few folktales in this play, she seems to use them in the same way that she uses folktales in her other plays, i.e. mirroring, contradicting, and/or modifying them. In *The Mai*, Carr employs the “myth within the play” construction. The play is structured around a Carr-created myth, the myth of Owl Lake, which is based on actual Irish folklore motifs. Carr uses the myth both to unify the various folklore images and to provide a template for the play’s storyline. The play is dominated by a watery landscape, Owl Lake, and the characters’ lives are intimately intertwined with both the water and its myth. The events surrounding Mai can be seen as reflecting the events in the Carr-created myth of the water that they live beside. In *The Mai*, Carr reveals previous action both with the water myths and through storytelling by the main character, Mai’s daughter Millie, who fills in information for the audience regarding Mai and Robert, Grandma Fraochaln, the nine-fingered fisherman, Mai’s London experiences, and the effects that Robert’s leaving had on Mai and the family. Through Millie, we also learn of her own son and “future” events such as her own failed relationship and the existence of her five year old son. Millie also tells the audience the creation myth of Owl Lake. Carr modifies the way that the myth of Owl Lake is reflected in the lives of Mai and Robert just enough to allow the audience to witness the tale lurking beneath the waters, so to speak. As we shall see, within the Owl Lake myth, Carr seems both to mirror and modify, at times even contradict, the original folktales on which she bases her myth of Owl Lake.

OWL LAKE

Millie presents Carr’s original myth that the lake was created from ‘loch cailleach oiche’ or “Lake of the Night Hag or Pool of the Dark Witch” (Carr, *The Mai* 147). The story is that Coillte, the daughter of the mountain god, Bloom, fell in love with Blath, Lord of the Flowers and

they experienced a lovely romance. She goes on to tell the story that mirrors in many ways Mai's relationship with Robert:

One autumn evening Blath told Coillte that soon he must go and live with the dark witch of the bog, that he would return in the spring, and the next morning was gone. Coillte followed him and found him ensconced in the dark witch's lair. He would not speak to her, look at her, touch her, and heartbroken Coillte lay down outside the dark witch's lair and cried a lake of tears that stretched for miles around (Carr, *The Mai* 147).

Coillte's lake of tears created what is now Owl Lake and upon these shores, Mai built her tribute to Robert, the beautiful house to woo him home. In the Legend of Owl Lake, one night while Coillte was weeping at the shores of the lake she had cried, the witch took her opportunity to push Coillte into the lake, thus drowning her. When spring came, Blath went in search of Coillte only to be told that she had dissolved into a lake of tears. In the play, Sam Brady, who is Mai's neighbor, relates the local legend that "when the geese are restless or the swans suddenly take flight it is because they hear Blath's pipes among the reeds, still playing for Coillte" (Carr, *The Mai* 147). This aural image of swans taking flight resounds through the entire play, and in production notes is mentioned as a cue that signals the transitions from one scene to another. It is also the aural motif that marks the end of the play, and consequently Mai's suicide.

Carr is using several folklore motifs within the story of Owl Lake, thus revealing information about Mai's fate long before the curtain falls at the end of Act II. At the end of Act I, as Millie finishes the myth of Owl Lake, the stage directions highlight what has been suggested in the folklore motifs: "Ghostly light on the window. Robert stands there with The Mai's body in his arms, utterly still. Millie watches them a minute. Ghostly effect" (Carr, *The Mai* 147-8). By this point in the play, however, because Carr has so expertly woven foreshadowing motifs throughout the first act, an audience would likely already know how the play would resolve, even without this visual of Mai's corpse.

Lake Creation Myths and Owl Lake

Carr mirrors several traditional folklore lake-creation motifs within her created myth of Owl Lake. Her myth makes direct reference to motifs such as 'Bodies of water from tears' (A911), 'Woman transformed into pool of water' (A920.1.11), as well as 'Transformation of woman into pool of water' (D283.1). The relationship of the first motif (A911) to Owl Lake is straightforward; Carr's image of the lake of tears mirrors the folktale motif of a lake created by

tears. Carr's mirrored use of the lake of tears and the pining Mai settling on the shores of it, helps tie together the two stories (that of Coillte pining for Blath and of Mai pining for Robert). What, other than fate and her own sorrow, could compel Mai to settle on this lake of tears?

The last two lake creation motifs are reflective both of Coillte's dissolving, and of Mai's drowning. Perhaps most interesting to these particular motifs is Carr's use of water as a transforming element for both female protagonists. In the case of Coillte, she is pushed by the witch and dissolves, while Mai willingly walks into the lake, thus in a way, transforming herself into Owl Lake itself. While it may seem that Carr is contradicting the folktale motif of transformation, to view Mai's death as a 'transformation' fits well with the explanation that many feminist critics give of Carr's female protagonists and their suicides, namely that the suicide is seen as life-continuing rather than life-ending; a returning to the earth/water as both 'womb and grave'. This transformation also seems present in Carr's legend of Owl Lake, in which the hag witch tells Blath that Coillte dissolved (rather than saying she drowned or died). By allowing Mai's death to be transformative, Carr infuses the character of Mai with a sense of personal agency that would otherwise be missing, thus showing, through her walking into the lake, Mai's strength rather than her weakness.

Swans/Geese and Owl Lake

The second broad motif category addressed in the myth of Owl Lake is the swans/geese motif. Motifs that could be connected easily with The Mai are: 'Birds show way to otherworld' (B151.2.0.2), 'Birds lament saint's departure' (B251.2.9), and 'Magic birds chained in couples' (B172.7). Within Irish folktales there are many instances of faeries taking the form of birds in order to show people how to enter their world, and also many instances of people diving into bodies of water (wells, lakes, rivers, the sea) in order to reach the faery world. Within this Irish folkloric context, Carr's use of the motif 'Birds show way to otherworld' makes sense. This is perhaps why she chooses to signal Mai's drowning, an action that takes place off-stage, by "sounds of geese and swans taking flight, sounds of water, silence" (Carr, *The Mai* 186), reflecting again the idea of Mai entering an afterworld that is transformative.

Both Coillte's and Mai's tales seem to mirror the motif, 'Birds lament saint's departure' (B251.2.9), which can be seen both in Sam Brady's explanation of the bird's 'hearing Blath's pipes among the reeds, playing for Coillte' and the birds' reaction to Mai's death. The link to this can perhaps best be understood through understanding the Christianization of Ireland. When Christianity came to the Island, many of the Pagan goddesses and gods were absorbed into the

Catholic faith through transformation into saints. For example, Saint Brigit took on many the attributes of the goddess, Brighid. In Carr's example, Coillte, being the daughter of the mountain god Bloom, in a post-pagan Ireland perhaps would be realized as a saint and thus be the saint for whom the birds lament. Mai, also, in a more figurative sense is cast by Carr as a "saint" for all with which she deals: Robert's infidelity, single motherhood, building the house on her own, and keeping her job as a principal.

The connection between birds, saints, Coillte, and Mai allows additional understanding of the play, both on a performative level and in relationship to Carr's approach to the identity discussion. The birds' cries at the end of each act signal their lament for the passing of both Coillte and Mai, helping to lend credence to the audience's belief that Mai will soon be drowned. In this way Carr draws a parallel between Mai and Coillte, between the two and birds, with the birds' lamenting loss of their goddesses/saints. That the connection between Mai and the birds is made aurally, in addition to verbally, is important to note. The addition of the aural connection between Mai and birds allows a more emotional reaction in the audience than would be possible if the relationship between Mai and the birds was only verbally explained. It would, thus, be an integral point that directors of *The Mai* should not overlook the importance of the stage directions given concerning the sounds of the swans. In addition to the performative information the bird connection lends, this connection also hints again at Carr's approach to the identity question. Mai seems to adapt the Coillte story in her own life in much the same way that Carr is calling for Ireland to adapt its own identity transformation. While Mai and Coillte both drown and are transformed into the same body of water, Coillte's death and transformation was not of her choosing. Mai, thus, inserts the notion of agency into her death. It seems that with this adaptation, Carr allows Mai to serve as an example for Ireland to follow in its own death/transformation process toward national identity.

The folklore motif 'Magic birds chained in couples' (B251.2.9) is a more complex motif, as Carr both mirrors and modifies it within the play. Before the audience is told the legend of Owl Lake, we hear a dream that Robert had of Mai:

I dreamt you were dead and my cello case was your coffin and a carriage drawn by two black swans takes you away from me over a dark expanse of water and I ran after this strange hearse shouting 'Mai, Mai,' and it seemed as if you could hear my voice on the moon, and I'm running, running, running over water, trees, mountains, though I've long

lost sight of the carriage and of you--- and I wake, pack my bags, take the next plane home (Carr, *The Mai* 125).

The dream was so moving to him that it caused him to return to Mai. Though this dream hints at the way Robert and Mai's relationship relates both to Blath and Coillte and to the swan image, these connections are understood better when we hear the legend of the lake. Traditional Irish folktales have references to couples who transform into swans and are chained together either willingly or unwillingly, such as in the folktale, Children of Lir, in which the transformed and chained swan-children have finally served the conditions of their curse. In this example, loving siblings in the form of swans are chained together in much the same way that Mai describes her link with Robert: "I don't think anyone will ever understand, not you, not my family, not even Robert, no one will ever understand how completely and utterly Robert is mine and I am his..." (Carr, *The Mai* 185). Like the Children of Lir, Mai suffers at the hands of her long-endured curse (of loving an inconstant lover too much, and a deep-seated depression), and eventually ages and dies.

Now it happens that a princess of Munster, Deoca, (the "woman of the South") became betrothed to a Connacht chief named Lairgnen, and begged him as wedding gift to procure for her the four wonderful singing swans whose fame had come to her. He asks them of the hermit, who refuses to give them up, where-upon the "man of the North" seizes them violently by the silver chains with which the hermit had coupled them, and drags them off to Deoca. This is their last trial. Arrived in her presence, an awful transformation befalls them. The swan plumage falls off; and reveals, not, indeed, the radiant forms of the Danaan divinities, but four withered, snowy-haired, and miserable human beings, shrunken in the decrepitude of their vast old age. Lairgnen flies from the place in horror, but the hermit prepares to administer baptism at once, as death is rapidly approaching them. "Lay us in one grave, says Fionuala, "and place Conn at my right hand and Fiachra at my left, and Hugh before my face, for there they were wont to be when I sheltered them many a winter night upon the seas of Moyle." And so it was done, and they went to heaven; but the hermit, it is said, sorrowed for them to the end of his earthly days (Rolleston 141).

Carr seems to modify the relationship of the swans found in the tale, as the Children of Lir are siblings, whereas Mai and Robert are married, but keeps the long-endured curse and chained

souls aspects of the tale. Carr seems to be drawing the connection between the swans in the Children of Lir to both the relationships of Blath and Coillte and Mai and Robert. In all three of these relationships there is a long-endured 'curse'. The swans curse and the curse placed on Blath are certainly more direct than the curse of Mai and Robert. However, all three curses are long endured and result in the cursed-ones' deaths. It is important to also note that none of the cursed are able to return to the way that they were before the curse. With this connection, Carr seems to be implying something about Ireland. After the long suffering is over, a return to pre-suffering identity is not an option; forward into death and transformation seems to be the only option.

For as much agency as Mai is able to demonstrate in her death, Robert seems to represent the way in which she lacks her own agency. In this way Robert's control over Mai is similar to the type of control that the faeries often have over mortals, and Carr mirrors this faery influence with her use of birds. In these four of Carr's plays, swans and birds occupy the space between this world and the otherworld or world of the faeries. Carr draws the connection between Robert and Mai and swans/birds/faeries many times in the play. This is interesting information as it regards performance. Robert and Mai, more than any other characters on stage, are caught in a place that is not only of this world, but also of the otherworld. This connection is made stronger with the many visual and aural references between the couple and birds, which may explain Mai's resiliency despite her relationship with Robert and her ability to still transform herself. The connection between Carr's blending of birds and faeries is mirrored in the folktale, *The Deathbed of Cuchulain*, from the *Lost Yellow Book of Slane*. Cuchulain has killed birds for all the other women of the encampment, but has excluded his own wife. When he attempts to kill another pair of birds, he discovers that they are unable to be killed because they are faeries in the form of birds. Just as the birds escape and find their own life beneath the lake, so too does Mai.

Then Cuchulain returned to his wife; and "Thou art enraged," said he to her. "I am in no way enraged," answered Ethne, "for I deem it as being by me that the distribution was made. And thou hast done what was fitting," she said, "for there is not one of these woman but loves thee; none in whom thou hast no share; but for myself none hath any share in me except thou alone." "Be not angry," said Cuchulain, "if in the future any birds come to the Plain of Murthemne or to the Boyne, the two birds that are the most beautiful among those that come shall be thine."

A little while after this they saw two birds flying over the lake, linked together by a chain of red gold. They sang a gentle song, and a sleep fell upon all the men who were there; and Cuchulain rose up to pursue the birds. "If thou wilt hearken to me," said Laeg, and so also said Ethne, "thou shalt not go against them; behind those birds is some especial power. Other birds may be taken by thee at some future day." "Is it possible that such claim as this should be made upon me?" said Cuchulain. "Place a stone in my sling, O Laeg!" Laeg thereon took a stone, and he placed it in the sling, and Cuchulain launched the stone at the birds, but the cast missed. "Alas!" said he. He took another stone, and he launched this also at the birds, but the stone flew past them. "Wretched that I am," he cried, "since the very first day that I assumed arms, I have never missed a cast until this day!" And he cast his spear at them, and the spear went through the shield of the wing of one of the birds, and the birds flew away, and went beneath the lake (Mac Ceileachair 1).

Cuchulain's sharing of the birds with other women mirrors Robert's inconstancy with Mai, as Cuchulain's 'sharing' could be seen as similar to Robert 'sharing' himself with other women in his extra-marital affairs. Ethne and Mai also share a similar reaction of being angry, yet accepting of the situation. Both Robert and Cuchulain offer to amend their behavior for the benefit of their wives, but neither is able to do so. In Carr's rendition of this tale, however, it is Mai, and not Robert who dies for the transgressions. When we consider, as mentioned previously, that Mai's death can be seen in a transformative manner, this seems to suggest that Robert's infidelity does not have the same devastating effect on Mai as it did on Ethne. Instead, it is what eventually allows Mai the ability to transform herself and find a new identity.

Abandonment and Owl Lake

Abandonment runs throughout *The Mai*, both in the lives of the characters and in the myth of Owl Lake. Central to the story of the play is Robert abandonment of Mai and his children for affairs with other women. Carr inserts many examples of mothers abandoning their own children in various ways (The Dutchess' abandoning Fraochlan through fantasies of her Sultan of Spain, Fraochlan's abandonment of Ellen through her devotion to the Nine-fingered Fisherman, Ellen's abandonment of her children through death in childbirth, Mai's abandonment of her children through her devotion to Robert above all else, through her depression and longing, and eventually through her suicide, and Millie's abandonment of her son through emotional distancing).

Carr seems to use abandonment in a very mythic way. This moves the abandonment in the play from a simple understanding of generational neglect to a more urgent level.

Abandonment in the folktales, especially when done by mothers, results either in death of the abandoned one (often times taking the form of being taken into the faery otherworld) or transformation of the abandoned one. Thus, the urgency felt both by the characters and the audience is due to Carr's use of abandonment as death-causing.

Carr's use of abandonment in the play matches the following motifs: 'Death from a broken heart' (F1041.1.1), 'wife sickens as a result of separation from spouse' (T213), 'husband and wife each unfaithful to other' (T249.2), 'Abandoned child cared for by grandmother' (S351.1), and 'children abandoned' (S322). In Carr's myth of Owl Lake Blath abandons Coillte to the lair of the witch, despite his promises of return, and Carr highlights this abandonment when Coillte comes to look for him there. These images and motifs are reflected in other images of the play as well, but in slightly different forms. In relationship to Owl Lake's myth, the most fitting motif Carr appears to be employing is 'Death from a broken heart' (F1041.1.1), which is in reference both to Coillte's loss of Blath and Mai's loss of Robert. Lost loves and broken hearts often are a cause of death in Irish folklore. In the example below is of Fionntuin Mac Bochna and his wife, Kesdra.

Just then a volume of white vapour arose from the dark loch. It went round and round, and at last wheeled out between the living pair; then in rapid whirris it sunk again on the lake, and Kesdra was left desolate on the brink. She cried out wildly on her husband not to abandon her; but seeing nothing but the wild hill round her, the grey sky over her, and the dark water beneath, she flung herself wildly below its quiet surface to find her partner or perish with him. To the bright land of Tirna-n-oge was Finntuan conveyed (Mac Bochna 1).

Kesdra willingly throws herself into the water after her husband in sadness and desperation. Carr modifies this in her Owl Lake myth. Coillte's sadness and desperation did not drive her to a suicide by drowning; rather the witch's jealousy of her love from Blath and his love of Coillte drives the witch to murder her. Mai and Kesdra willingly drown themselves, and both Kesdra and Mai have been abandoned and agree that they cannot live without their husbands, but Mai is a woman forsaken with nothing left for which to live, while Kesdra is a woman abandoned with only her husband. Carr contradicts the folktale in one other way. In the tale it is Finntuan, the

male, who holds the ability to transform himself via the otherworld, while, in a reversion of agency, it is Mai, the female, who is able to do so.

Faery Mounds and Owl Lake

Irish folklore often tells of faeries who are part of the creation of an area and their roles in such creations are not always benevolent, as is the case with the witch hag's role in the creation of Owl Lake. That the hag lives in a lair, or underground, keeps with the Irish folkloric understanding of fairies and their dwellings, as the faeries live in the mound, as opposed to on top of it; both are cavernous and underground dwellings. In fact, such underground dwellings, or 'faery mounds' are still found all over Ireland today, and the Irish have historically held the belief that fairies reside in them. This belief is based both on their folklore, and on accounts of people either interacting with the fairies or somehow being affected by the fairies. Traditionally, it is considered very bad luck to build one's home on a faery mound. Within the play, the myth of Owl Lake is widely known. Mai knew the myth of Owl Lake, and thus she also knew that the land she was buying and building her new house on was a faery mound (bad enough luck) of the dark hag witch (even worse luck). She also notes in a dream that she has of Robert: "...in the distance, I see a black cavern and I know it leads to nowhere and I start walking that way because I know I'll find you there" (Carr, *The Mai* 126).

The last motif type echoed in the myth of Owl Lake concerns witches: 'Fairy in the form of a hag' (F234.2.1) and 'Witch lives in fairy mound' (G233). Carr uses them as a possible means to tie the troubles that Mai is experiencing into faery lore. Faeries and faery mounds play a significant role in Irish culture. Carr seems to mirror the folktale understanding of faeries, specifically ones who are witch or hag-like, living in mounds and underground. In her book *At the Bottom of the Garden*, Diane Purkiss discusses the connection between mounds and the notion that they are inhabited by fairies/witches/dead ancestors. She also discusses how gender differences affect the telling of these types of stories.

Male identity comes from the father; in the Celtic regions, all identity comes from one all-powerful ancestor. The odd formulations of the chief's titles -- *the MacLeod*, *the MacDonald* -- implies that the individual is nothing; his meaning comes from descent. All over the British Isles there are burial mounds [and] in the Celtic areas, the clan system preserved intact the idea of a powerful, though dead, male ancestor who gives a name and an identity to everyone in the clan. A memory was also preserved of the mounds as

places of the dead, places where the powerful dead might impart virtue to the surrounding countryside, long after the names of their original inhabitants were forgotten. Just in this way, the fairies, and particularly those fairies who are in any case recently dead male heroes, end up inhabiting the mounds – also ambiguous, also able to help (70)

[For women in these societies] a fairy story is about reaching rock bottom – in that sense, a story about dying – but it is also a story about finding a way out, if only in story. And yet we must not be sentimental about these stories. They are not stories of a kind, acceptant, pastoral world, but brutal, violent, often plain *mean* stories of mean lives, stories not of warm closeness to a benign earth, but of too much closeness to an earth that cannot give enough food, stories not of community sharing, but of villages hostile and towns unfriendly. They come from hurt. Fairies also share many characteristics with the dead; in some stories they *are* the dead, or the dead are with them, in others it is hard for teller and reader to tell the difference between a ghost or revenant or fairy [or witch]. This means they can symbolize loss; loss of self particularly (85-86).

In the play, Carr reverses how gender interacts with gender, with the clan's identity coming from the matriarch, as opposed to the patriarch. This reversion also explains Mai's connection to the otherworldly Owl Lake. Carr contradicts the way that identity is given through the male ancestor. She does this both by replacing an all-powerful male ancestor with an all-powerful female hag and by copying the way that the identity-giving ancestor is named 'the'. By having Mai be "the Mai" she is suggesting, again, that an Irish identity is to be found in the feminine emotional landscape as opposed to the linear and rational ways of masculinity. The link between the witch hag of Owl Lake and the Irish folkloric understanding of the dead and fairies living in mounds seems important in that Carr is suggesting a link not only between Coillte and Mai, but also, an ancestral link between Mai and the hag.

SAM BRADY, DRUIDS, AND THE CURSE

Millie tells the story of Sam Brady, their neighbor who always disliked Robert; one day Sam Brady who

had enough ... and ... threw the ashes from his fire over our wall, a gesture considered a curse in that part of the country (Carr, *The Mai* 157).

The first motif within the tale of Sam Brady that matches with Irish folklore is that of using ashes to curse. It can be found in 'Ash used by druids for divination' (D1311.4.1.1) and 'Ashes thrown into stream dissolve animals' (F981.5). In ancient Irish society, the druids were those responsible for passing binding judgments and enacting penalties for crimes committed. Other orders within the druid caste were responsible for recording history, creating and performing poetry, and serving as oracles and magicians for healing and protection. The druids were also the highest class, often the sole counsel of kings, and as such held a great deal of sway in the society, politically, socially, and psychologically. The druid's most feared response was satire which wielded by the skilled spell-weavers could destroy the reputation of its victim. Sam serves as druid when he passes judgment on Robert's infidelity and abandonment of the Mai and his children with his ashen curse. Carr seems to be drawing from the folkloric use of ash as a tool for divination, mirroring the magical abilities by noting that it was "commonly considered a curse." While Sam Brady seems in some ways to be fulfilling this role of druid, Carr seems to have modified the notion of the druid into a more modern context. It is Sam who grants the plot on Owl Lake to Mai:

It was Sam Brady who sold the site to The Mai. For years he'd refused all offers, offers from hoteliers, publicans, restaurateurs, rich industrialists, Yanks, and then turned around and gave it to The Mai for a song. When asked by irate locals why he'd sold it to The Mai, a blow-in, Sam merely answered, 'Highest bidder!' (Carr, *The Mai* 111).

A possible reason for Carr's use of magic and linking Sam Brady with druids is that doing so allows her to spark the superstitious fears of the audience. As the imagery of druids is more likely to spark genuine fear in Irish audiences than, perhaps, the audiences of other cultures, it becomes important to understand Carr's intention when performing *The Mai*. The fear and genuine concern about magical dealings needs to be translated into the psyche of the audience. If performed outside of cultures imbued with the imagery of druids, then Sam Brady should take on qualities of the type of feared magical characters of the pertinent culture. The understanding of the ability of Sam Brady to convey this type of fear in the audience is deepened in the next two motifs found within the Sam Brady stories.

Destroying Cow and Sam Brady

The second motif associated with Sam Brady is the 'destroying cow' motif which in Irish folk literature is reflected in 'Destructive cow possessed by demons' (B16.1.5.2) and

'Failure of crops and milk as punishment for adultery' (Q552.3.0.3). The most famous of the destroying cow motifs from Irish folklore comes from Tain Bo Cuailgne in which a grand, prized bull The Brown Bull of Cualnge rampages across the countryside after its theft has brought a great war between counties for possession of it. Carr's Billy the Black is not the epic Brown Bull of Cualnge, but does seem to be a modification of it, especially as regards the gender of the destroying animal. The folktale features a bull (male) while Carr creates a destroying cow (female). This points to Carr's repetitive modification of folktales, in which she moves the power and/or agency away from the male over to the female, in this case Billy the Black.

He also figured a dose of Billy the Black was necessary. Billy the Black was his one obstreperous cow and she could always be counted on to do the damage. The farmers around were wary of Billy the Black. If you upset Sam, well the next night you'd find your cornfield torn up by Billy the Black ... Billy the Black was let loose in our garden, or what was left of it, and tore it to shred (Carr, *The Mai* 157).

In the following folktale excerpt, the Bull returns after having slain the White-horned bull of Ulster.

It was not long before the men of Erin, as they were there early on the morrow, saw coming over Cruachan from the west the Brown Bull of Cualnge with the Whitehorned of Ai in torn fragments hanging about his ears and horns. ... Then went the Brown Bull of Cualnge. He turned his right side towards Cruachan, and he left there a heap (crúach) of the liver of the Whitehorned, so that thence is named Cruachan Ai. Next he came to the river Finnglas ('Whitewater'), and he drank a draught from the river, and, so long as he drank the draught he let not one drop of the river flow by him. Then he raised his head, and the shoulder-blades (lethe) of the Whitehorned fell from him in that place. Hence, Sruthair Finnlethe is the name given to it. He pursued his way to the brink of Ath Mor ('the Great Ford'); and he left behind the loin (lúan) of the Whitehorned in that place, so that thence cometh Athione. He continued eastwards into the land of Meath to Ath Truim. And he left behind there the liver (tromm) of the Whitehorned. He raised his head haughtily and shook the remains of the Whitehorned from him over Erin. He sent its hind leg (lárac) away from him to Port Large. He sent its ribs (clíathac) from him to Dublin, which is called Ath Cliath. He turned his face northwards then, and he knew the land of Cualnge, and he went his way towards it. In that place were women and youths and

children lamenting the Brown Bull of Cualnge. They saw the Brown of Cualnge's forehead approaching them. "The forehead (taul) of a bull cometh towards us!" they shouted. Hence is Taul Tairb ever since. Then turned the Brown of Cualnge on the women and youths and children of the land of Cualnge, and he effected a great slaughter amongst them. He turned his back to the hill then and his heart broke in his breast, even as a nut breaks. Such, then, is the account and the fate of the Brown Bull of Cualnge and the end of the Tain (Dunn 29).

There are certain similarities between Carr's cow and the folktale's bull. Both animals have a widespread reputation and renown and are able to exact wanton destruction upon the landscape, and upon the innocents along with the guilty. Carr mirrors the characteristics of the bull in her cow in order to establish her use of the folkloric bull, but reverses the gender to signal a shift in power from the male to the female.

Birds and Sam Brady

Also within the Sam Brady story of the play we see the swan motif resurface, in two ways we have seen Carr use it before: 'Birds show way to otherworld' (B151.2.0.2) is seen in the bird's lamenting call "that sings the once living out of the world" and also in 'Magic birds chained in couples' (B172.7)). To this, Carr also adds the motif 'Taboo: killing a swan' (C841.5) with the 'Magic Birds Chained in Couples' motif.

Sam's final statement of disapproval of Robert was to take his gun and blow the head off the cob feeding innocently near the bank. It's true what they say: swans do keen their mates. She circled him for days. It's a high haunting sound that sings the once living out of the world. (Carr, *The Mai* 157).

Sam shoots the male of a swan pair and exacts the unbinding of the 'birds chained in couples', perhaps as a metaphor for Robert's abandonment of the Mai, or perhaps even more druid-like, as a sort of blood sacrifice to exact the justice of the ashen curse on Robert. As such, the swan motif, as it applies to Sam Brady, could be seen both as a modification and a contradiction to the way it appears in the folktales. The swans not only represent Blath and Coilte, but also Robert and Mai. By killing the male swan, Sam Brady symbolically kills Robert. Swans, as mentioned previously, also represent the way to the otherworld. By killing the male swan, Sam Brady also prevents Robert's entrance into the otherworld, thus freeing Mai. Again, Sam Brady is able to

inhabit the psychic space of the druid and, in doing so, stirs up genuine concern in the audience that even in the modern technological world, magic is still possible.

GRANDMA FRAOCHLAN'S PAST

Millie explains Grandma Fraochlan's belief that she is the daughter of a Sultan of Spain, though "she was born and bred on Inis Fraochlan, north of Bofin" (Carr, *The Mai* 115). Later, Millie reveals that instead of the fantastic tale that her mother told her, Grandma Fraochlan's mother likely had a brief affair with

a Spanish or Moroccan sailor--- no one is quite sure--- who was never heard of or seen since the night of her conception. There were many stories about him ... Whoever he was, he left Grandma Fraochlan his dark skin and a yearning for all that was exotic and unattainable (Carr, *The Mai* 115-116).

Grandma Fraochlan's memory of her father was largely the result of the tales that her mother 'The Duchess' told her to explain her father's continued absence.

The Duchess told me my father was the Sultan of Spain and that he'd hid The Duchess and meself on Fraochlan because we were too beautiful for the world. But in the summer he was going to come in a yacht and take us away to his palace in Spain ... and everyone on Fraochlan'd be cryin' with jealousy--- and I believed her and watched on the cliffs every day for the Sultan of Spain (Carr, *The Mai* 169).

This can be seen in the folk literature as the motif of Spain. Spain in the folk literature is regarded in one of two ways: 'Spain as otherworld' (F130.2) or 'Spain as the land of the dead' (E481.0.1). Both of these lend some explanation to Carr's mirroring use of Spain specifically in regard to Grandma Fraochlan and her mother The Duchess. In Irish folk literature, the faery world is often equated with both the land of the dead and with the otherworld. Carr's choice of Spain for Fraochlan's ancestry combines all these motifs into one. Folk literature has many examples of the faery folk taking mortal lovers, either as the agent of abduction or the victim of abduction. As agents of abduction, faeries take lovers (usually men) into their realm and marry them. The mortal must abide by faery laws or particular restrictions to remain (e.g. not ever touching the ground, etc.). As victims, the faery has been won or otherwise captured and must remain in the human world. In these instances, the relationship can remain only as long as a

particular taboo is not transgressed such as “bringing guests home to visit” or “staying out past a certain time.” Invariably, the taboo is crossed and the mortal is left forsaken, pining for the loss of his or her lover.

An example of the latter “abducted faery” type is the tale of the Selkie woman. Carr expands on this faery lover motif with Grandma Fraochlan’s relationship with the Nine-fingered Fisherman. The Nine-fingered Fisherman lover tale in many ways is the contradiction of the tale of the Selkie. In the Selkie tale, a fisherman out at sea finds a beautiful woman sunbathing on the rocks with her seal skin beside her and is immediately overcome with an undeniable love for her. He then proceeds to steal her skin and force her to return to his home as his wife. He is able to keep her in human form for many years, eventually having a child with her. She never ceases to long for the sea. One day, while the fisherman is out at sea fishing, their child reveals the hiding place of her skin and when the fisherman returns, she is gone. In his pining for the lost faery woman, he loses sight of reality and ceases to care for his child.

In these cases, the faery is an unwilling occupant of this world and seeks only to return to the otherworld. In these unions, the love of the faery takes precedence over everything else. The mortals often forsake their lives as they know it to pursue their love, leaving behind spouses, children, friends, and homes. Even in cases where the mortals capture the faery, their lives change dramatically as they expend great energy to keep the faery lover. When their time with the faery lover is at an end, either because of their leaving the otherworld for one reason or another, or because the faery finds her clothes and abandons them, their thoughts are always with the abandoned love, often at the expense of their mortal world life.

In the stories surrounding Grandma Fraochlan’s past, Carr seems to be drawing on these fantastic tales of “humans taking faery lovers,” suggesting that Grandma Fraochlan’s mother (The Duchess) is a mortal woman, and her father is a being from the otherworld (Spain). This suggests a possible faery lineage that runs through the family, starting with Grandma Fraochlan and down through the Mai and Millie. If this is the case, then Fraochlan’s father’s absence might point to some taboo the Duchess transgressed. Just as Fraochlan pines for her lost Nine-fingered Fisherman, her mother The Duchess dreams of the Sultan’s promised return each summer and passes this dream to Fraochlan. This pipe dream continues through the generations, resounding first in Fraochlan’s hope for the return of her father and her unending love of the long gone Nine-fingered Fisherman, to Mai’s unreasonable love of the wandering and inconstant Robert, and

finally to Millie and her revealed future. This generational effect mirrors the faery interactions with mortals, in that such interactions often have multi-generational consequences.

As we shall see, Carr both mirrors and contradicts the Selkie-type tales in several ways, but keeps many of the core elements. First, both stories engage a fisherman who takes a (in the case of *The Mai*, potentially) faery-blooded wife. Both have characters who have been overcome with their love for another. Fraochlan explains the overwhelming nature of her love for the Nine-fingered Fisherman in a monologue with Julie:

And if you're one of them lucky few whom the gods has blessed, they will send to you a lover with whom you will partake of that most rare and sublime love there is to partake of in this wild and lonely planet. I have been one of them privileged few and I know of no higher love in this world or the next (Carr, *The Mai* 143).

Both stories involve transient lovers who eventually leave their partners, though these roles are reversed in that Fraochlan, the faery blooded of the pair, is left instead of the human fisherman in the Selkie tale. Like the Selkie, the Nine-fingered Fisherman's longing for the sea is what takes him away from her, as Fraochlan clarifies when her daughter Julie challenges her on the reason for his departure: "He didn't leave me. He was taken from me. He was given to me and he was taken from me..." (Carr, *The Mai* 143). Finally, like her human counterpart in the tale of the Selkie, Fraochlan's affair with the Nine-fingered Fisherman was paramount in her life. The affair dominated her present while he was there and dominated her memories after he was gone. Just as the fisherman of the Selkie tale fails to care for his own child, so does Fraochlan as she explains in her own words to Julie:

I was a useless mother. ...There's two types of people in this world from what I can gather, them as puts their children first and them as puts their lover first and for what it's worth the nine-fingered fisherman and meself belongs ta the latter of these. I would gladly have hurled all seven of ye down the slopes of hell for one night more with the nine-fingered fisherman and may I rot eternally for such unmotherly feelin' (Carr, *The Mai* 182).

The suggested connection between Fraochlan's mother, The Dutchess, and the faeries gives further evidence that Mai's departure from this world into the lake at the end of the play is less about the desperation of suicide and more about "returning to the womb" or to the faery

underworld. If Mai is the great granddaughter of a union between the Sultan of the Otherworld and a mortal woman, her settling on the banks of Owl Lake (on the faery mound of the dark witch) and her subsequent return to the faery world (via Owl Lake) following the failure of her love affair with Robert makes much more sense. His breaking of a fidelity taboo also follows the typical pattern of a relationship between a mortal and a faery. When Robert, the mortal, breaks the taboo, Mai, who is linked with faeries, is then free to depart the mortal world for her watery otherworld.

Nine-Fingered Fisherman and Grandma Fraochlan

Grandma Fraochlan explains how it came to be that her husband, Tomas, became ‘the nine-fingered-fisherman’. Tomas was a salmon fisherman when she was delivering her third baby. “He’d been out a day and a nigh’ when he felt there was somethin’ wrong of me. And so there was, twenty-two hours of gruntin’ and not a sign of the child’s head” (Carr, *The Mai*, 181). When he asked the skipper to turn the boat around, the skipper refused. Tomas leapt into the freezing sea and began the swim home, but the skipper, who was worried for his safety, helped him back into the boat and brought him home. “He lost his little finger on his right hand and from there on was known as the nine-fingered fisherman” (Carr, *The Mai* 183).

Nine is a number that appears literally hundreds of times in Irish folklore. One of the reasons for this is that nine is considered a magical number, being three (itself a magical number) times three. There are nine hazel trees that grow over the Irish Well of Wisdom, the Cauldron at the Head of Hades (which some refer to as the Celtic Holy Grail) whose fire was blown into flame by the breath of nine young women, as well as the sacred nine-day long Celtic week and the nine muses of memory. It is even rumored that one can dispel the magical effects of the evil eye by looking fixedly at the object of the curse through nine fingers.

Some specific motif examples of the magical nine that might relate to her use of nine are: ‘Nine ranks of heaven’ (A651.1.6.1), ‘magic virtue of nine waves’ (D911.1.1), and ‘Nine wonders of Ireland’ (Z71.6.3). Carr seems to mirror these motifs in Fraochlan’s memories of the man who bore these fingers, and perhaps more specifically, this mirroring is seen in the motif ‘hands with unusual number of fingers’ (F552.1.1), which reflects on the Nine-fingered Fisherman’s condition. Carr seems to use Grandma Fraochlan, her past, and her connection to the nine-fingered fisherman to establish Mai’s family as faery-blooded. Nine and faeries share a similar folkloric space, in that they are both connected to the supernatural, the otherworld, and the unexplainable. The connection between Grandma Fraochlan (and her lineage) is important

because without this understanding, Mai's death becomes more about desperation, but such a faery connection makes it clear that Mai's death is about returning to the faery otherworld.

Grandma Fraochlan's Giant Oar

Grandma Fraochlan arrives to Mai's home with her 'giant oar' in tow. It takes two pages of dialog (Carr, *The Mai* 112-113) for the oar to make it into the house, and through this is it revealed that she brings it with her whenever she travels and that she sleeps with it beside her. This is apparently due to the oar's connection with her deceased husband, the nine-fingered-fisherman; "Sorry, *a stoir*, but it's all I've left of him now" (Carr, *The Mai* 113). This use of the oar in *The Mai* might fit with the 'Golden oar' (F841.2.4) motif of Irish folklore. The golden oar appears in the Welsh tale *The Spirit of the Van*:

Among the mountains of Carmarthen, lies a beautiful and romantic piece of water, named The Van Pools. Tradition relates, that after midnight, on New Year's Eve, there appears on this lake a being named The Spirit of the Van. She is dressed in a white robe, bound by a golden girdle; her hair is long and golden, her face is pale and melancholy; she sits in a golden boat, and manages a golden oar (Keightley 128).

The Spirit of the Van in this tale is seen by a local farmer who immediately falls in love and calls to her just as she is disappearing at dawn. Each night the farmer returns only to find that the Spirit does not, and consulting a seer learns that he must woo her with cheese and bread which he attempts every night until the following New Year's Eve. With his offerings, she accepts and promises not to leave him as long as he does not strike her three times. Over the course of the years, he does and she flees with her livestock and he is left desolate. In this tale, as in the Selkie tale, a human is overcome with love for a beautiful faery and is left. Like Grandma Fraochlan, the farmer abandons his fields, livestock, family and his own health in pursuit of the faery. Thus, the oar is another mirroring of the faery motif, which again establishes the connection between fairies and the family. Carr blends the power and agency of the female Spirit of the Van with the pining and powerlessness of the male farmer in Grandma Fraochlan. Carr seems to be commenting on the current state of Ireland in its search for its identity in this specific combination, namely that Ireland is both powerful and lamenting at once.

MAGIC NEEDLE AND THREAD

The needle and thread motif (D1181) wends its way through the entirety of the play, but is most evident in Millie's recollections of moments when Mai was breaking down following Robert's departures.

When I was eleven The Mai sent me into the butcher's shop to buy a needle and thread. It was the day Robert left us. Now at eleven I knew enough to know that needle and thread were bought in the drapery, but I thought maybe it was a special kind of thread The Mai wanted and because of the day that was in it I decided not to argue with her. ... Of course they didn't have any ... and I said rather gruffly, 'Mom, they don't sell needles and thread in the butcher's. ... The Mai set about looking for that magic thread that magic thread that would stitch us together again. (Carr, *The Mai* 110-111).

Carr's use of this needle and thread motif falls under 'Magic needle' (D1181), which in Irish folk literature can be found in the tale of Sheen. In the excerpt below, Sheen's brothers, who have been turned into wild geese, find Sheen trapped in a Bog, and at first, decide to leave her since she was the cause of their loss of human form. However, moved by her regret and willingness to help them, they help to release her, thus saving her from drowning, and tell her how to set things right again.

Sheen knew--for the servants had often told her the story--that it was one of her seven brothers who spoke. "Since ever I knew of it," said she, "the whole of my trouble has been that I was the cause of your losing your human form and the companionship of our father who is now called the Lonely King. Believe me," said she, "that I would have striven and striven to win you back." There was so much feeling in her voice that her seven brothers, although they had been hardened by thinking about their misfortune, were touched at their hearts and they flew down to help her. They bore up her arms, they caught at her shoulders, they raised up her feet. They carried her beyond the marsh. Then she knelt down and cried to them, "O my brothers dear, is there anything I can do to restore you to your human forms?" "There is," said the first of the seven wild geese. She begged them to tell it to her. "It's a long and a tiresome labor we would put on you," said one. "If you would gather the light down that grows on the bogs with your own hands," said another, "and if you spun that down into threads, and wove the threads into a cloth and sewed the cloth into a shirt, and did that over and over again until you had made

seven shirts for us, all that time without laughing or crying or saying a word, you could save us. One shirt you could weave and spin and sew in a year. And it would not be until the seven shirts were put upon us that the human form would be restored to each of us." "I would be glad to do all that," said Sheen, "and I would cry no tear, laugh no laugh, and say no word all the time I was doing this task (Colum, 104).

Carr's mirrored use of the needle and thread seems to refer to a mending of the family through magical sewing. Sheen, unfortunately, fails at her task, and thus, neither Sheen nor Millie are able to knit the family back together. Perhaps Carr is suggesting that there is no knitting back together the family identity once it has been broken, a message she repeats in many ways throughout her plays to suggest that Ireland, also broken, will not be returned to its pre-English identity. In addition to understanding how the needle and thread motif lends itself to the Irish identity discussion, we see that it also gives important performative information. Millie tells the audience of this moment very early in the play. It was a very desperate moment for Mille, because it was not just another moment of her mother's madness; it was foreshadowing the death of her family.

MUSIC

Music seems to have an almost supernatural power over the lives of Mai and Robert. Robert and Mai are both equally accomplished cellists, though Mai gave it up for Robert. Robert's connection with his music over his connection to his family seems to cause most of the family grief, as he places the importance of his music over that of his family. For Mai, it resuscitates hope that things will return to how they were whenever she hears him play. Mai's connection with music seems to be that of sorrow and yearning for Robert and the stability of his presence. In fact, during Robert's absence, Mille remembers her standing at the window and singing as if "pulsing messages to some remote star which would ricochet and lance Robert wherever he was, 'come home - come home'" (Carr, *The Mai* 111). Echoes of this calling out across the sea can be seen in an excerpt from the folktale, *The Children of Lir*, in which Lir's children have been cursed by their stepmother and turned into swans doomed to fly above three seas for three hundred years per sea. This excerpt of the story is from their time in the second, a treacherous and blustery sea. One of the swans, Fionnuala says:

Let us choose a place of meeting, so that when we are separated and lost and wandering each one will know where to wait for the others. The swans, her brothers, said it was a good thought; they agreed to meet together in one place, and the place they chose was Carraig-na-Ron, the Rock of the Seals. And it was well they made that choice, for a great storm came on them one night and scattered them far out over the sea. Their voices were drowned in the tempest and they were driven hither and thither in the darkness. In the pale morning Fionnuala came to the Rock of the Seals. Her feathers were broken with the wind and dragged with the saltiness of the sea and she was lamenting and calling on Aodh and Fiacra and Conn. "O Conn, that I sheltered under my feathers, come to me! O Fiacra, come to me! O Aodh, Aodh, Aodh, come to me!" And when she did not see them, and no voice answered, she made a sore lamentation and said: "O bitter night that was blacker than the doom of Aoifa at the first to us! O three that I loved! O three that I loved! The waves are over your heads and I am desolate!" (Young 119)

Fionnuala's plan to create a safe meeting space and her subsequent lamenting and calling out to her sibling swans is very similar to Mai's experience. Mai builds a safe haven for Robert to return to her, the house on Owl Lake. Mai's singing out to Robert to return to her mirrors the cries and prayers of lamentation Fionnuala calls out to the angry sea to return her brothers and sister to her. In the Children of Lir, as in *The Mai*, the cries are heard and Fionnuala's siblings return, just as Robert returns. However, as a possible contradiction to Fionnuala's tale, Mai receives no long-term respite from the treacherous and wing-rending sea of Robert's infidelity until she takes agency back from Robert and returns to her otherworld, Owl Lake.

Music also surfaces in the myth of Owl Lake, as seen in statement of Sam Brady's that when the swans and geese are restless and suddenly take flight. It is said that this is because Biath is playing his pipes in mourning for Coillte. Both of the previous music elements fit well with the folkloric music motifs: 'Magic music--- longing' (D1374.1), 'Magic music--- mourning' (D1359.2.1), and 'magic music causes joy' (D1359.3.1).

The Mai, while not the strongest example of Carr's use of Irish folklore motifs, contains many distinctively folkloric elements. These folkloric elements help shed some light on some of the more nonrealistic elements of the play and help lend an understanding to some of the methodology Carr is employing to communicate with the readers and audience members. What makes *The Mai* successful in production is this weaving of distantly familiar ideas and motifs with a believable story, one that gives the impression of a tale that, lying just beneath the surface

of consciousness, is timeless and mysterious enough to engage a reader or audience member beyond the simple tale of a woman scorned in love.

Throughout these four plays of Marina Carr she is drawing clearly and distinctively from the folktale motifs noted in Tom Peete Cross's *Motif Index of Early Irish Literature*, which focuses on the pre-invasion Irish folktales. While she will occasionally use motifs that are from other cultures' folklore, she predominantly focuses on folktales that are specific to Ireland only, and specifically from the pre-invasion era.

In *The Mai*, all of the swan and geese motifs (B151.2.0.2, B251.2.9, B172.2) are specific to the Cross motif index. All the motifs that correspond to Sam Brady and the Druids, Sam Brady and the destroying cow, and Sam Brady and birds, as well as the motifs that correspond with Grandma Froachlan and the nine-fingered fisherman and Grandma Froachlan's giant oar come only out of the Cross index. All of these motifs are specific to Ireland's pre-invasion folktales. As such, we see Carr beginning to explore pre-invasion folklore as a tool.

Carr's subtle use of these motifs in *The Mai* is likely what makes this the most palatable of her post-absurdist plays. It is clear that she is beginning to delve into a pre-colonial Irish past and mine its folktales for their imagery, but as a peripheral complement to the main storyline. In her later plays, she expands the folkloric content and lays bare some of the motifs often in very disturbing ways.

The next play *Portia Coughlan*, explores a similar use of the motifs but with more edginess and more plot centrality. *By the Bog of Cats* takes this progression even further, with the folktale motifs seated clearly at the center of the plot. By the time audience members tread into *On Raftery's Hill*, they no longer get to witness the less dangerous feeling versions of the folktales as presented in *The Mai*. Such renderings are replaced with more raw and dangerous tales.

PORTIA COUGHLAN

Portia Coughlan (1996) represents a turning point in the work of Marina Carr. *The Mai* marks the movement from her earlier, less mature pieces to the body of work that most critics would consider her arrival as one of the 'new Irish playwrights'. *Portia Coughlan* is the first time that Carr begins the process of moving the folktales from the periphery of the play's storyline to a more central and fully integrated placement. While Owl Lake myth is reflective of the actions of the characters in *The Mai*, the Belmont River and its myth take a more centralized and character-

like role in *Portia Coughlan*. Belmont River is the drowning place of both Gabriel and Portia, the rendezvous location both for Portia's affair and for the incestuous relationship between Gabriel and Portia, and Gabriel's haunting place. He haunts Portia both with his song and his visible visitations. Carr's stage directions instruct that the river be always visible on stage, even when the action is occurring inside Portia's house. For this reason, the analysis will first focus on the Belmont River, with the other images analyzed in their relationship to the river.

THE MYTH OF BELMONT RIVER AND THE FOLKTALE, *THE EARTH SHAPERS*
(THE CREATION OF IRELAND)

The creation myth of Belmont River is revealed to the audience by Portia, and is, at its most basic, a story of a river god rescuing a girl witch who has been impaled. From this rescue, the river is magically created. In the telling, Fintan is dismissive of the legend and marks the witch as evil and a 'mad hoor.' Portia, however, views the witch as 'just different'.

Portia: Ever hear tell of how Belmont River came to be called Belmont River?

Fintan: Wasn't it about some river God be the name of Bel and some mad hoor of a witch as was doin' all sorts of evil round here but they fuckin' put her in her place, by Jaysus they did.

Portia: She wasn't a mad hoor of a witch! And she wasn't evil! Just different, is all and the people round here impaled her on a stake and left her to die. And Bel heard her cries and came down the Belmont Valley and taken her away from here and the river was born. And they say Bel taken the more than the girl when he swept through the valley. I don't know about that, but I think they do say right for this place surely be the dungeon of the fallen world. ... Gabriel used to hear the girl when the river was low; said she sounded like a aria from a cave (Carr, *Portia Coughlan* 219).

As in *The Mai*, Carr draws a link between the life of her protagonist, the protagonist of the myth, and links both to the Irish identity question. As did the myth of Owl Lake, the Belmont River reflects a myriad of Irish folktale motifs.

In the Belmont River creation myth, Carr employs the following folklore motifs relating to the river itself: 'magic river' (D915) and 'river produced by magic' (D915.1).

The folktale *The Earth Shapers* relates creation of Ireland by the gods' magic. The following passage from that tale tells of the formation of the rivers by the Stone of Destiny. The river and land in the folktale is created by a combination of a deity and fairies. Carr mirrors this in her myth of Belmont River as it is created by the interaction between a river god and a witch. As the second excerpt will show, Carr's town also mirrors the forsaken quality of the land in the folktale, and yet while the goddess in the tale and Portia both share a level of power and agency, the Belmont River witch is not afforded this agency.

The De Danaans saw everything clearly. They saw that they were in an island covered with green grass and full of heights and strange scooped-out hollows and winding ways. They saw too that the grass was full of flowers--blue and purple and yellow and white and red.

"Let us stay here," they said to each other, "and make beautiful things so that the Earth may be glad."

Brigit took the Stone of Destiny in her hands: it shone white like a crystal between her hands.

"I will lay the Stone in this place," she said, "that ye may have empire."

She laid the Stone on the green grass and it sank into the earth: a music rose about it as it sank, and suddenly all the scooped-out hollows and deep winding ways were filled with water--rivers of water that leaped and shone; lakes and deep pools of water trembling into stillness.

"It is the laughter of the Earth!" said Ogma the Wise.

Angus dipped his fingers in the water.

"I would like to see the blue and silver fishes that swim in Connla's Well swimming here," he said, "and trees growing in this land like those trees with blossomed branches that grow in the Land of the Silver Fleece."

"It is an idle wish, Angus the Young," said Ogma. "The fishes in Connla's Well are too bright for these waters and the blossoms that grow on silver branches would wither here."

We must wait and learn the secret of the Earth, and slowly fashion dark strange trees, and fishes that are not like the fishes in Connla's Well.

"Yea," said Nuada, "we will fashion other trees, and under their branches shall go hounds that are not like the hound Failinis and deer that have not horns of gold. We will make ourselves the smiths and artificers of the world and beat the strange life out yonder into other shapes. We will make for ourselves islands to the north of this and islands to the west, and round them shall go also the three waves of Mananaun for we will fashion and re-fashion all things till there is nothing unbeautiful left in the whole earth."

"It is good work," cried all the De Danaans, "we will stay and do it, but Brigit must go to Moy Mel and Tir-na-Moe and Tir-nan-Oge and Tir-fo-Tonn, and all the other worlds, for she is the Flame of Delight in every one of them."

"Yes, I must go," said Brigit.

"O Brigit!" said Ogma, "before you go, tie a knot of remembrance in the fringe of your mantle so that you may always remember this place--and tell us, too, by what name we shall call this place."

"Ye shall call it the White Island," said Brigit, "and its other name shall be the Island of Destiny; and its other name shall be Ireland."

Then Ogma tied a knot of remembrance in the fringe of Brigit's mantle (Young 4).

The tale goes on to tell of the takeover of the Island by Balor the Evil-Eye and the Fomorians.

Every night when darkness had come into the sky, Mananaun wrapped himself in his mantle of power and crossed the sea and walked all round Ireland, stepping from rock to rock. No one saw him, because his mantle made him invisible, but he saw everything and knew that trouble had found the De Danaans. The ugly, mis-shapen folk of the Fomor had come into Ireland and spread themselves over the country like a pestilence. They had stolen the Cauldron of Plenty and carried it away to their own land, where Balor of the Evil Eye reigned. They had taken the Spear of Victory also, and the only one of the four great Jewels of Sovereignty remaining to the De Danaans was the Stone of Destiny. It

was hidden deep in the earth of Ireland, and because of it the Fomorians could not altogether conquer the country, nor could they destroy the De Danaans, though they drove them from their pleasant palaces and hunted them through the glens and valleys like outlaws (Young 6).

Carr uses a combination of mirroring, modification, and contradiction of the folktale in her Belmont River myth. Carr mirrors certain aspects of the folktale in her river myth in order to allow the audience to viscerally feel the connection between the tale and the myth. As the Ireland of the later expert of the folktale has been taken over by Fomorian invaders and is devoid of the treasures and beauties that the gods created for the De Danaans, the Ireland of *Portia Coughlan* is also forsaken. In the world of *Portia Coughlan*, the “ugly and misshapen” inhabit the landscape (e.g. Raphael with his crippled foot, and Stacia with her one eye), and the treasures that make life beautiful and heaven-like do not exist.

However, Carr modifies the tale so that the audience does not immediately recognize it, thus avoiding the activation of the audience’s nostalgia which prevents the formation of an identity. In the folktale the rivers are ‘the laughter of the earth’ and the land is created by the goddess, Brigit, and the faerie race, the De Danaans. The Belmont River was also created by deity, the river god, Bel, but in a modification of the tale, it is not a bright and happy situation that creates the river. Instead the creation comes from the spiteful killing of a town witch and Bel’s rescue of her.

Carr contradicts the role the goddess Brigit by replacing her with the witch of the Belmont River. One possible explanation for this is that Carr is exploring the power and agency of Brigit and the identity that it allowed the inhabitants of the Ireland within the tale, and how such agency and clear identity is not possible in modern Ireland. She shows this both with the killing of the town witch, a modern version of the goddess, and with Portia’s suicide. Carr is suggesting that even if the beautiful old Ireland with its identity existed today that it could not function. Carr seems to suggest that such sovereignty would threaten England and would be eliminated, as was the witch. It is Portia’s suicide that points the way for Ireland to create an identity. Just as Mai’s death can be seen as transformative, so can Portia’s suicide be an act of agency and transformation.

RIVERS AND THE FEMININE

A second element of the Belmont River myth concerns Bel's rescue of the girl. The river god, Bel, can be seen in the Irish folktale motifs 'god of water' (A420), while the impaled witch is the folkloric 'river goddess' (A425.1). Donald Alexander Mackenzie in his *Wonder Tales from Scottish Myth and Legend*, specifically discusses the spirits of the rivers of Scotland:

In other stories we find female water spirits who wait at fords, threatening travellers with disaster. They also could be thwarted by those who had the necessary knowledge which made it possible for them to secure protection.

Almost all the rivers of Scotland were abodes of goddesses, but about many of them there are no surviving stories. The character of a goddess was suggested by that of a river (MacKenzie 12).

Thus, with *Portia Coughlan*, we find the witch/goddess connection in the Belmont River myth reflects this common folkloric connection between goddesses and bodies of water in Celtic tradition. In all of her plays, Carr ties a watery landscape to the female protagonists. There have been many speculations about the water so prevalent in her settings. This connection between goddesses, witches, and females with rivers and water seems to suggest that Carr draws a parallel both between female protagonists and water and the power of the goddesses associated with the water. It is from their watery landscapes that the female protagonists draw their sense of identity and strength.

In most of the folktales, the water is a source of healing, wisdom, and an entrance to the Otherworld. Belmont River is located between Portia's property and the property of her father, thus serving not just as property boundary but also an emotional boundary between Portia's past and present lives. This aspect of the river is even more pronounced when Gabriel's death is considered, as his death was also an emotional death for Portia, with her suicide serving as a more realistic version of her emotional one at the time of Gabriel's death. It is to this moment in her life that she returns when she visits the river and Gabriel, as if Carr is suggesting that Portia herself is a ghost of her previous self that, like Gabriel, haunts her present life. This idea of the river as a membrane or boundary between life and death is mirrored in the motifs, 'river as barrier to otherworld' (F141), 'perilous river as barrier to otherworld' (F141.1.1), and 'water as entrance to the underworld' (F93). Inherent to the role of the river as a barrier between life and death, are the deaths themselves, which take place in the river.

In the tale of Beira, we find other similarities to *Portia Coughlan*. Beira's connections with water mirror multiple aspects of Carr's play and myth of the Belmont River. While this tale does not include a description of the creation of the Green Island or an explanation for the Well of Youth, both are referring to the explanation found in the previous excerpt from *The Earth Shapers*. Beira's knowledge of the healing nature of the waters of the Well of Youth correspond to Portia's own connection to the waters of the Belmont River and, perhaps, that of the myth's witch as well. Throughout the play, Portia can be found returning to the river for solace, respites, and reconnection with her lost brother, all soul-nourishing things.

Beira lived for hundreds and hundreds of years. The reason she did not die of old age was because, at the beginning of every spring, she drank the magic waters of the Well of Youth which bubbles up in the Green Island of the West. This was a floating island where summer was the only season, and the trees were always bright with blossom and laden with fruit. It drifted about on the silver tides of the blue Atlantic, and sometimes appeared off the western coasts of Ireland and sometimes close to the Hebrides. Many bold mariners have steered their galleys up and down the ocean, searching for Green Island in vain. On a calm morning they might sail past its shores and yet never know it was near at hand, for oft-times it lay hidden in a twinkling mist. Men have caught glimpses of it from the shore, but while they gazed on its beauties with eyes of wonder, it vanished suddenly from sight by sinking beneath the waves like the setting sun. Beira, however, always knew where to find Green Island when the time came for her to visit it (24).

A second excerpt from the same tale reveals another layer of the way that Carr mirrors this tale in her play. Similar to Beira's imbibing of the waters of the Well of Youth, Portia and Gabriel's "drinking" of the waters of the Belmont River that in the play ends their lives, is a kind of rebirth out of the world, where they are misunderstood, into the mythical faery world that lies just below the waters in many Irish folktales. The witch girl of the Belmont River creation myth is also restored by the river god, Bel.

The waters of the Well of Youth are most potent when the days begin to grow longer, and most potent of all on the first of the lengthening days of spring. Beira always visited the island on the night before the first lengthening day--that is, on the last night of her reign as Queen of Winter. All alone in the darkness she sat beside the Well of Youth, waiting

for the dawn. When the first faint beam of light appeared in the eastern sky, she drank the water as it bubbled fresh from a crevice in the rock. As soon as Beira tasted the magic water, in silence and alone, she began to grow young again. She left the island and, returning to Scotland, fell into a magic sleep. When, at length, she awoke, in bright sunshine, she rose up as a beautiful girl with long hair yellow as buds of broom, cheeks red as rowan berries, and blue eyes that sparkled like the summer sea in sunshine. Then she went to and fro through Scotland, clad in a robe of green and crowned with a chaplet of bright flowers of many hues. No fairer goddess was to be found in all the land, save Bride, the peerless Queen of Summer (26).

RAPHAEL AND PORTIA

Portia's husband, Raphael, is a hardworking, financially successful, honest, forgiving, loyal, Christian man who has the respect of the town. He is a saint of sorts, right down to his angel name. We see the character of Raphael, the crippled Saint of rescue, in the motifs, 'person with one foot' (F517.1.1.1), 'god with one foot' (A128.3.1), 'angels as rescuer' (R168), and 'crippled saint miraculously receives horse and chariot' (V221.0.2.1). Carr splits this last motif between Raphael as a metaphoric horse and chariot in Portia's life and the gift from Maggie and Sechil that oddly mirrors Raphael, a "three-foot white delft horse on its hind legs". We see Portia's true nature despite Raphael and her desire to change in the motifs, 'husband discovers wife's adultery' (K1550.1) and 'woman deserts husband for unworthy lover' (T232).

As such, his presence in the play offers another glimpse into the Belmont River myth, a 'what if' of sorts. What if the Belmont witch had forsaken her witch-nature and, instead, settled down with an upstanding Christian man for a 'normal' life? Could such a decision have changed her fate? The answer to this question is hinted at in Raphael's crippled foot, a chip in the perfect veneer. A more solid answer lies in Portia's failure to remain faithful to Raphael, their crumbling marriage, and her unmotherly attitude towards her children. The answer that Carr seems to give to her posed 'what if' is that the witch, like Portia, could never have successfully denied her true nature. She could only have tried for a long time unsuccessfully. She would always have been 'different'. Indeed, the play ends with Portia explaining to Raphael her honest desire for a normal life and rescue from herself in her marriage to Raphael.

I seen you long before you ever seen me, seen ya fishin' one Sunday afternoon and the stillness and sureness that came off of you was a balm to me, and when I asked you who

ya were and they said that's Raphael Coughlan, I thought, how can anyone with a name like that be so real, and I says to meself, if Raphael Coughlan notices me I will have a real chance to enter the world and stay in it, which has always been the battle for me. And about Gabriel – I cannot, Raphael, I cannot. And though everyone and everythin' tells me I have to forget him, I cannot, Raphael, I cannot (Carr, *Portia Coughlan* 255).

PORTIA AND WITCHES

Carr certainly does not romanticize the connection between water, female deities, and her protagonists. Carr explores the darker side of this connection in her mirroring of the folktale *Beira, Queen of Winter*. This description of Beira is similar to the witch girl of Carr's myth, in that both women are feared. Carr does not specifically explain the reason that the villagers impale the Witch girl on a stake other than a suggestion that she was evil, or misunderstood (Carr, *Portia Coughlan* 219). Perhaps she was killed only out of the townspeople's fear of her. In associating Portia with both the witch girl of the myth and the goddess of the folktales, Carr suggests that they share a similar experience. Portia exhibits the anger of Beira through the venomous things she says about her children, her husband, and generally those around her. Most of the characters of the play are cautious around Portia and try to avoid her wrath, just as the characters of the Beira tale do and those around the witch of the myth. Portia, like Beira, is generally always in a foul mood, with a biting wit and little patience for those around her.

Dark Beira was the mother of all the gods and goddesses in Scotland. She was of great height and very old, and everyone feared her. When roused to anger she was as fierce as the biting north wind and harsh as the tempest-stricken sea .

As each month went past, however, Beira aged quickly. She reached full womanhood in midsummer, and when autumn came on her brows wrinkled and her beauty began to fade. When the season of winter returned once again, she became an old and withered hag, and began to reign as the fierce Queen Beira.

The aged Beira was fearsome to look upon. She had only one eye, but the sight of it was keen and sharp as ice and as swift as the mackerel of the ocean (23).

It is told also that Beira let loose many rivers and formed many lochs, sometimes willingly and sometimes against her will, and that she also shaped many bens and glens. All the hills in Ross-shire are said to have been made by Beira.

Beira had another well in Inverness-shire which had to be kept covered in like manner from sunset till sunrise. One of her maids, whose name was Nessa, had charge of the well. It happened that one evening the maid was late in going to the well to cover it. When she drew near she beheld the water flowing so fast from it that she turned away and ran for her life. Beira watched her from the top of Ben Nevis, which was her mountain throne, and cried: "You have neglected your duty. Now you will run for ever and never leave water."

The maiden was at once changed into a river, and the loch and the river which runs from it towards the sea were named after her. That is why the loch is called Loch Ness and the river the river Ness. Once a year, when the night on which she was transformed comes round, Ness (Nessa) arises out of the river in her girl form, and sings a sad sweet song in the pale moonlight. It is said that her voice is clearer and more beautiful than that of any bird, and her music more melodious than the golden harps and silvern pipes of fairyland (23-26, 28-29).

PORTIA AND GABRIEL

Portia and Gabriel's relationship is significant in relationship to folklore motifs not only in its incestuous nature, but also in the fact that they are twins. Certainly, twins are not specifically Irish, but the ways in which they show up in the tales and the ways Carr uses them are clearly similar, as shown in the following motifs. Carr seems to blur the line between the two by having each take on many of the gender attributes of the other. Gabriel is described by many characters throughout the play as being a softspoken, gentle, and feminine child, while Portia is seen as being exceptionally powerful and sexually active for a female. Carr deepens the blurring with the specifically Irish motifs: 'Twins born with ear of other in mouth' (T587.2) and 'Two persons with bodies joined' (F523), which also echoes Portia's above description of her and Gabriel in the womb. Portia also reminisces about her and Gabriel emerging from the womb 'holdin' hands –When God was handin' out souls he must've got mine and Gabriel's mixed up, aither that or he gave us just the one between us and it went to the Belmont River with him'

(Carr, *Portia Coughlan* 211). Carr explores this combination of male and female aspects in her protagonist through her blending of the two into one person, perhaps as a continuation of her pattern of exploring agency and empowerment in her female protagonists. Portia and Gabriel considered themselves to be of the same soul and those around them shared a confusion about who was who at any given time.

The relationship between Portia and Gabriel seems at many times to be supernatural. His ability to haunt her and her ability to continue to see and hear him long after his death highlight this. That both of them are connected to the river suggests that, perhaps their connection to one another is due to an otherworldly influence. As is typical in such relationships that are found in folklore, a taboo is involved. For Portia and Gabriel, the taboo is their incestuous nature. However, not only is their relationship incestuous (both within the womb and later in childhood), they are also born of an incestuous relationship. In Act Three, Maggie reveals to Stacia the incestuous nature of Portia's parents.

I'm not sure even Marianne knows. Marianne and Sly is brother and sister. Same father, different mothers, born within a month of one another. Me mother told me on her death-bed that Marianne was auld Scully's child, around the same time Blaize was expectin' Sly. She knows. The auld bitch! Always knew. That I'm convinced of. ... Done her best to thwart it [the marriage of Marianne and Sly], but never would own up as to the why of the thwartin'! Too proud, ya see, and me mother too ashamed. Besides, me father would have killed her if her ever found out – and I mean killed her. Young Gabriel Scully was insane from too much inbreedin' and I'd near swear he walked into the Belmont River be accident. Aither that or his antennae were too high; couldn't take the asphyxiation of that house (Carr, *Portia Coughlan* 245).

The brother-sister incest repeated itself in Marianne and Sly's children, Portia and Gabriel, as Portia explains later in the same act.

I never told anyone this before –ya see, me and Gabriel made love all the time down be the Belmont River among the swale, from the age of five – That's as far back as I can remember anyways –But I think we were doin' it before we were born. Times I close me eyes and I feel a rush of water around me and above we hear the thumpin' of me mother's heart, and we're a-twined, his foot on my head, mine on his foetal arm, and we don't know which of us is the other and we don't want to, and the water swells around our ears,

and all the world is Portia and Gabriel packed for ever in a tight hot womb, where there's no breathin', no thinkin', only darkness and drums and touch – And when I was fifteen I slept with Damus Halion – should've known better, he meant nothin' to me – and Gabriel seen and Gabriel seen and never spoke to me after (Carr, *Portia Coughlan* 254).

Several folklore motifs match the incestuous nature of these relationships. . 'Enigmatic statement betrays incest' (H582.2.1) matches Maggie's telling of the story. 'Unwitting brother-sister incest' (N365.3), 'brother-sister marriage of the gods' (A164.1), and 'Unchaste woman bears twins' (H412.1). Marianne's and Sly's relationship, as well as Portia and Gabriel's relationship, match 'brother-sister incest' (T415). Specific to Portia and Gabriel's relationship is the motif of fifteen, which ties into the age that Portia slept with Damus, thus abandoning Gabriel: 'fifteen signs before the day of judgment' (A1002.2) and 'fifteen signs before doomsday' (Z71.16.11.3). It is suggested several times throughout the play by several different people that Marianne caused the death of Gabriel due to her inability to handle her knowledge of the relationship between Portia and Gabriel, which matches the motif, 'male of f-m twin pairing thrown into river to avoid the evils of a twin birth' (M371.0.2). Carr's uses the folklore motifs in the incestuous relationships to deepen the connection between the otherworld and Portia and Gabriel. This allows Portia's behavior to be seen in a light that it may not otherwise be allowed. Without this supernatural explanation, Portia's attitudes and behaviors towards Gabriel seem to come from a place of mental instability. Instead, the audience is able both to empathize with Portia and Gabriel and to see a certain level of necessity in the interactions between Gabriel and Portia.

AGENCY, THE RIVER AND GHOSTS

Carr seems to play with the folkloric notion of the river as an agent, as playing an active role in the drowning of both Gabriel and Portia. This idea of river as agent can be seen in the motifs, 'waters rise to drown wrongdoer' (F930.2), 'Treacherous river drowns victims' (F932.8.4), and 'death from drowning for breaking taboo' (F923). Carr's imbuing of the river with agency deepens the connection between rivers and the otherworld. Perhaps it is the spirit of the water itself or beings on the otherside of the barrier who are active in the drowning of river. The boundaries between Portia and the river, as well as between the etheric Gabriel and the river seem to blur, especially as relates to agency. What is influencing what?

Gabriel in his ghost form can be seen as matching the motif, 'Banshees as portents of misfortune' (M301.6.1). In Irish lore and culture, banshees, singing ghosts, are immediately

recognized as preludes to one's death. The play opens with one light on Portia standing by the river; the other light on Gabriel. "He stands at the bank of the Belmont River, singing. They mirror one another's posture in an odd way; unconsciously. Portia stands there, drinking, lost-looking, listening to Gabriel's voice" (Carr, *Portia Coughlan* 193). This very first moment in the play decisively conveys Portia's death, though Cathy Leeny calls the moment when the audience sees Portia's dripping corpse the 'theatrical coup de grace' (xxi) with what follows to be what Fintan O'Toole describes as 'a psychological autopsy' (Leeney, xxi). In several ways, this being one of them, Carr signals to the audience Portia's death. Without the audience's constant awareness of this, the play would quickly descend into excessive emotion.

Gabriel's presence both as ghost and banshee can be seen as falling into two motif groups, that of song and the other of ghosts and death. The first group is seen in motifs such as 'Ghost sings' (E402.1.1.4), 'Poet sings after his death' (E371.3), 'The dead sing' (E546), 'Fairies sing' (F262.1), 'Ghosts moan as a death omen' (E547), and a repetition of 'Twins born with ear of other in mouth' (T587.2), as Portia is the only one with Gabriel's songs in her ears. All of these motifs speak to the banshee image. The second group, ghosts and the dead, are used as follows. In establishing the presence of ghosts in general is seen the motifs, 'spirit in human form' (F401.6), 'lost souls' (E752), 'revenant as man' (E425.2), 'revenant as child' (E425.3), 'dead brother's friendly return' (E326), and 'the dead speak' (E545). Ghosts of suicide are seen in the motifs, 'ghost of suicide seen at death spot or nearby' (E334.4), 'suicide cannot rest in grave' (E411.1.1), and 'non-malevolent ghost haunts scene of former misfortune, tragedy' (E334). Ghosts as active in the death of another person are seen in the motifs, 'ghost of suicide drags people into river' (E266.1), 'spirit pursues person' (F402.1.10), 'spirits cause death' (F402.1.11), 'dead return to fulfill bargain' (E342), and 'return from dead to rescue from drowning' (E379.1), which Carr inverts as Gabriel does not rescue but woos Portia to her drowning. Portia's reaction to Gabriel is seen in the motifs, 'taboo seeing dead man not killed by weapons' (C319.2), 'Hearts break when lovers are old beloved is dead' (F1041.1.1.4), 'woman dies of sorrow for death of brother' (P253.9), 'death from grief for death of lover or relative' (F1041.1.2), 'ghost laid in body of water' (E437.2), and 'adulterous wife commits suicide' (T249.1).

Carr does not restrict her use of Gabriel's haunting to the realm of theatrical device. More importantly, Carr weaves the folklore of ghosts and rivers as boundaries between worlds into the fabric of the play to underline her exploration of the current discussion on the Irish identity. She

seems to be suggesting a blurring of what many consider to be Irish with what is also perhaps seen as not-Irish. She takes this another step when, in the play, Portia's memory is challenged. Memory plays an important role in identity formation, as what one is willing to remember controls the material that the self is made from. There are several moments in the play where Portia's memory of her relationship with Gabriel is challenged. One such moment is when Marianne reminds Portia that the relationship was not always a romantic and miasmic clinging to one another.

I seen what he used do to you! How he used start ya chokin' by just lookin' at ya!
 How he used draw blood from ya when ya tried to defy him! ... Gabriel stopped singin',
 Portia, when ya refused to go anywhere with him, when ya refused to ate at the table with
 him, when ya ran from every room he walked into, when you started runnin' round with
 Stacia and Damus Halion. That's when Gabriel stopped singin'. Oh Portia, you done
 away with him as if her were no more than an ear of corn at the threshin' and me and
 your father could do nothin' only look on (Carr, *Portia Coughlan* 250).

In this work, Carr seems to be calling for a stark and honest look at Ireland's past. Without this honest look, Ireland's search for identity may remain stuck. As such, Gabriel's ghostly presence serves as banshee not only to Portia but Ireland as well. In *Portia Coughlan*, Carr uses almost all pre-invasion folktales, though she seems to also include some folkloric motifs from other cultures. For example, all the motifs that correspond with the river, river and the feminine, the river and agency come out of the Cross index, though these motifs can also be found in the folktales of Breton (D915.1, F262.1), Judaism (R168), Africa (M371.0.2), and Welsh (E334.4). Carr's reference to motifs of non-Irish folktales are few in number, and do not seem to play a part of Carr's commentary on Irish identity, though through this process, she seems to be finding the inspirations from folktales to be powerful vehicle for connecting an audience directly to something older and deeper.

The folktales in *Portia Coughlan* are meaningful and significant, yet are still somewhat peripheral to the story of Portia. As in *The Mai*, Carr is still using a "folktale within the play" structure that strongly mirrors the Portia story. As we get into *By the Bog of Cats*, we will begin to see Carr weave the folklore motifs directly into the story of the characters which begins to allow the audience to connect more specifically to Irish folklore's past.

CHAPTER III

THE ANALYSIS: *BY THE BOG OF CATS* AND *ON RAFTERY'S HILL*

BY THE BOG OF CATS

By the Bog of Cats (1998) is the play in the sequence of Carr's work that most straddles the worlds of realism and folklore. As a result, there is not an obvious unifying theme or image to connect the various odd moments, images, or people in the play. While there is enough realism in *The Mai* and *Portia Coughlan* for the folkloric elements, (the Owl Lake myth and the Belmont River) to stand out in such an obvious way that all the other nonrealistic images are easily connected to them, realism in *By the Bog of Cats* is only present in a vaporous way. Thus, the many folkloric and nonrealistic elements seem less unified in their presence. This is reflected in this analytic treatment of the play. Instead of discussing how the images are connected to each other through one folkloric image, the myriad of images will be analyzed through their connection to the folklore, the reality that occupies the most space in the play itself.

In *The Mai* and *Portia Coughlan*, *By the Bog of Cats*' landscape is watery and otherworldly, playing the role of 'both womb and grave'. However, in *By the Bog of Cats*, the water is not only part of the landscape, as was Owl Lake and Belmont River, but is the landscape in its entirety. Hester and Catwoman do not live *by* the bog; they live *in* the bog, in the watery world, in the grave and womb. In contrast, the townspeople try to push aside the life of the bog and its inhabitants, namely Hester and Catwoman. Carr layers more metaphysical elements onto those presented in both *The Mai* and *Portia Coughlan*.

HESTER AND CATWOMAN

In *By the Bog of Cats*, Hester, like both Mai and Portia, is fierce and at the same time able to evoke a sympathetic connection with the audience. Despite Hester's fierceness, earthiness, and at times brutality, the audience can find itself within her. Abandonment is not a foreign concept, and even though Hester has despicable traits, one can empathize with her plight. This is true even in her final moments as she slits the throat of her own child, Josie, and then kills herself in an attempt to avoid more abandonment. It is easy to place oneself in her position of not wanting life to go on and also not wanting one's child to suffer.

The play opens with Hester dragging a dead black swan across the stage, a Ghost Fancier watching her. Within the first few minutes of the play it is established through Hester's conversations with the Ghost Fancier and with Catwoman that she is fated to die on the same day as her now dead swan. The Ghost Fancier explains that he is trailing a ghost by the name of Hester Swane (Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 266). When Hester explains that she is Hester Swane and still alive the Ghost Fancier becomes confused until he realizes that he has mistaken dawn for dusk. "Then I am too previous. I mistook this hour for dusk. A thousand apologies. I'm sorry for intruding upon you like this. It's not usually my style" (Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 267).

The ghost fancier's death prophecy for Hester is reinforced by the town's blind seer, Catwoman, who is able to speak with ghosts and functions in the town as a folk healer, of sorts. Carr describes as "in her late fifties, stained a streaky brown from the bog, a coat of cat fur that reaches to the ground, studded with cat eyes and cats' paws. She is blind and carries a stick" (Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 271). Hester states sarcastically at one point "Is there anythin' them blind eyes doesn't see writ in the bog hole" (Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 277).

Many characters within the play consider her a witch and her appearance, as well as the traits she reveals through the play reflect this; indeed, Carthage invites her to his wedding as it is 'considered bad luck not to invite Catwoman'. Even at their wedding, Carthage asks Catwoman for a prediction for him and Caroline.

Carthage: Well, Catwoman, what do ya predict for us?

Catwoman: I predict nothin'.

Carthage: Ah g'wan now, ya must have a blessin' or a vision or somethin'.

Caroline rightly calls Carthage off of his demand for a prediction, but Carthage presses on:

Carthage: Come on now, Catwoman, and give Caroline and me wan of your blessin's.

Catwoman: Seein' as ya insist. Separate tombstones. I'm sorry but I tould ya not to ax me (Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 308).

Catwoman's reputation reflects a folklore motif that spans multiple cultures' folktales: 'old woman's curse' (M411.5). However, though Catwoman has the reputation of cursing the inhabitants of the town if she is crossed. However, it is more accurate to say that she prophesize ill fates, rather than places curses. The other characters, however, believe that she is the

originator of these ill fates. This is why Xavier invites her to his wedding, despite the desires of his mother.

Mrs. Kilbride: Xavier, what did ya ave to invite the Catwoman for? Brings down the tone of the whole weddin'. ... Why did ya have to invite her?

Xavier: Ya know as well as me it's bad luck not to invite the Catwoman (Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 307).

In Irish folklore, women who are considered witches have had license to freely move about in Ireland in places where others are not permitted. In many instances, it is not clear whether this is due to the fear of curses they can put upon people or if they are revered so highly. In the following passage from *The Exile of the Sons of Usnach*, Book of Leinster version, Cathbad the druid has foretold of the fate of a yet unborn child, Deirdre. The excerpt relates the precautions that were taken to ward against Deirdre's prophesy of bringing great ruin on Ulster and its king:

none of mankind was permitted to enter the house where she was reared, save only her foster-father, and her foster-mother; and in addition to these Levorcham, to whom naught could any refuse, for she was a witch (Windische 1).

In addition to her abilities to see into the future, she also mimics cats in the way she eats; she drinks milk from a saucer and eats mice that she catches on the bog. As odd and bizarre as she seems, several of the Catwoman characteristics and behaviors can be found within the folklore. The folklore motifs 'woman-cat' (B29.4), 'transformation of woman to cat' (D142.0.1), 'witch in the form of a cat' (G211.1.7), 'Person with cat's ears' (F511.2.2.1), and 'person with cat's snout' (F514.3) all reflect the folkloric combination of cats with humans and vice versa. The motif 'Cat as beast of ill omen' (B147.1.2.2 0 reflects her appearance in the warnings against Hester as well in her above-quoted warnings from Carthage and Caroline's blessing.

Catwoman also embodies several folkloric motifs in her ability to foresee the future in motifs such as 'magic power to see death circumstances of absent person' (D1825.5), and 'advice from fortune teller' (D1814.1). These last two motifs are applicable both to Catwoman's vision of Hester and her wake of destruction in the form of her dream, and to Catwoman's conversation with Hester's dead brother, Joseph, and the advice she gives to him.

Joseph: Is there no way (to return to life)?

Catwoman: None, none in this world anyway, and the sooner ya realize that the better for ya. Now be on your way, settle in to your new world, knock the best out of it ya can (Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 300-301).

Carr is employing two final folklore motifs in her treatment of Catwoman: 'Magic knowledge of events in distant place' (D1813) and 'future learned through omens' (D1812.5). Both of these are reflected in Catwoman's various prophecies, visions, and dreams throughout the play. She notes to Hester early on when Hester is coming to bury auld Black Wing: "I know everythin' that happens on this bog. I'm the Keeper of the Bog, in case ya forgotten." These motifs are finally reflected in Catwoman's use of dreams and bogholes and her ability to converse with ghosts to learn about the future of characters.

During the course of the play, it is revealed that Catwoman has always lived on the bog and that she owns it. Her connection with Hester reaches back to Hester's birth; the Catwoman helped deliver and care for her along with Black Wing, the dead swan Hester drags across stage in the earliest moments of the play. Hester's birth mother was negligent as a caretaker, and so the burden fell on Catwoman. In the third scene of the play Catwoman details the fate or curse on Hester and the connection between Hester and her swan, Black Wing.

Catwoman: You're buryin' auld Black Wing, aren't ya?

Hester: How d'ya know?

Catwoman: I know everythin' that happens on this bog. I'm the Keeper of The Bog of Cats in case ya forgotten. I own this bog. ... Here give her to me a minute, auld Black Wing. She came to my door last night and tapped on it as she often did, only last night she wouldn't come in. I bent down and she puts her wing on me cheek and I knew this was farewell.... I had a dream about ya last night. Dreamt ya were a black train motorin' through the Bog of Cats and, oh, the scorch off this train and it blastin' by and all the bog was dark in your wake, and I had to run from the burn. Hester Swane, you'll bring this place down by evenin'.

Hester: Ah, how can I lave the Bog of Cats, everythin' I'm connected to is here. I'd rather die.

Catwoman: Then die ya will. ... The night ya were born she [Josie, Hester's mother] took ya over to the black swan's lair, auld Black Wing ya've just buried there, and laid ya in the nest alongside her. And when I axed her why she'd do a thing like that with the snow and ice everywhere, ya know what she says, 'Swane means swan'. 'That may be so,' says I, 'but the child'll die of pneumonia.' 'That child', says Josie Swane, 'will live as long as this black swan, not a day more, not a day less (Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 301).

These images that Carr presents in the first few pages of the play can all be located within the Irish folklore. Each of these major motifs (swans, fate, and curses) can be located within two basic motif groups, which can be classified as 'swans' and the other, 'mother-curses'.

HESTER, SWANS, AND MOTHER-CURSES

Auld Black Wing is said to have cared for Hester when she was a baby. In the above passage, Catwoman recalls Hester's mother leaving the child with auld Black Wing in the cold and ice under the pretense that the bird would care for the child as one of her own. In this way, we can see Carr delving into the first folklore swan motifs, 'helpful swan' (B469.2) and 'animal nourishes abandoned child' (B535). Tales with these particular motifs often show a child who is either unwanted or otherwise meant to be disposed of being taken in by some sort of beast, be it wolf, bear, gorilla, or bird. In the folktales, swans are able to move between the otherworld and this world, and are also, at times, messengers from the otherworld.

The second swan motif is 'magic adhesion to swan' (D2171.3.2) which we find both in reference to the relationship between Hester and auld Black Wing, and, as mentioned above, in the relationship between swans and Hester's mother. It seems that the magical adhesion began not with Hester, but Josie, her mother, as revealed in a conversation between Hester and Monica.

[Josie] was a harsh auld yoke, Hester. Came and went like the moon. Ya'd wake wan mornin and look out over the bog, and ya'd see a fire and know she'd returned. And I'd bring her down a sup of milk or a few eggs, and she'd be here sittin on the step just like you are with that big head of black hair and eyes glamin like a cat and long arms and a powerful neck all knotted that she'd stretch like a swan in a yawn and me with ne'er a neck at all. But I was never comfortable by her, riddled by her and I wasn't the only wan. There was lots spent evenin's tryin to figure Josie Swane, somethin cold and dead about

her except when she sang, and then I declare ya'd fall in love with her (Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 323).

In this passage, Carr draws similarities between Hester's mother and a swan, not just in the obvious mentioning of her swan-like neck, but, as other characters also corroborate, in her behavior. The physical description that Monica gives of Josie ("black hair and eyes glamin like cat, and long arms and a powerful neck") is reminiscent of a swan. Her black hair corresponds to the black markings on the head of a swan; her eyes are black and shining like a swan's eyes. Her long arms, like the long graceful wings of the swan carry her away on her migrations. In addition to her looks, the description that Monica gives of Josie suggests similarities to a swan, such as being fed by others (Monica and Catwoman) and her migratory behavior, going away for periods of time but always returning to the same location. Monica's description clarifies what Carr seems to be suggesting: Hester's adhesion began with the first swan in her life, her mother. Hester's second adhesion (the curse of dying the same day as the dead swan presented at the beginning of the play) was to Black Wing. Carr's use of the curse in *By the Bog of Cats* matches several traditional curse motifs from the folktale. The first motif, 'curse given at birth of child' (M412.1) reflects the actual timing of the curse, while Hester's reaction to this curse, revealed in her conversation with Monica, matches the motif: 'curse by parent' (M411.1).

Monica: Flee of from this place. Flee off to Eden.

Hester: Eden – I left Eden, Monica, at the age of seven. It was on account of a look be this caravan at dusk.

Monica: And who was it gave ya this look, your mother, was it? Josie Swane?

Hester: Oh aye, Monica, she was the wan alright who looked at me so askance and strangely – who'd believe an auld look could do away with ya? I never would've 'cept it happened to me (Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 322-323).

Carr employs another traditional curse motif in 'irrevocable curse' (M415). At several points during the play, Hester and Catwoman both admit that her mother's curse is irrevocable. Hester, in the moments that she admits or pretends to admit to the seriousness of the curse decries the strength of the curse and her inability to change its course. Catwoman, also recognizes the

strength of the curse and its irrevocability, and yet believes that if Hester will only leave, the curse will cease to be.

Catwoman: Lave this place now or ya never will.

Hester: Doesn't seem to make much difference whether I stay or lave with a curse like that on me head.

Catwoman: There's ways round curses. Curses only have the power ya allow them. I'm tellin' ya, Hester, ya have to go. ... I'll be off now and don't say the Catwoman never tould ya. Lave this place now or ya never will (Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 276).

Whether the inevitability of the curse on Hester was due to her desire to stay on the Bog or if it were due to the nature of the curse itself, Hester dies as predicted. Another aspect of the curse that Carr seems to be pulling from Irish folklore is 'a vow never to flee in fear of death' (M161). Hester refuses to leave despite multiple warnings from several characters that she is destined to die if she does not. Catwoman is the clearest regarding the consequences for remaining by the Bog, though other characters suggest legal, social, or financial ruin for Hester if she does not leave.

The play ends with Hester killing her daughter, Josie, in the same manner by which she killed her brother Joseph. Shortly following, she kills herself, cutting out her heart and leaving it on her chest "like some dark feathered bird" (341). These deaths can be seen in the folklore motif: 'Mother will die on same day as daughter' (E765.4.3.1). The generational tie of the women to swans and the otherworld and the generational mother-curse is interesting, as it suggests that such a way of being is inescapable for Josie, Hester, and the young Josie.

Carr's subtle suggestion that Josie and Black Wing are the same being fits well within the Irish folkloric notion of shape-shifting. Within many folktales, a person appears in multiple forms, often at the same time, a concept that does not fit with a modern understanding of being and linearity, but makes perfect sense within the folklore that Carr is using.

In the tale Taliesin from *The Welsh of the Llyfr Coch o Hergest (The Red Book of Hergest)*, Tagid Voel and his wife Caridwen have two children, Creirwy who is the fairest maid in all the land, and Morvran ab Tegid who is the most ill-fated man in all the world. His mother, hoping to give him some advantage in his life, consulted the book of the Fferyllt that recommended she boil a cauldron of Inspiration and Science for her son. To be successful, the

cauldron must burn ceaselessly for a year and a day, and to this task she set Gwion Bach to stir and the blind Morda to kindle the fire beneath it. As the tale goes, Gwion Bach spills three drops of the charmed liquor onto his finger and the heat burned him so that he placed his finger into his mouth, thereby acquiring all the magical abilities to see into the future. A vision of the future shows that he must flee Caridwen's wrath for having stolen the magic of the cauldron, and so he does. Caridwen does return and sees that her work has been for naught and beats poor Morda until one of his eyes falls out of his head, and through his screams, Caridwen learns that it was in fact Gwion Bach who stole from her. The excerpt below records the extraordinary tale of her pursuit of Gwion Bach.

And she went forth after him, running. And he saw her, and changed himself into a hare and fled. But she changed herself into a greyhound and turned him. And he ran towards a river, and became a fish. And she in the form of an otter-bitch chased him under the water, until he was fain to turn himself into a bird of the air. She, as a hawk, followed him and gave him no rest in the sky. And just as she was about to stoop upon him, and he was in fear of death, he espied a heap of winnowed wheat on the floor of a barn, and he dropped among the wheat, and turned himself into one of the grains. Then she transformed herself into a high-crested black hen, and went to the wheat and scratched it with her feet, and found him out and swallowed him. And, as the story says, she bore him nine months, and when she was delivered of him, she could not find it in her heart to kill him, by reason of his beauty. So she wrapped him in a leathern bag, and cast him into the sea to the mercy of God, on the twenty-ninth day of April (Lady Charlotte 472-3).

Carr modifies this tale in *By the Bog of Cats* especially as it relates to the relationship between mother and daughter. In the tales Ceridwen's child is male and she completely abandons him to the mercy of the sea god, while in the play, the children are both females (Hester and young Josie) and never completely abandoned, though they are both certainly neglected by their mothers. The most stark modification to the tale that Carr makes in the play is when Hester does not leave her child to either the mercy or care of an otherworldly being, but instead, takes young Josie with her into the otherworld. This is possibly because she sees that young Josie will have no protection for her own otherworldliness. There is no swan or sea god available to protect her, and after Hester slits her own throat, young Josie does not even have her own mother to protect her or teach her how to shapeshift between the two worlds.

A third swan motif from folklore is, 'revenant as swan' (E423.3.2). With the use of this motif, Carr moves the play even further into the non-linear timeline. Catwoman, as well as other characters, speak of Hester and her mother being equal to Catwoman in their intuitive abilities, specifically of visions and 'black magic'. Catwoman admits "You're my match in witchery, Hester, same as your mother was, it may even be ya surpass us both as the way you go on as if God only gave ya a little frog brain instead of the gift of seein' things as they are" (Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 273-274). Monica, in the final pages of the play notes: "Well, I don't know how ya'll stay now, your house in ashes, ya after appearin' in that dress. They're sayin' it's a black arts thing ya picked up somewhere" (Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 324). With both of these and several other examples and suggestions that the gift of prophesy lies with all the female members of the Swane family, Carr seems to be suggesting that Hester's mother, Josie, was able to foresee Hester's murder of Joseph, and thus, presented Josie with another reason to tie Hester's life-force to the swan. In this way, the dead swan at the beginning of the play serves as a revenant. This is similar to the way that Gabriel served as Portia's revenant in *Portia Coughlan*.

PROPHECY AND MOTHER-CURSES

Prophesy is a major element to the curse on Hester, as her death is prophesized by her mother, Catwoman, the swan, Hester herself, Joseph's ghost, and the Ghost Fancier. Primarily, Carr seems to be weaving in the prophesy motifs as they relate to curses. Two broad categories of prophesy motifs relate to the way Carr is using these in *By the Bog of Cats*: 'death prophesied' (M341) and 'fate decried before birth' (N121).

The "death prophesized" motif is the core of the prophesy motifs that Carr is employing. At multiple points throughout the text, Hester is reminded of her impending death: The Ghost Fancier tells Hester that he will see her again at dusk (when she herself is in the form of a ghost) and Catwoman tells Hester repeatedly that she must leave to avoid her fate. As shown previously, Catwoman's prophesy is based on the curse Hester's mother put on her: that Hester will 'live as long as the swan, not a day longer or shorter' (Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 275).

Carr is using with several other prophesy motifs from the folklore for *By the Bog of Cats*. The Catwoman tells Hester that she must leave before nightfall, and because the ghost fancier has revealed that he will return at dusk, Hester knows when her death will occur, based on prophesy. The curse alone, without this added element of prophesy, would set a fate for Hester, but without her knowledge. The prophecies allow Hester to know her curse. This corresponds with the

folklore motif 'foreknowledge of hour of death' (D1812.0.1). Additionally, because one of the signs of the prophesy of Hester's death is auld Black Wing, Carr is employing two final folklore motifs in 'birds furnish omens' (B147.2) and 'prophetic swan' (B143.0.1).

THE MURDER OF JOSEPH AND HESTER'S INSANITY

The last curse motif from which Carr seems to be drawing is the 'insanity from curse' motif (D2065.7) This motif reflects Hester's behavior in many ways, and is most likely due to her repeated attempts to deny her curse. The first way Hester could be considered insane is her refusal to leave the bog, though she is aware of her prophesized death. The illogicality of her refusal to leave the property (in the face of very practical reasons) seems to reflect a break in sanity. She has been paid for the property to the house and no longer holds the deed. Her lover is marrying another woman and will be moving to the house. The time is up for her legally, socially, and financially, and yet she continues to remain on the property.

In addition to this, Hester's insanity presents itself in other, more clear, ways. She seems to acknowledge a split in personality in her private conversation with Caroline just before the wedding.

Hester: Listen to me now, Caroline, there's two Hester Swanes, one that is decent and very fond of ya despite your callow treatment of me. And the other Hester, well, she could slide a knife down your face, carve ya up and not bat an eyelid (Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 285).

Directly following this moment, Hester assaults the unsuspecting Caroline, such that no socially-stable individual would:

Hester: (Grabs her hair suddenly and viciously.) Listen to me now Caroline. Carthage Kilbride is mine and only mine. He's been mine since he was sixteen. You think you can take him from me? Wrong. All wrong. (Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 285)

Another moment of Hester's insanity is in her arrival at Carthage and Caroline's wedding in her wedding dress. This action, by itself, would be questionable, but in combining this with Hester's belief that she can win Carthage back on his wedding day, her behavior moves beyond questionable to clearly insane.

The final examples of Hester's insanity involve her disregard for life. This is reflected in four actions: the murder of her brother Joseph to acquire the farm, the burning of the farm and all the livestock, and her murders of her daughter Josie and her own suicide in the final moments of the play. In each of these instances, Hester clearly demonstrates her break with reality. Her murder of her own brother, however, seems to be the act that most signals her insanity. After foretelling Hester's death, Catwoman alludes to the reason that Hester may be facing her end, a reason that is revealed fully later in the play.

Catwoman: Ya know what I think?

Hester: What?

Catwoman: I been thinkin' a while now that there's some fierce wrong ya done that's caught up with ya.

Hester: What fierce wrong?

Catwoman: Don't you by-talk me, I'm the Catwoman. I know things. Now I can't say I know the exact wrong ya done but I'd pu a bet on it's somethin' serious judgin' by the way ya go on.

Hester: And what way do I go on?

Catwoman: What was it ya done, Hester?

Hester: I done nothin' --- Or if I did I never meant to.

Catwoman: There's a fine answer.

Hester: Everywan has done wrong at wan time or another.

Catwoman: Aye, but not everywan knows the price of wrong. You do and it's the best thing about ya and there's not much in ya I'd praise. No, most manage to stay a step or two ahead of the pigsty truth of themselves. Not you though (*Carr, By the Bog of Cats* 274).

To answer this, in the second half of the play the audience is presented with the ghost of Joseph Swane, Hester's brother. Joseph's ghost arrives at Carthage and Caroline's wedding and attempts to talk to Catwoman, one of the few of the living who can hear him. She tries to resist talking with him as "Saturday is me day off"(Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 300). He is lonely and a bit lost, and begs her "Please, I haven't spoken to anywan since the night I died" (Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 299). As the conversation progresses, Catwoman begins to understand that Joseph is Hester's brother. This fact is a surprise to her since Hester never spoke of a brother. Catwoman tires of the conversation and worries of being taken for "not the full shilling". She offers to lead Joseph to Hester so that Hester can take charge of her ghost. Joseph arrives to find Hester's house and livestock in flames. Hester has burned it all both as an act of revenge on Carthage and a desperate attempt to prevent Caroline from inhabiting her home (which Hester views as the last vestiges of her 'normal life' with Carthage), and perhaps also as an insane last-ditch effort to remain on the Bog.

Hester: Well, Carthage, ya think them were only idle threats I made? Ya think I can be flung in a bog hole like a bag of newborn pups? Lets' see how you like this – Ya hear that sound? Them's your cattle howlin'. Ya smell that smell? That's your forty calves roastin'. I tied them all in and flung diesel on them. And the house, I burnt the bed and the whole place went up in flames. I'd burn down the world if I had enough diesel – Will somewan not come and save me from meself before I go and do worse? (Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 317)

When Joseph presents himself to Hester, it is revealed through their dialog that Hester and Carthage murdered Joseph to obtain Joseph's half of Hester's father's inheritance. While they were all out boating one day, Hester slit Joseph's throat and then, with Carthage's help weighted him down and threw him into the water. Based on the brutality of his murder, Hester naturally assumes that Joseph is a revenant, returned from the grave to wreak revenge upon her for his murder. But Joseph is instead forgiving and merely wanting company. His forgiveness, however, only provokes Hester's rage and eventually compels her to tell Joseph her hidden reason for killing him, apart from the money: her mother died in childbirth with him.

Joseph: Hester, I was goin' to split it with ya when we reached the shore, ya didn't have to cut me throat for it.

Hester: Ya think I slit your throat for the few auld pounds me father left me?

Joseph: Then why?

Hester: Should've been with her for always and would have only for you.

Joseph: If ya knew what it was like here ya'd never have done what ya done.

Hester: Oh I think I know, Joseph, for a long time I been thinkin' I'm already a ghost
(Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 321).

The events surrounding Joseph Swane's murder correspond with a number of common folktale motifs. General broad categories of tale motifs that are represented in the play include: 'murdered person cannot rest in grave' (E413), 'Person thrown into water and abandoned' (S142), 'treacherous sister' (K2212), and 'non-malevolent ghost haunts scene of former misfortune, tragedy' (E334). Each of these directly corresponds to particular elements of the murder of Joseph Swane by Hester.

Joseph's afterlife wanderings and unrest reflect 'murdered person cannot rest in grave' (E413). He begs Catwoman: "I want to be alive again. I want to stop walkin'. I want to rest..." (Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 300). Catwoman, however, has no solace for him. "You'll never do them things again, Joseph Swane" (Carr, 1994, 300), reflecting her awareness of the unending restlessness of his state.

Hester and Carthage's abandonment of Joseph in the lake reflects both 'Person thrown into water and abandoned' (S142) and 'treacherous sister' (K2212). Carr addresses abandonment throughout her works, but specifically in *By the Bog of Cats*.

Within Irish folklore, treacherous sisters can take many forms, but often these manifest as sisters who murder for personal gain (in love, property or wealth) or out of jealousy (for love lost, spurned, or unattained, or beauty or other traits desired). Both of these broad categories appear to be motivations for Hester; she desired Joseph's wealth, and she was angry at the loss of her mother during his childbirth, which she directly attributed to him. In the first instance, Hester is trying to forge stronger connections to this world by stealing Joseph's share of the inheritance and thus building physical capital in the form of more land in the Bog. In the second instance, she is vengeful against Joseph for having taken her mother from this world.

Within Irish folklore are also more specific folkloric motifs that align with the murder of Joseph Swane. Similar to the more general ‘murdered person cannot rest in grave’ (E413), the brutality and violence of Joseph’s death (slit throat and drowning) are perhaps better reflected in the motif ‘persons who die violent deaths cannot rest in grave’ (E411.10).

Additionally, as Joseph Swane presents himself to Hester, he sings the song of the Bog of Cats that his (and Hester’s) mother sang to them both.

By the Bog of Cats I finally learned false from true,
 Learned too late that it was you and only you
 Left me sore, a heart brimful of rue
 By the Bog of Cats in the darkling dew (Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 317).

Josie, their mother, was considered by the town to be a ‘song-stitcher’, or what is known in Ireland as a *senchai*. This type of person is considered to be a “storyteller, receiver of lore and historian” (Zimmerman 34). Within this context, the townspeople’s acceptance of Josie when she sings makes sense. The conversation below between Monica and Hester further illustrates the extraordinary nature of her songs and her passing of this torch to Hester.

Monica: There was a time round here when no celebration was complete without

Josie Swane. She’d be invited everywhere to sing, funerals, weddin’s, christenin’s, birthdays of the bigger farmers, the harvest. And she’d make up songs for each occasion. And it wasn’t so much they wanted her there, more they were afraid not to have her.

Hester: I used go with her on some of them singin’ sprees before she ran off.

And she’d make up the songs as we walked to wherever we were goin’. Sometimes she’d sing somethin’ completely different than the songs she’d been makin’ on the road. Them were her ‘Blasts from God’ songs as opposed to her ‘Workday Songs’, or so she called them. And they never axed us to stay, these people, to sit down and ate with them, just lapped up her songs, gave her a bag of food and half a crown and walked us off the premises, for fear we’d steal somethin’, I suppose (Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 323-324).

This idea is threaded into the moment above, as well, when her children sing. It is important to note that the song they sing is one that Hester assumed to be one that is only passed from mother to daughter. Josie passed it to Hester, and Hester to her daughter, Josie.

Hester: You've a nerve singin' that song. That song is mine! She made it for me and only me. Can't yees lave me with anythin'!

Joseph: I didn't know it was yours. She used to sing it to me all the time (Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 318).

That Joseph knows the song is both surprising to Hester and it signals to her that this ghost knew her mother. The two are sharing a sort of magical lore passed to them by their mother. Clearly Carr is tapping the notion of the sanchai storyteller in this moment. In addition, Carr is focusing another pairing of motifs that she also presented in *Portia Coughlan* with Gabriel: 'appearance of wraith as announcement of person's death' (E723.6) and the banshee motif 'banshees as portents of misfortune' (M301.6.1). In *By the Bog of Cats* Carr presents Joseph as the banshee. However, in Irish folklore, banshees are feminine in nature, which could seemingly complicate this motif, suggesting that Carr is modifying the motif, changing the female agency of the banshee to male. The arrival of Joseph's ghost heralds Hester's death and his singing aligns him with the Banshee of Irish legend: the singing ghost who brings death and misfortune. Carr may be modifying the gender of the banshee to obfuscate the ending of the play from the audience.

THE PROPERTY DISPUTE

Hester's insanity also plays a role in how she handles the property dispute. One of the central elements of the dispute between Carthage and Hester is the property that they once shared. Carthage has bought her portion of the house, but she refuses to leave. Hester's tie to the land throughout the play appears to focus on the return of her mother. However, in the conversation with the ghost of Joseph, the audience learns that her mother is dead and will never return for her.

Several attempts are made by many different characters to acquire the land, from the pleadings of Caroline to the reasoning of Carthage, to the threats of Mrs. Kilbride. Nothing is successful, and in the end, Hester exacts wholesale destruction of the farm. Several events foreshadow Hester's burning of the farm. The first is oddly enough, a threat against Hester by Mrs. Kilbride.

Carthage: Just go away, I can't bear the sight of ya!

Hester: I can't lave the Bog of Cats---

Mrs. Kilbride: We'll burn ya out if we have to---

Hester: Ya see---

Mrs. Kilbride: Won't we, Xavier? (Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 315)

As Carthage refuses to give in to her pleas and decides that little Josie will need to remain with him until Hester has moved from the property, Hester states: "I've swallyed me pride over you. You're lavin' me no choice but a vicious war against ya" (Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 316). Hester's "vicious war" to which she alludes when speaking with Carthage, begins with chaining the cattle and calves together, dousing them with diesel fuel, and lighting them on fire. She then burns the house down, beginning with the bed that she used to share with Carthage. Before Joseph's entrance, she is heard saying "I'd burn down the world if I'd enough diesel --- will somewan not come and save me from meself before I go and do worse" (Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* 317). Hester at this moment, in begging for someone outside of herself to save her, recognizes her descent into insanity and her inability to monitor herself and her behavior.

Hester's burning of the house and cattle correspond with the following Irish folklore destruction motifs: 'House burned with all inside' (S112.0.2), 'destruction of property by fire from heaven as punishment' (Q552.13.2), 'punishment: disappearance of ill-gotten gains' (Q552.18)

In many instances, Irish folklore depicts fire as the sole means of permanently eradicating enemies. In *The Destruction of Da'Derga's Hostel*, Conaire is ambushed at DaDerga's Hostel, and because he has willfully broken a series of geas (taboos), he and his men are in grave danger. One of the tactics leveled against Conaire and his men by their enemies is fire. The ambushers try three times to burn the hostel to the ground and three times the fires are extinguished. Conaire and his men are somehow saved multiple times from fire because of divine grace. Unlike in *The Destruction of Da'Derga's Hostel*, Hester is successful in lighting the fire. Carr's contradiction of the tale suggests that perhaps Carthage is not protected at all by divine grace.

Another folkloric example of fire more closely mirrors Carr's use of fire. In an excerpt from *The Boyhood Deeds of Cuchulain*, Cuchulain slays the last of the three sons of Nechtan in

revenge for their insults against him, and finishes the situation in a very Hester-like manner: "Then he and Ibar went into the house and destroyed what was in it, and they set fire to it, and left it burning, and turned back towards Slieve Fuad, and they brought the heads of the three sons of Nechtan along with them." (Gregory 85) Cuchulain was insulted and was permitted to exact just revenge on the perpetrators, ending in the torching of their lands and homes. This level of just revenge suggests that Hester does have divine authority to exact revenge, or at least through her insanity believes she does.

In an additional excerpt from *The Exile of the Sons of Usnach*, we find an additional example of the type of destruction that Hester enacts. In this tale, Deirdre who has been prophesized at birth to be the cause of great suffering to the people of Ulster and to its king, has been kidnapped by Conor, following his brutal and unjust slaying on the three sons of Usnach. Those in the party of the sons of Usnach react to the news.

Now the sureties who had remained behind, heard what had been done, even Fergus and Dubhtach, and Cormac. And thereon they hastened forward, and they forthwith performed great deeds. Dubhtach slew, with the one thrust of his spear, Mane a son of Conor, and Fiachna the son of Feidelm, Conor's daughter; and Fergus struck down Traighren, the son of Traiglethan, and his brother. And Conor was wrath at this, and he came to the fight with them; so that upon that day three hundred of the men of Ulster fell. And Dubhtach slew the women of Ulster; and, ere the day dawned, Fergus set Emain on fire. Then they went away into exile, and betook them to the land of Connaught to find shelter with Ailill and Maev, for they knew that that royal pair would give them good entertainment. To the men of Ulster the exiles showed no love: three thousand stout men went with them; and for sixteen years never did they allow cries of lamentation and of fear among the Ulstermen to cease: each night their vengeful forays caused men to quake, and to wail (Windische 302).

The brutality of the folkloric heroes' response to injustice is similar to Hester's. Both level a fiery destruction against their opponents, burning everything they can to the ground and destroying all they can find to destroy.

In *By the Bog of Cats* Carr uses the Irish pre-invasion motifs most heavily with Hester and Catwoman, such as B29.4, D142.0.1, F511.2.2.1, F514.3, B147.1.2.2.0, E765.4.3.1, and D2065.7. While there are Cross motifs in the other aspects of the play, such as swans, mother-

courses, Joseph's murder, and the destruction of the property, these aspects also include several references to English motifs, such as E423.3.2, E413, E334, E411.10, E723.6, and D1825.5. This suggests that Carr, while moving folklore to a more central location in the plot, also is aligning the Irish psyche more with Hester and Catwoman than the other characters and aspects of the play. These other elements seem to represent a blending of Irish and English motifs. This highlights Carr's use of pre-invasion folktale motifs as the voice of the Irish collective unconscious. In this play, she makes a clear distinction between the Irish and English collective unconscious. In the last of the plays discussed here, we will see Carr deploy both pre- and post-invasion Irish (and specifically Irish) folklore on her audience in a bizarre, mystical pastiche that floods the audience's senses and sleeping unconsciousness in an attempt to awaken them to their shared, umbral past and move them beyond both their English gifted identity and a stagnant and imagined Irish past.

ON RAFTERY'S HILL

On Raftery's Hill (1996) is arguably Carr's most disturbing play, both to Irish and non-Irish audiences, though often the reasons are quite different. In reviews from Ireland, the critics note the sheer awfulness and horror of the play, yet often close with statements in support of seeing it. For English and American audiences, however, disgust and misunderstanding of the intent of *On Raftery's Hill* leads to the conclusion that it is a failed attempt at Greek tragedy, and thus an audience member should not waste his or her time seeing it. Both domestic (Irish) and non-domestic critics walk the same path of disgust, revulsion, horror, and head-shaking amazement at the Raftery clan's lives and behavior, and yet reach two very different conclusions. Such dichotomous reactions might be explained generally by a critic's differing background and knowledge of the play and/or Marina Carr, but in this play, the most brutal of Carr's post-absurdist works, something is at work that would speak to an audience on a visceral level and yet would be lost on those unfamiliar with its folkloric foundations.

What makes these dichotomous reactions particularly interesting is that *On Raftery's Hill* shares many of the same thematic elements of Carr's other works. Like her other plays, it has a tormented female protagonist who is capable of both deep loyalty and deep cruelty to her family; it has a grandmother who does not sweetly knit by the fire, but rather hurls barbs at her family while wishing for escape. Animal abuse and mutilation is also not unique to this play. There are incestuous relationships and sexual assaults, and while in this work these are pushed a bit farther

than in her previous (and later) works, these too are not unique to *On Raftery's Hill*. Yet, there is something about this play that disturbs all audiences on a very primordial level as is evidenced in the reviews both in Ireland and elsewhere. What explains this? The folklore may lend a clue.

The curse on Raftery's farm in *On Raftery's Hill* functions in much the same manner as the Belmont River did in *Portia Coughlan* and Owl Lake in *The Mai*. The curse is a major and central thematic element that assists in tying the myriad of the images and motifs together. As such, just as the river in *Portia Coughlan* was analyzed against the folklore motifs as well as the other images within the play, the curse (which is, itself, folkloric in nature) in *On Raftery's Hill* will be examined based on its relationship to both the folklore motifs and its relationship to the other images in the play.

THE CURSE AND FAIRIES

The location for this play is Raftery's Hill, a farm in the midlands of Ireland. Rumors abound that it is cursed. Certainly, Red's behavior, both past and present, could provoke a curse, but his behavior can be seen more likely a reaction to and not the cause of the curse. The following folktale excerpt from "The Fairies' Revenge" shows the result of settling on land that belongs to the faeries.

The fairies have a great objection to the fairy raths, where they meet at night, being built upon by mortal man. A farmer called Johnstone, having plenty of money, bought some land, and chose a beautiful green spot to build a house on, the very spot the fairies loved best. The neighbours warned him that it was a fairy rath; but he laughed and never minded (for he was from the north), and looked at such things as mere old-wives' tales. So he built the house and made it beautiful to live in; and no people in the country were so well off as the Johnstones so that the people said the farmer must have found a pot of gold in the fairy rath. But the fairies were all the time plotting how they could punish the farmer for taking away their dancing ground, and for cutting down the hawthorn bush where they held their revels when the moon was full (Wilde).

Carr reveals the curse to the audience and reader in a multitude of ways, though largely it is seen indirectly through the behavior of the inhabitants who live on the Hill. As each character is presented and progresses through the play the audience gets to peek behind the mask of sanity they each try to wear, some more successfully than others. The general insanity of all the

Rafterys is the first clue to the curse. Carr embeds a hint as to the nature of the curse in two throw away lines, one embedded in Dinah's speech to Sorrel, trying to soothe her and convince her that Red really was a good father despite her rape the previous night. Dinah says: "Taught me the names a the trees, ash behind the house ... beech the lower field, beech the haggard, beech the fairyfort..." (Carr, *On Raftery's Hill* 40). Dara's clue is much more direct, as he tries to explain to Sorrel the depth of Red's "perverted rages":

I seen him cut the udders off a cow noh two wakes ago. Down in the river field. And then he shoh ud, and then he dragged ud to the river wud a rope, a job should take three men to do. And then he pushed ud over the bank into the river. Cows is the most beauhiful creatures, gentle and trustin and curious and they've these greah long eyelashes. This wan walked up to him and starts nuzzling him and he goes ah her wud a knife ... I seen him Sorrel, and all the time he's cursin and scramin abouh auld Raftery and the fairyfort, couldn't make head nor tail of ud (Carr, *On Raftery's Hill* 33).

Irish folk literature is steeped with stories about the fairies and fairyforts. From these two suggestions in the script, we can conclude that the curse on Raftery's Hill has come about as a result of poor house placement. Old Raftery built his house on top of a fairyfort. In Irish tradition and folklore, settling land that belongs to fairies or on the pathways they use to travel is extremely bad luck. Building a home on a fairymound certainly would provoke a curse of the "little people." The behavior of the characters, the state of the land, and many other usual aspects of this play's themes can be explored through the folklore.

If Raftery's Hill is a fairyfort, Red is trying to protecting himself and his family from the fairy influence. It is difficult for Americans who have grown up with Tinkerbell and Flower Fairies to imagine the fairy of Irish folklore. Encounters with Irish folklore fairies are seldom welcomed. As Diane Purkiss notes in her history of fairies *At the Bottom of the Garden*, "Rather than good or bad, fairies are more simply and plainly *dangerous*" (Purkiss 8). Fairies of Irish folklore were baby-killers and child-stealers. They could kidnap the unsuspecting and take them away to the otherworld, they could kill with curses, destroy one's livelihood, make cows' milk dry up, make women barren, and a myriad of other nasty things. To invoke the fairies' wrath is to invoke a lifetime (or perhaps several lifetimes) of anguish. Redmond Raftery, is not one to rely on post-Christianized Ireland's religious evocations of saints, and understands the wrath the fairies could produce. He takes matters into his own hands. Carr's suggestion that Raftery's Hill is a

fairyfort suddenly explains a great deal of the goings-on, as well as Red's brutality; while everyone is attempting to escape, Red is trying to win a losing battle against a fairy curse that his father invoked. This connection is more clear when we see how Carr mirrors the first part of the folktale, *The Curse of the Pantannas*.

LONG, long ago, at the farm of Pantannas, in Glamorgan, there lived a churlish old husbandman. He hated the Fair Folk who danced on his fields to the light of the moon, and longed to discover some way of ridding his land of them.

Not being able to think of any plan, he went to an old witch and told her of his wish. She made him promise to give her one night's milking on his farm, and then advised him thus:

"Wherever you see a fairy ring in your fields plough it and sow it with corn," she said.

"When the fairies find the greensward gone, they will never revisit the spot."

The farmer took her advice. He yoked his oxen and drove his iron ploughshare through every circle in which the fairies had danced at night, and sowed it with corn. The nightly sounds of dance and song ceased, and no fairy was afterwards seen in the fields of Pantannas.

The farmer rejoiced greatly, imagining vain things, until one evening in the spring of the year, when the wheat was green in the fields. The farmer was returning home in the red light of the setting sun, when a tiny little man in a red coat came to him, unsheathed a little sword, and directing the point towards him, said:

Dial a ddaw, Vengeance cometh, Y mae gerilaw. Fast it approacheth.

After saying this, the mannikin disappeared. The farmer tried to laugh; but there was something in the angry, grim looks of the little man which made him feel very uncomfortable. Spring, however, turned into summer, and summer into autumn, without anything happening, and the farmer thought that he had been very foolish to fear the threat of the little man in the red coat. In the autumn, when the corn was golden in the fields and ripe for the sickle, the farmer and his family were one night going to bed. Suddenly they heard a mighty noise, which shook the house as though it would fall. As they trembled with fear, they heard a loud voice saying:

Daw dial. Vengeance cometh.

Next morning, no ear or straw was to be seen in the cornfields, only black ashes. The fairies had burnt all the harvest (Thomas).

Following this beginning in the tale, the farmer begs forgiveness from the fairy. The fairy explains that the curse has been ordered from his lord, and that it is to continue on his family forever. The farmer asks the fairy to pass along his apology to his lord. The fairy does, and the lord modifies the curse. Nothing will happen to the farmer, and instead of the curse lasting forever, it will affect his future generations until the property has been sold nine times. The play very closely mirrors this tale, in that, Old Raftery seems to be the farmer who initially caused a curse to be set, and yet, he was a very prosperous farmer. It is his next generations that seem to be suffering the curse, and it seems the curse has no end in sight.

FAERYFORTS AND FAERYROADS

In order to more fully understand behavior of the Raftery family, especially as it relates to the curse placed on their land by the faeries, it is important to understand how the land was before Old Raftery built his farm on it. As mentioned previously, Irish folklore is rife with stories of the faeries and their homes and causeways, and how one can recognize a faery home. The most common motifs involve descriptions of the beauty of lands that belong to the faeries and the mounds or underground places that are associated with them. Lady Gregory explains the homes of the fairies (Sidhe) in the preface to her book *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland* as

They are everywhere; their home is in the forths, the lisses, the ancient round grass-grown mounds. There are thorn-bushes they gather near and protect; if they have a mind for a house like our own they will build it up in a moment. They will remake a stone castle, battered by Cromwell's men if it takes their fancy, filling it with noise and lights. Their own country is Tir-nan-Og--the Country of the Young. It is under the ground or under the sea, or it may not be far from any of us (1).

The group of motifs involving the faeries and their structures are: 'Prehistoric burial mounds as dwellings of fairies' (F211.0.1), 'Fairies underground palace' (F222.1), 'fairies build causeway (fairyroad)' (F271.2.2), and 'fairies clear land' (F271.5). Carr mirrors the first two motifs to signal to the hill on which the Rafterys are living as being on faery land. The second

two motifs 'fairies build causeway (fairyroad)' and 'fairies clear land' in the folk literature both refer to the descriptions of the land before Old Raftery settled there. The lands that the fairies inhabit are known to be the most fertile and splendid of places, and would certainly be a place that seemed perfect to settle. Red himself describes the land of Raftery's Hill as "three hundred acre a the finest land this side a the Shannon and west a the Pale" (21) and Shalome recalls the land before Red got hold of it: "It was beautiful..." (31). This is similar to the way that the faery land is described in the tale, *Einion and the Fair Family*. Carr mirrors this tale in order to establish that the land was pristine at one point, and that the current state of both the farm and the family developed when Red took over the care of the land.

ONCE on a time a shepherd went up a mountain to look after his sheep. A thick mist came on, and he lost his way, and walked backwards and forwards for many a long hour. At last he got into a low rushy place, where he saw before him many circular rings. He knew at once that they were the circles in which the Fair Family danced, and remembering how many a shepherd who had chanced on these rings had disappeared from mortal eyes, he determined to run away as fast as he could. As he was racing off he was met by an old fat little man. "Stop," said the old man, and there was something in this voice which made Einion (that was the shepherd's name) obey. "What art thou doing?" "I am running home," said the shepherd. "Come after me," said the old man, "and do not utter a word until I bid thee." The shepherd could not choose but obey, and he followed his guide on and on until they came to an oval stone. The old man tapped the stone three times with his walking stick, and the stone rose of its own accord, disclosing a narrow passage leading into the earth. "Follow me fearlessly," said the fat man; "no harm will be done thee." On the youth went, as reluctantly as a dog to be hanged. It was dark in the passage, though a sort of whitish light radiated from the stones which formed the roof: at last the tunnel opened into a fine wooded fertile country. Birds sang in the groves, and streams of clear water, flowing through meadows carpeted with bright flowers, made music as sweet as that of the feathered tribe. Dotting the landscape were splendid mansions, and into one of these Einion was led by the little man. Both sat down to eat at a table of silver: golden dishes containing the most delicious meats and golden goblets full of exquisite wine came to their places of themselves and disappeared of themselves when done with (Thomas).

The change from the pristine and fertile nature of the land, the prosperous stewardship of Old Raftery, and the respect of his family to the state in which audience sees both the land and the family can be explained by the curses that faeries place upon those who settle on their beautiful lands.

THE CURSE AND DISEASE (INSANITY)

Clearly, the fairies of Irish folklore would have the ability to wreak havoc on the Rafterys, especially if Old Raftery (Red's father) actually had been foolish enough to settle on the fairies land. The fairies of Irish folklore are not creatures with which one should trifle, and as will be explained, Red's brutal behavior toward them (and even toward those things that he's equated with fairies in his mind e.g. hares) is his attempt to wage all out war on these nasty creatures.

Carr mirrors several of the folktale motifs that can explain the nature of the curse(s) that the Rafterys have incurred, and why: 'malevolent or destructive fairies because offended' (F360, C46), 'Fairy lays curse on family' (F316), 'Fairies take revenge on person who crosses them, tear out eyes' (F361.3), 'Fairies take revenge on trespassers on ground they claim as Theirs' (F361.4), 'Fairies take revenge for being dishonored', (f361.9), and 'Fairies take revenge on mortals who destroy their homes' (F361.12).

From the folktales, fairy curses can be seen manifested in many different ways. Those curse types that reflect Carr's characters and the land of these characters might be seen in 'fairies cause disease' (F362) and more specifically, mental disease as in 'fairies cause insanity' (F362.2), 'fairies control prosperity' (F366.4), 'Fairies defile water' (F369.2), and 'Fairies destroy crops' (F369.5). One can see the current state of the land as being the result of a faery curse. The behavior of the family is best explained by Carr's mirroring of the second motif, 'fairies cause insanity' F362.2).

Ded

Several of the characters suffer from particular maladies both mental and physical. Ded, Red and Shalome all reflect the motif: 'fairies cause insanity'. Very early in the play, Red describes Ded as:

a halfwih who lives in a cowshed... can't tell nigh from day, oak from ash. He'd milk a bull and drink ud in his tay and never know the differ. And I swear I seen him talkin to

the corn, kissin ud and caressin ud as if ud were a golden wench swayin in the sun (Carr, *On Raftery's Hill* 21).

Ded lacks lucidity most of the time, except in rare moments such as his rage against his father after Sorrel's rape, and needs constant sedating medication to remain coherent. Even coherent, he is as Dinah describes "like somewan ouh a the stone age" (Carr, *On Raftery's Hill* 14). Several characters note that he should probably be sent to the asylum, yet no one moves to do so. He sleeps in the cowshed and must be wooed back into the house, even to eat, and must be reminded "Humans ates their dinner off of a table ... animals ates ud off a the fluur and slapes in sheds" (Carr, *On Raftery's Hill* 14). Even though Red mentions to other characters suggesting that he'd like his son to move back into the house from the shed and the dung, Ded's behavior suggests that this would likely be a dangerous situation for the young man. In a moment of outburst, Ded reveals a bit of the abuse that Red has threatened him with, as well as the true nature of the relationship between Dinah and Sorrel. Ded, while recalling the night of Sorrel's birth, says:

you're to go down to the cowshed wud Dinah. And I says Daddy I won't, I want to stay wud mother, and he says, go now and do what you're tould. And there's blood and every fuckin thing coming out of Dinah. And I says Daddy I don't know what to do and Daddy says she's only calvin and I says I didn't want to be be left wud her and he gives me a belt and draws me up alongside a hees face and says go now and do whah I'm sayin and if ya ever spake of ud after I'll cut your balls off (Carr, *On Raftery's Hill* 48).

If Red's brutality or the incest in his family were the determining factor in Ded's mental illness, one would expect all the members of the family to exhibit behavior very similar to Ded's, as they all share the same environment. However, each family member exhibits behaviors that are distinctly different from each other, and yet all are similar in that they are all insane. A faery curse helps explain this familial insanity.

Dinah

Dinah, Red's eldest daughter, on the surface seems to be one of the most sane of the Rafterys, and yet she engages in behaviors that also are, at their very best, neurotic. As mentioned, she has an ongoing physical relationship with her father, Red, and while she has subsumed the mother and caretaker role in the family, protecting both Ded and Sorrel from the rages of Red, she too shares in this abuse when it serves her. Her fierce loyalty to Red is at times

frightening, and yet she will fluctuate between rages against him for raping Sorrel, and defending him and her unusual relationship with him. Based on her vicious reaction to Sorrel following the rape, it is not clear if her anger with Red is more about concern for Sorrel or jealousy of her. If this were not enough, Dinah also appears to have an at least intermittent sexual relationship with her brother, as revealed in an argument between the two of them in Act 2.

Ded: I'm getting the guards, tell them about you and Daddy.

Dinah: G'wan, get the guards! G'wan get them! And tell them what ya done to me. While you're ah ud.

Ded: I done nothing to you only clane up the mess after Daddy! (Carr, *On Raftery's Hill* 38)

Dinah's sanity seems to have taken a turn suddenly, as seen in a conversation she has with Dara. In this conversation she reveals that was once engaged to Dara's brother but cut things off suddenly. We can envision that her experience so many years ago mirrored the rape of Sorrel that we witness at the end of Act 1. Both Dinah and Sorrel react to their rapes by cutting off the one relationship that could free them of their lives with Red. Their inability to escape the land also matches the nature of the faery curse.

Sorrel

Sorrel is the "wan perfect thing" in the house, as described by Dinah. She seems to have escaped much of the horror the rest of the Rafterys have experienced; however, she is born of the incestuous relationship between Red and his daughter, Dinah. Dinah tells Red that Sorrel is, "a Raftery, a double Raftery, well versed in subterfuge" (Carr, *On Raftery's Hill* 46). She begins the play on the verge of doing something that none of the other Rafterys have been able to do: escape. She is the fiancé of Dara Mood, a local farmer, and has been making plans with him to leave the hill for kinder places. Her father, however, has different plans. At the close of Act One, Red exerts his dominance on Sorrel, who he sees as having been scheming against him, and shows her "how to gut a hare" (Carr, *On Raftery's Hill* 36) as he rapes her. She begins the play with dreams of moving on from the hill, and yet through her rejection of Dara (following her rape by Red) we begin to understand how the rest of the Rafterys have become trapped here. As Shalome explains to Dara: "You'll make someone very happy, young man, but it won't be Sorrel

Raftery. Because, you see, we're strange creatures up here on the Hill. And strange creatures, aberrations like us, don't make for lifetime companions" (Carr, *On Raftery's Hill* 50). Shalome's description of the family as "strange creatures" and "aberrations" match the way that the cursed insanity has changed them into strange ghosts of their pre-curse selves.

Shalome

Shalome, Red's mother is described by Dinah as "a march hare in a nightdress" (Carr, *On Raftery's Hill* 18). Shalome packs her suitcase and periodically leaves the house on her way to her long-dead father's house in "Kinnygar." Each time, she gets just a short distance and returns, not remembering the way, or is ushered back to bed by one of the other characters. Her behavior is largely attributed to senility and Carr nurtures the audience's belief that she is merely a raving old woman, but as more information is revealed about the Rafterys and the goings-on on the Hill over the years, her senility, like Ded's madness, begins to make sense. She is trying to escape the madness and has, after years of trying to do so without fruition, gone insane herself. Near the end of the play, Shalome is seen descending the stairs in Sorrel's wedding dress muttering to herself "You left Kinnygar in your wedding dress so it's only right you should return in it." This sad logic points to her belief that all her previous attempts at escape perhaps were not successful because she did not try to leave under the same circumstances under which she came to live on Raftery's Hill. As the horrible details of Raftery's Hill are revealed and if we can look through her aged rantings and her senility to the truth that lies underneath, we begin to realize that she is truly the only sane Raftery because she is the only remaining member of the clan who is still trying to escape. While age or her environment might account for her seeming insanity, the folklore motif 'fairies cause insanity' (F362.2), may suggest that the fairies were likely to have had a hand in her wanderings and flights of fancy. Since Carr mirrors the folktale in her use of the curse in the play, it would make sense that Shalome is the only remaining family member who could possibly escape. Old Raftery and Shalome were not effected by the fairy curse, only the generations to follow. Sadly, however, Shalome's identity is tied to her marriage with Old Raftery, and she has not created a new identity since his death. This lack of re-creation is what allows the curse to take hold and cause the cursed insanity.

Red

Red's insanity manifests as horrific cruelty toward animals and people. While he is certainly not a sympathetic character at any point in the play, in light of a genuine insanity he at

least gains more depth and likewise becomes slightly more understandable to an audience. Many of Red's most graphically violent incidents specifically concern hares and livestock. In fact, even in his brutality towards people, he refers to them as either hares or livestock. Red constantly seems murderous towards rabbits in this play and his interactions with them seem illogical and even perhaps insane on many levels. At times he claims the poor state of his land is due to the hares. For this he kills any hares he finds on his land. At one point early in the play, Red comes home after killing two hares and asks Sorrel to make them into soup. Sorrel, recognizing the significance of hares, responds: "I will noh. Nowan ever tell ya ud's bad luck to shoooh a hare, not to mind two" (Carr, *On Raftery's Hill* 19). During this same exchange, Isaac, Red's friend who has been out hunting with him, relates the events of the morning's hunt: "(Red) went into the lair after them and strangled the leverets. Seven little babbys all huddled in a ball. Ya don't hunt fair, Red" (Carr, *On Raftery's Hill* 19).

Why might it be bad luck to shoot a hare? Where does Red's insane and brutal fixation on them originate? One can incur the wrath of the faeries by shooting a hare or going into their lair and strangling the babies. In addition, the folklore motif: 'fairy in the form of a hare' (F234.1.12) would suggest that to kill a hare is to potentially kill a faery and bring retaliation on yourself and your family as a result.

This connection suggests that Red's retribution on the hares is an indication of his belief that the misfortune of his hill is linked to them, and thus the faeries. He views the hares as somehow part of cursing his land, which is seen in 'demon in the form of a hare' (F401.3.6), and 'witch in the form of a hare' (G211.2.7). Red also blurs the distinction between people and hares and often uses the term "hare" when he is derogatorily referring to people. When Red calls Ded into the house to talk to him and "congratulate" him for not being a "total animal" he demands: "Stop blinkin' will ya. You're not a hare a'ya?" (Carr, *On Raftery's Hill* 26). He also refers to people as hares when he is angry with them, as in the rape at the end of Act 1. As Red cuts the clothes off Sorrel, he transforms the rape into the act of "skinning a hare," first cutting the flesh off a hare, and in the immanent moment, with Sorrel naked and Red on top of her, he states, "Now this is how ya gut a hare (stabs knife in table. Blackout.)" (Carr, *On Raftery's Hill* 36).

Red's equation of people and hares might be explained by another group of motifs from the Irish folk literature. These human-hare transformation motifs: 'transformation of a man into a hare' (D117.2), 'Reincarnation as a hare' (E612.3), and 'witch transforms herself into a hare to suckle cows' (D655.2)) suggest an explanation for Red seeing hares wherever he looks. Another

folktale explanation of Red's hatred of rabbits and hares may be from the motif 'tale of hare as revenant' (E423.2.2) in which a spirit returns in the form of a rabbit to wreak revenge for a transgression.

Additionally, the text makes frequent references to Red's cruel and wasteful slaughter of the livestock on Raftery's Hill. Red's cruelty extends beyond the hares to cows and sheep, though the cruelty here goes beyond unfair killing. Red mutilates the cows, leaving them to bleed to death and rot in the fields. Again, his cruelty towards the animals seems to be linked to Red's belief that they are somehow magically part of the curse on his lands. In Lady Gregory's *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland*, she notes:

The Sidhe [fairies] cannot make themselves visible to all. They are shape-changers; they can grow small or grow large, they can take what shape they choose; they appear as men or women wearing clothes of many colours, of today or of some old forgotten fashion, or they are seen as bird or beast, or as a barrel or a flock of wool. They go by us in a cloud of dust; they are as many as the blades of grass (Gergory).

The fact that he does not use the cows for food, but rather kills them out of a murderous rage highlights this suggestion. By leaving the animals in the fields for all to see and smell, or dragging them to the river to befoul the stream that feeds the downstream town, Red is sending a clear message to the fairies that he will not take this curse laying down.

There are many motifs that link cows and sheep with fairies, such as, 'Fairy gives man cattle' (F343.9). Red's murderous behavior towards the livestock might be an attempt to abolish the links between the fairies and his land. Two other motifs 'Fairy in the form of cow' (F234.1.1), and 'Fairy in the form of a sheep' (F234.1.11), as explained in Lady Gregory's preface above may also lend some explanation to Red's cruelty. Another Irish folklore motif similar to the above is 'fairies as cows' (F241.2). In W.B. Yeats' *Fairy and Folktales of the Irish Peasantry*, he explains that the fairy "has many shapes--is now a horse, now an ass, now a bull, now a goat, now an eagle. As all spirits, he is only half in the world of form" (Carr, *On Raftery's Hill* 94). These connections between fairies and their transformation into sheep and cows may help explain Red's otherwise inexplicable behavior toward his livestock, as he butchers them and leaves them to rot in the field. In this sense, by destroying the animals of his farm, Red is trying to rid his land of the fairies (whether real or imagined) and reverse the curse on his property and family.

THE CURSE AND PROSPERITY

The Irish folklore motif 'fairies control prosperity' (F366.4) can also help us understand some of what is happening on Raftery's Hill, particularly the state in which the audience and reader find it at the beginning of Act One. Many characters throughout the play describe the current state of the hill. Shalome describes it as "a river of slurry and rotten animals" and laments on "the smell of these fields" (Carr, *On Raftery's Hill* 31). Isaac paints a picture of the farm very early in the play in the few lines into his and Red's entrance: "That's not a cowdung smell, that's the stink a all a them dead sheep and cattile ya just lave maggotin the fields ... wud a stinking carcass in every field. You'll turn this beauhiful farm into an abattoir" (Carr, *On Raftery's Hill* 19). Dara, on his entrance, suggests that Red "should clear them fields... the wind takes the stink all over the Valley. Ud's shockin, that's whah ud is" (Carr, *On Raftery's Hill* 21). Though Red suggests that Dara "take a draught a the air up here on the Hill," Dara notes "Aye and keel over wud the stink a rotten sheep and cows" (Carr, *On Raftery's Hill* 24). While Sorrel blames the state of the farm on Red "pushin on" and having "no interest in the farm anymore" (Carr, *On Raftery's Hill* 32), Shalome gives clues that the lack of prosperity in the land has less to do with neglect than with something else: "Look what we've done to this beautiful Hill, Red. It was beautiful, and yet we're entirely blameless. What sort of monsters must we have been in a past life to suffer like this?" (Carr, *On Raftery's Hill* 31). In such a statement is the implication that something outside of the direct actions of Shalome and Red caused the state of the farm, namely the fairies and the curse. Dinah acknowledges the connection between the family's prosperity and the land itself in that when they are "ouh workin the fields, and the cattle, and the pigs" things don't go "bockety" for them (Carr, *On Raftery's Hill* 46). "Working the fields, and the cattle, and the pigs" in the context of the fairy curse would mean monitoring and keeping the fairy influence at bay. All the members of the Raftery clan seem to acknowledge the curse on the land, and while the majority of the family members seem to feel that the situation is out of their control, Red sees it as his own personal war to wage. While it is difficult to determine which family member has the most sane reaction to the curse, it is clear that Red possesses the clearest sense of agency. That Red is able to feel any agency in the face of a faery curse is a contradiction to the way that characters in folktales react to faery curses. Carr's insertion of agency is clearly seen in the following excerpt from Patrick Kennedy's *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts*, an Irish folktale of Irish waters that have unusual properties. In the tale, the common man is unable to

affect the course of the curse, only a priest of very specific qualities is able to do so. According to Irish historian/storyteller Gerald Barry:

In Connaught there is a well salubrious for human uses, but whose very taste poisons flocks, and herds, and beasts of burden, and all sorts of animals. The pebbly sand of this well, if only applied to the mouth, at once assuages the cravings of thirst. There is a well in Munster which if touched or even looked at by a man, the whole province will be deluged with rain, which will not cease until a priest, selected for the purpose, and who has been a virgin in body and mind from his infancy, appease the fountain by the celebration of mass, and the sprinkling of holy water and of the milk of a cow of one colour (a custom barbarous enough, and destitute of reason). (qtd. O'Sullivan)

Once again, Carr contradicts the way that agency occurs in the folktale in order to infuse her character with an otherwise missing autonomy and sense of power, however, this time she affords it to Red, a male, and not her female protagonist. Red's reaction to the curse is, in some ways, worse than the effects of the curse itself. The agency of Red is demonstrated in hyperviolence, rape, and devastation. The agency of Carr's females is not exhibited in such ways.

OLD RAFTERY, RED, AND THE OTHERWORLD

In her previous plays, Carr established the link between her female protagonists and the otherworld. Her manipulations of the folktales usually centered around the exploration of agency as it regards this connection. In this play, however, she establishes the connection between the otherworld and agency, not to her female protagonist, but to Old Raftery and Red. While all of the family members are clearly affected by the connection that these two men have to the faery otherworld, it is the men, not the women, who define the nature of this relationship to the otherworld. As a result, Sorrel, unlike Mai, Portia, or Hester seems to lack agency within her own life.

Carr establishes this connection between Old Raftery and Red to the otherworld in several ways. Old Raftery is the one who originally settles the land and incurs the curse on both the land and his family. The origin of the name Raftery is another way that Carr ties Old Raftery to the otherworld. In Lady Gregory's *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland*, Gregory tells of her encounter with a Mrs. Sheridan who had once met the historical Raftery, a Gaelic poet whom she had met and liked very much, but who had somehow "vexed her father who thereafter

forbade her to talk to him". The poet was born in County Mayo, and Mrs. Sheridan came here to visit the remains of the house where he was born. Gregory's accompanying friend asked an old woman, whom they were visiting, about the ruins of the house, and she related a tale of seeing the fairies while she was walking home one evening. In the same text, she relates the death of Raftery. What is pertinent about the description of Raftery, is not that he was a poet, but that he was able to foresee his own death. Clearly, the historical Raftery was both a poet and a seer, both of which connect him with the otherworld.

Some say there were flames about the house all through the night, "and those were the angels waking him." Yet his warning had not been sent through these white messengers but through a vision that had come to him once in Galway, when Death himself had appeared "thin, miserable, sad and sorrowful; the shadow of night upon his face, the tracks of the tears down his cheeks" and had told him he had but seven years to live. And though Raftery spoke back to him in scornful verse, there are some who say he spent those last seven years in praying and in making his songs of religion (Yeats).

Red's name is another way that Carr creates the tie between the otherworld and Red. In Irish folklore, the color red is clearly associated with faeries and the otherworld. In Yeats' explorations of the west of Ireland, he encountered numerous tales in which red was directly tied to the faery host. He has discovered a man whom he calls Michael Barrett, who he describes as "perhaps half-crazed" as he frequently claims to have had encounters with the faeries. Yeats relates one of the tales he tells of a neighbor girl who was touched by the Sidhe (the faeries):

Hession's little girl got a touch from them. She was as fine a little girl as ever you saw, and her mother sent her into Gort to do a message. And on the road she met a red-haired woman, with long wisps of hair as bright as silver, and she said, 'Where are you going and who are you?' 'I'm going to Gort on a message.' says she, 'and I'm Mrs. Hessian's daughter of such a place.' Well, she came home, and that very night she got a pain in her thigh, with respects to you, and she and her mother have half the world walked since then, trying to get relief for her; but never a bit better did she ever get. And no doubt at all but that's the very same day Michael Barrett saw [the Sidhe] in the field near Hessian's house (Yeats).

It is not only red hair that may distinguish the Sidhe, but also their clothing. The following excerpt is from a tale of a faery sighting in County Clare:

I saw them myself one night I was going to Ennis with a load of straw. It was when we came to Bunnahow and the moon was shining, and I was on the top of the load of straw, and I saw them in a field. Just like jockeys they were, and riding horses, red clothes and caps they had like a jockey would have, but they were small (Yeats).

In this same text, a man identified as J. Creary notes of his own sighting: “And Lee told me that one night he saw red men riding through the country and going over ditches (#).” There are literally dozens of examples of the color red being associated with the faery folk. Carr’s choice of ‘Red’ as well as her pairing of this with the name of a famous Irish poet-seer, Raftery, who was rumored to have cavorted with faeries suggests that other faery connections found throughout the play are intentional on her part.

Interestingly, Carr uses no motifs that are specifically English in *On Raftery’s Hill*. Instead, she uses mostly Cross index motifs and some motifs from O’Sullivan’s index, which is mainly post-invasion Irish folktales. Some Cross motifs that match with the faeryforts and faeryroads are F211.0.1 and F271.5, and Cross motifs that match with curses and disease are F361.9, F366.4, F369.2, and F369.5. Cross motifs that match with Red are F234.1.12, F401.3.6, and D117.2. The only motif that matches with curse and prosperity is from the Cross index, F366.4.

Because nearly all the motifs from *Raftery’s* are culled from the Irish pre-invasion folktales, we can assume that Carr is honing her use of folklore to a specific end. By both choosing Irish folklore and specifically pre-invasion folklore motifs, and in making the folklore central to the plot she is perhaps aware of the affect the folklore will have on her audiences. Not only is she employing folklore in a more central role and using specific Irish pre-invasion literature, *Raftery’s* mirrors both the structure and the images of the folktales. This strengthens her ability to evoke a visceral response from the audience, simultaneously revealing some of the darkest shadow material yet to be seen in her plays, and yet, allowing the Ego to recognize it as “also-I” through her use of the folktales.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

This study examined four of Marina Carr's plays, *The Mai*, *Portia Coughlan*, *By the Bog of Cats*, and *On Raftery's Hill*. Existing critical literature on these plays suggests two main explanations for the structure and dark content within the plays, a feminist critique of women's place within Irish society and the similarities between the plays and Greek tragedy. Other existing literature explores Carr's place within the Irish national theatrical tradition, specifically in the way that her work does or does not address the issues of post-colonial engagement with cultural identity. This analysis focused on the connection between the images that seem dark and/or troubling and difficult to understand and Irish folklore motifs. The analysis revealed both that Carr is using Irish folklore motifs and specifically motifs from Pre-Invasion folktales. As seen in the analyses, Carr often modifies the tales within her plays, specifically around the issue of agency and autonomy in her female protagonists, thus allowing Carr to discuss a surrogate Irish cultural identity without ever directly mentioning it.

Carr employs a myriad of techniques in integrating the folklore into her work. In the first two plays, *The Mai* and *Portia Coughlan*, she creates origination myths about Owl Lake and Belmont River, and these created myths mirror the stories of the female protagonist. In addition, Carr uses the Irish folktale motifs, images, and structures in the creation of her myths. The additional images within these two plays that connect with folktale motifs, are tied to the folklore embedded within the creation myths, thus forming a cohesive whole. This pattern changes with the third play, *By the Bog of Cats*. There is no Carr-created myth in which to tie together all of the various images that come from the folktales. Specific manifestations of the folktale motifs occur within the situations and characters themselves. Carr employs yet another technique in the fourth play, *On Raftery's Hill*. In this play the folktale images, motifs, and structures are placed more centrally into the plot of the play. One could lay the structure of the play on top of the folktales that Carr uses in this play and have an almost perfect match. The analysis makes clear that Carr is utilizing the Ireland's pre-invasion folktales, and yet, the question that remains is why she would be doing this. As mentioned, Carr seems to be using the folktale motifs in order to connect with the audience in more visceral way around the issue of

Irish cultural identity. Though all of her plays seemed to do this, *On Raftery's Hill* was more successful at evoking a visceral response from the audience than was *The Mai*. Perhaps this is because *On Raftery's Hill* used the folktales more centrally, more infused into the play than in *The Mai*. Why would this evoke such an emotive response from Carr's audience? What is it that is happening in the relating of these stories, modified in Carr's plays that explains the 'moving and mythical' feeling that so many critics mention? Many who see her plays seem to have the sense that something big is happening when they watch them, and yet few are able to articulate what that something is. Many attempts at understanding Carr's plays focus on the feminist and Greek aspects of the works. There is no reason to suggest that these aspects are not present in her plays, and the existing analyses of Carr's plays already do a brilliant job of revealing these layers of the plays. However, these analyses do not seem to be able to explain the folkloric images and moments in the play, a fact that many critics and academics acknowledge, and one that hopefully this analysis has made clearer. If feminism and Greek tragedy are not the only explanations behind Carr's plays, what other ones could there be?

POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS

Folktales as a Disruption of the Abbey's Realist Form

Many Irish playwrights and visionaries have begun to engage the reality of the Celtic Tiger and question its effect on the Irish cultural identity. As Ireland moves beyond the domain of England and into the technological world market, both the country and its theater are exploring the ways in which Irish identity is changing. As Margrett Llewellyn-Jones (Principle Lecturer at the University of North London) puts it,

There is an underbelly to this apparent prosperity, which includes not only poverty and drug problems but also corruption scandals. Economic developments have changed the literal and social landscape, including attitudes to history, class and gender, and especially to religion, as the power of the Catholic church has declined. All these changing features can be traced in the nature and reception of dramas created on both sides of the [Northern Ireland/ Republic of Ireland] Border, many of which revisit history, and can be linked to the evolution of notions of cultural identity (3).

One of the defining characteristics of these playwrights' works is a pushing against the classical realism of the Abbey Theatre, the poetic approaches of Synge or the formal and stylized plays of Yeats and Lady Gregory. As Llewellyn-Jones discusses,

Subversion of realism's formal and ideological limitations deploys strategies that range from the use of the mythical and magical to disruption of linear time, from the splitting of subjectivity to the development of the carnivalesque and grotesque. Further, liminal, potentially heterotopic space is evoked. In this sense, even the 'hearthside' of apparent fourth-wall settings perform overtly and/or subtextually the transformative potential of identity, [and] are in tune with the evolution of more fluid, hybrid identities while acknowledging the specificity of the rural Irish economy (139).

While Marina Carr's plays have elements of realism, her works, like her contemporaries also push against the formalism of realism. Unlike Carr's use of the folktales, W.B. Yeats, Edward Martin, and Lady Gregory simply recreated the myths for the stage. The Abbey performed dramatizations of the ancient Irish folktales in a spirit of replication. The tales were performed with careful attention to detail and there were no distortions or manipulations of the texts. Their manifesto was thus:

We propose to perform in Dublin in the spring of every year certain Celtic and Irish plays, which whatever their degree of excellence be written with a high ambition, and so build up a Celtic and Irish school of dramatic literature. We hope to find in Ireland an uncorrupted and imaginative audience trained to listen by its passion for oratory, and believe that our desire to bring upon the stage the deeper thoughts and emotions of Ireland will ensure a tolerant welcome, and that freedom to experiment which is not found in the theatres of England. We will show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and easy sentiment, as it has been represented, but the home of ancient idealism (Lady Gregory 8-9).

This goal to create an autonomous and respectable Irish theater in combination with the desire to rebuke England's depiction of Ireland was the driving force behind the Abbey's use of folktales. In a sense, it was the Irish FUBU (For Us By Us) theater of its time. The use of the folktales allowed a positive identity to which the audience could ascribe themselves. For instance, the representation of Ireland through a drunken and foolish peasant, was replaced with a brave and

heroic Cuchulain. However, Yeats, Gregory, and Martin had to be careful to present these dramas in a manner that would not upset the dominant English bourgeoisie. Thus,

The Abbey's repertoire ranged between plays confined by a more realist structure set within the fourth wall conventions and those which, in different ways, push against these limitations through magical/mythical elements, though not necessarily towards a fully subversive effect. [This is possibly] an attempt to reconcile on the level of myth what could not be reconciled by politics (Llewellyn-Jones 7).

Contemporary Irish drama seems to challenge the idealistic realism of the Abbey, and yet, shares the goals of subverting the misrepresentation of the Irish and bringing forth a national post-colonial Irish identity. It is therefore, "both a disruption of realist form and the re-working of mythic and folk elements as a means of deconstructing the ideology of language, history, and gender through performance" (Llewellyn-Jones 8). Celtic Tiger playwrights seem to approach this deconstruction either through an obvious rebellion against the conventions of Irish drama or through manipulation and mockery of the conventions. An example of the first approach would be Celtic Tiger playwrights Tom Murphy and Noel O'Donoghue who were determined that whatever they wrote, "One thing is fucking sure – its not going to be set in a kitchen" (qtd. Llewellyn-Jones 22). Martin McDonough, Conor McPherson, and Marina Carr seem to utilize the other approach; Cuchulain and kitchens are present in their plays, and yet the ways in which they use and manipulate both the stereotypes and the folktales highlight the disruption of the realist forms. In the case of Marina Carr's plays, Cuchulain becomes a disillusioned housewife who commits suicide. It is difficult to cleanly categorize the methods that Celtic Tiger playwrights are using to this end. This may be because, as Fintan O'Toole mentions, "What is peculiar about Ireland is that we have become a post-modern society without ever becoming a fully modern one" (O'Toole 35).

It is interesting to note that while the current playwrights, Marina Carr included, seem to be pushing against the realist form, realism cannot be completely abandoned without a negative reaction from the audience and critics. In particular, a sense of necessity is demanded for what happens on stage. One could certainly wonder at the necessity of the character's actions in Carr's plays. Yet Carr's use of the folktales in her plays is what seems to lend this necessity even amidst the crumbling realism. *Ariel* shows what happens when she does not use the Irish folktales. Her success with her other plays seems to rest in her use of the folktales and her comments on Irish

identity, two aspects that appear to be mostly missing from *Ariel*. As a result, the play was not received well by the critics. *Ariel*'s premiere was at the Dublin Theatre Festival in 2002, as the editors of the *New Hibernia Review* noted, "During the Dublin Theatre Festival, Marina Carr's *Ariel* and Sebastian Barry's *Hinterland* provoked the critics to dismay and disapproval" (v5n2). Indeed, Fintan O'Toole's *Irish Times* review was not as positive as his reviews of her other plays. As he sees it, the play's major problems are thematic overkill and a lack of social realism.

This is simply too much for one play, even for a dramatist of Carr's bold and relentless imagination. ... These are serious problems, all the more so, because the play does not pretend to work on the level of social realism. Fermoy is not even remotely convincing as a contemporary Irish politician and his religious ravings in an extended television interview don't sound like the kind of stuff that could make him the next Taoiseach. (Leeny and McMullen 90)

It is interesting to note that, while *Ariel* certainly lacks in realism, so too do her other plays, as do the plays of many other contemporary Irish playwrights. Certainly, her other plays risked becoming emotionally excessive, and yet, due to her skilled use of the folktales, they did not. Many critics analyze Carr's work, in general, as re-creation of Greek myth. This certainly seems to be the case in *Ariel*. Fintan O'Toole sheds light on the main difference between her other plays and this one when he mentions that in *Ariel*,

[Carr] does not manage to get to the core of the Greek plays: a sense of necessity. In a Greek world, the killing of Iphigenia is as necessary as its terrible consequences are inevitable. Here, Fermoy's sacrifice of his daughter is driven, not by the logic of the story, but by a rhetoric drawn from psychotic visions. We never get a convincing reason why it has to happen (Leeny 90).

In the four of Carr's plays analyzed in this dissertation, while there are obvious similarities between her work and Greek tragedy, her use of Irish folklore, and not Greek myth, seems to be what allows the important sense of necessity and social realism. The generational abandonment between mother and child found in *The Mai* makes sense when the fairy bloodline is considered. Hester's killing of her daughter, Josie, seems necessary, given the curse her mother gave her and Catwoman's prophesies. Portia's loyalty to her brother and the witch of Belmont River lead her to drown herself. Red's brutal behavior, though disgusting, is understandable

within the context of the fairy curse on his land. While none of these situations seem particularly realistic in a modern context, they seem so given a folkloric context. *Ariel* lacks this Irish folkloric element that is so central to the success of Carr's other plays. Without the Irish folklore, *Ariel*'s characters fail to evoke a connection with the audience, thus appearing overly emotionally wrought and unnecessarily murderous. Also, without Carr's use of Irish folklore, the identity discussion that is so prevalent in her other plays dwindles with this one. It is important to remember that Marina Carr is not the only Celtic Tiger playwright who seems to use the Irish folktales. Conor McPherson and Martin McDonagh also have high levels of violence and myth in their plays, and yet, the audiences and critics seem to sense a level of necessity in the actions of their characters. Again, the folktales seem to be lending a reality and necessity to the plays in which they appear.

Folktales as Part of the Field Day Company's Fifth Province

The realism of the Abbey is not the only form being pushed against in the plays of contemporary Irish plays. The Literary Revival, the re-establishment of Gaelic in Ireland, created an Ireland that was further split into North and South, Catholic and Protestant, Ireland and not-Ireland. This cleaving is what The Field Day Company was critical of and what it wanted to overcome. The Field Day Company was formed in 1980 by playwright Brian Friel, actor Stephen Rae, poets Seamus Heaney and Tom Paulin, and musician David Hammond. "Field Day was very much involved with 'border-crossing', both literally on tour and conceptually in terms of plays produced" (Llewellyn-Jones 18). Dean claimed that Field Day operated as a kind of

early warning system ... to liberate from these incarcerating languages in which we have been bred and find some new discourse which would enable people to think of different social arrangements – better and other than sectarian bitterness (qtd. Llewellyn-Jones 18).

Field Day discussed the existence of a 'Fifth Province', a notion from Irish ancient folklore. According to the folkloric history, Ireland at that time was divided into five provinces. There is no account for what happened to Ireland to cause it to be divided into its current four provinces (Ulster and the Republic of Ireland, which is made up of three provinces). This fifth province became a type of utopia in the Irish mind. According to Friel and Field Day, the fifth province

may well be a province of the mind, through which we hope to devise another way of looking at Ireland, or another possible Ireland, and this really is the pursuit of the company ... Field Day is a forum where a more generous and noble notion of Irishness than the narrow inherited one can be discussed (Llewellyn-Jones 141).

The Fifth province can be seen as an imaginative space, or as Llewellyn-Jones calls it, a Foucault-like heterotopia (19). The blurring of these boundaries is present in the Celtic Tiger playwrights not only in relation to the North/South borders, but also the borders of Ireland/not-Ireland, specifically in relation to the relationship between America and Ireland, "since a returning family member often acts as a catalyst, challenging the cultural identities of those who have remained at home" (17). Carr's plays and use of Irish folklore could be seen as operating as part of the ideology of this Fifth Province of Field Day, full of boundary crossing and re-mythologizing. For instance, Carr's use of the folktales in *The Mai* could be seen as focusing on the ways that the heroine's, or female protagonist's actions "are both like and unlike the heroines of myth and traditional female stereotypes"(12). In *Portia Coughlan* Carr could be using the folktales in order to blur the boundaries between the folkloric community that helped to create the actual Belmont River by supposedly killing a town witch and the present community in which Portia and her family exist. This could be seen as Carr's metaphor for the old folkloric fifth province and the fifth province of Field Day that allows a "more noble notion of Ireland than the one inherited". Marina Carr's use of the pre-invasion folktales could be seen, then, as an attempt to blur the boundaries of what is Ireland and not-Ireland, in order to address the fluid and changing nature of the post-colonial Irish cultural identity. It is important to note, however, that while both Field Day and Marina Carr seem to be creating this identity in the imaginary space of theater, it is a very real journey of identity recreation in which they and their audiences are engaged. Fintan O'Toole describes this process.

A sense of identity that is entirely imaginative, though not imaginary ... cultural, matters not of a past that can be read but of a present and future that have to be constantly written and re-written (179).

The Folktales and Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty

Marina Carr, while possibly sharing some of the Field Day's goals, also departs from their mission with the darker aspects of her plays. It is to these aspects that we continually return after considering the existing explanations for her works. She does not seem only to strive to

create an Irish identity that is “noble and free from” the negative aspects of the inherited identity. In fact, she seems to be parading these darker aspects around the stage, calling for the audience to identify with them, as her female protagonists are the characters in which these darker aspects are embodied. It becomes more clear, then, that Marina Carr uses the pre-invasion Irish folklore in her plays in order to bring in what is unconscious and undesired in the Irish identity, through a visceral connection with the audience. In this way, her works take on some of the aspects of Artaud’s Theatre of Cruelty. While Carr, unlike Artaud, is highly focused on language in her plays, she also employs several Artaudian qualities, specifically in the “dream-like elements – startling transformations” (Llewellyn-Jones 47). There are characters that are “grotesque hags, contrasts between light and dark and echoing use of non verbal as well as verbal sounds [such as the swans in *Portia Coughlan* or the noises of animals being butchered in *On Raftery’s Hill*] (47). Artaud claimed that “Violent concentrated action is like lyricism; it calls forth supernatural imagery, a bloodshed of images” (qtd. Llewellyn-Jones 62). It is clear that in contemporary Irish theater,

myth and Irish tales are important not only through content which reinstates a cultural heritage, but in those ritual actions performed on stage which invite a sense of audience involvement. While these later strategies may not be as strictly carnivalesque as the kind of total theatre strategies suggested by Artaud, they are literally encoded into the performing body and may thus express postcolonial discourses (Llewellyn-Jones 14).

Artaud proposed the strategies of his Theatre of Cruelty, in part, to connect with the audience in an emotive way, in order to tap what was unconscious, passionate, taboo, and desirous. The dark aspects of Marina Carr’s plays, her use of lighting and sound and imagery seem to reflect Artaud’s aims. Why might Marina Carr be employing the strategies of both the Field Day and Theatre of Cruelty, which on the surface seem to be in opposition over the purpose of theater? It appears that the way in which these two meet in the use of folklore in Marina Carr’s plays can be understood within a Jungian context.

Based on the results of the analysis, it seems that Carr is taking a non-intellectual approach to the identity discussion, and is suggesting that identity creation can only manifest through an embodied and viscerally felt experience. With her use of Irish folklore, she seems to be calling for Ireland to move beyond its past that has been idealized, intellectualized, and/or abjected, both by those who are trying to discover their own identity and by those who are

viewing and experiencing the identity that has predominately served as marketable. By using the pre-invasion folklore, Carr is allowing this past to slither its way back into the Irish psyche, in hopes that the psyche, no longer caught at the developmental stage concerned with its own past, will move its energies to the development of its future identity. In this sense, Carr's use of pre-invasion folklore and Ireland's present state within its search for national identity is understood best within a Jungian development of identity model.

PRE-INVASION FOLKLORE AS PRIMORDIAL IMAGES OF THE IRISH COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS

As Jung describes, the collective unconscious, and the shadow self contained within it, speak in myth-motifs in order to communicate information that is unconscious to the ego self. As regards Ireland, the pre-invasion folktales represent the self before England's colonization and resulting identity crisis. To move beyond this developmental arrest, Ireland needs to reintegrate the old primordial identity found in their pre-invasion folktales. However, it would be insufficient to stop there. Once it is reintegrated, Ireland must then engage in its transformative death, or movement beyond this identity. Such a movement is different than the current stage, where the old identity is not fully explored, not conscious, and not integrated. Ireland must move beyond the dichotomous reaction of either abjecting the darkness and light of old-identity, as did the Abbey Theatre or over-identifying with it, as did *Field Day*. Carr's use of the pre-invasion folktales allows the audience this process of exploring and integrating the old self, with all its darkest images and all of its healing power of autonomy and agency.

RELEVANCE OF THE FINDINGS AND POSSIBLE FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Without the findings of this study, these four plays by Marina Carr and their ability to move her audience could continue to go unexplained, as might the dark and bizarre images within the plays. The results of this study allow a new interpretation of her plays. Do they succeed in evoking a visceral engagement with Irish identity, through her use of Irish folklore and female protagonists? In light of this new standard, *Ariel's* poor reception was not due to her failure at Greek tragedy or feminist critique, but her lack of engaging commentary on Irish identity through Irish folklore and its motifs, as well as a lack of an autonomous female protagonist; *Ariel* was killed as opposed to committing the transformative suicide. As seen in Carr's latest play, *Woman and Scarecrow*, she has refocused her attention on these core elements. Likely Carr learned from

her mistakes in *Ariel* and will continue to carve out her niche as one of the primary Celtic Tiger playwrights.

On a larger scale, Irish theater critics and scholars should begin investigating folklore as a tool for greater understanding of theatrical literature. The feminist analyses of Anna McMullan and Cathy Leeny could investigate the ways that the motifs deepen feminist theory within the plays, and how the playwrights modify the tales within the plays for such purposes. Eilis Ni Dhuibne's analysis, which explores the folkloric essence of Carr's plays, could be expanded with the details that a structured methodology of traditional folklore analysis provides. Future analysis of Carr's plays might include a structural analysis that is similar to Vladimir Propp's treatment of Russian folktales, in which he laid out a common predictable structure across the tales. Such an analysis may reveal a similar structural pattern between Carr's plays and the Irish folktales that she is using. There may be evidence to suggest that the structure and use of Irish folktale motifs that Carr is employing are present in other Celtic Tiger playwrights as well, such as Martin McDonagh, Conor MacPherson, and Gina Moxley. As a result, applying folkloristic and Proppian analyses could prove to be useful in understanding the dark, violent, and mythical aspects of their plays as well. Additionally, further research might expand into a type analysis of Carr's (and other Celtic Tiger playwright's) works. Though this dissertation did not do a type analysis of Carr's work, one type was found in *On Raftery's Hill*. The folktale and the plot of the story were highly similar, and thus were of the same identifiable type. It may be the case that all of her plays, as well other Celtic Tiger playwrights, use types.

Questions of Irish identity have been a key focus for many generations of Irish. These questions have spurred many centuries of debate and strife both on the Isle and off it. Many theatre practitioners have attempted to focus questions of identity on questions of where the Irish have been, where they are now, and where it appears they want to be in the future. In order to do so, visionaries have had to reconcile Ireland's reconstructed (from folk histories) past history with the modernity of its society. As Ireland has transformed itself in the latter part of the 20th century and moves into the 21st with unprecedented growth in wealth, population, technology, general moderization, and a move towards cosmopolitan ideals, issues of identity have been complicated further. In addition to the Modernist issues of attempting to resuscitate/resurrect a pre-English identity, Ireland is confronted with all the nightmares of a boom economy and culture (drugs, gangs, homelessness, poverty, etc.) which exacerbates an already difficult task.

Some argue that Ireland is searching for something that does not exist; that identity is an illusion, particularly in a globalized community. We cannot exist, however, apart from who we---our people, our culture, our communal thoughts, ideas, dreams, histories do exist, and a search for an understanding of that, even if we then choose to deviate, modify, contradict, or embrace that, can and will have a huge impact on who we are and what we do tomorrow. "If ye don't know the past, then ye will not have a future. If ye don't know where your people have been, then ye won't know where your people are going." (Carter 44).

When confronted with the slippery nature of Ireland's pre-colonized history, the only meaningful link to Ireland's past is through its folklore. Yeats and Lady Gregory both were aware of this integral element in recapturing something resembling a pre-English identity. Successful theatre in Ireland, since the inception of the Abbey has been focused one way or another on the question of identity. The Celtic Tiger playwrights seem instinctually to understand this as well, as they tap into the powerful and primordial images of the Irish collective unconscious.

Marina Carr, as one among these, is pulling from the ancient past in order to push the boundaries of the current Irish identity. Her ability to listen to and translate the motif warnings from the Irish collective unconscious for a modern audience is helping to lead post-colonial Ireland to an integrated and more conscious self, coalescing the past and all its darkness with the future and all its brightness. She is particularly effective in modernizing the folk motifs to speak to the increasingly fragmented diaspora of Irish, and resurrect not only these ancient images, but in turn, perhaps also the Irish identity.

As Ireland moves into an increasingly fragmenting segment of its history, pulled between its past and its future, it will become increasingly difficult to identify Irishness. For people who have known their past, this is perhaps not as tragic as for those like Ireland who are emerging as a post-colonial state. Playwrights such as Marina Carr and her cohorts, just like their predecessors, will help tie together 'the best of what is and was Ireland' with 'the best of what Ireland could be.' They are striving to forge an Ireland out of the miasmal mists of its past, through resurrecting what was and making it new again. As Irish critic, Claudia Harris, states in a review of Marina Carr, "may the scary hauntings continue" (Harris 232).

APPENDIX A

IRISH HISTORY/THEATRICAL HISTORY TIME LINE

DATE	Political Events	Theatrical Events
1171	Ireland becomes a 'lordship' of English crown after invasion by Henry II of England, sanctioned by the Pope. English law applied to 'the Pale' around Dublin	
1541	Henry VIII claims title King of Ireland Tudor 'plantation' of English gentry as landlords in Ireland	(See McGuinness' <i>Mutabilitie</i> 1990 about Elizabethan Ireland)
1601	Hugh O'Neill's rebellion falters after defeat at battle of Kinsale	
1649	As Governor of Ireland, Oliver Cromwell causes massacre at Drogheda	
1660	Restoration of Charles II in England	
1688	Protestant William of Orange is invited to be King of England	
1690	Battle of the Boyne—William's Protestant army defeats Irish rebels supporting Catholic James II, deposed from English throne	
1791	United Irishmen formed in Belfast and Dublin	
1795	Founding of the (Protestant) Orange Order	
1800	Act of Union passed by English Parliament	
1833	Ordnance Survey of Ireland by British Army Engineering Corps	(See Friel's <i>Translations</i> 1980)
1834	Daniel O'Connell introduces debate on repeal of Union	
1838	English Poor Law extended to Ireland	
1845-1859	The Great Famine--- emigration increase	(See Murphy's <i>Famine</i> 1968)
1852	First Saint Patrick's Day Parade in New York	
1860		Boucicault <i>The Colleen Bawn</i>

DATE	Political Events	Theatrical Events
1862	Harland and Wolff shipyard in Belfast	
1864		Boucicault <i>The Shaughraun</i>
1867	Fenian disturbances in England and Ireland	
1869	Disestablishment of Church of Ireland	
1870	Home Rule movement founded	
1880	Parnell leader of Irish Parliamentary Party	
1886	Gladstone's Home Rule Bill defeated	
1887		Antoine's Theatre Libre, Paris
1890		Ibsen's <i>Ghosts</i> in Paris
1892		Shaw writes <i>Widower's Houses</i>
1893	Second Home Rule Bill, passed by Commons rejected by Lords	
1897		Moscow Arts Theatre formed
1899		Establishment of Irish Literary Theatre
1902		Yeats' <i>Cathleen ni Houlihan</i>
1903		Irish National Theatre Society founded
1904		Abbey theatre opened
1905	Sinn Fein established	
1907	Jim Larkin--- Union leader, organizes dock strike in Belfast	Synge's <i>Playboy of the Western World</i>
1911	Irish Women's Suffrage movement	
1912	Third Home Rule Bill, introduced--- but undergoes various challenges Ulster covenant against Home Rule	
1913	Irish Transport and General Worker's Dublin 'Lock out,' led by Larkin, then James Connolly. Formation of Citizen Army Foundation of Irish Volunteers	(see Kilroy's <i>Talbot's Box</i> 1977)
1914	Home Rule eventually passed but suspended due to 1914-1918 First World War	(see McGuinness <i>Behold the Sons of Ulster</i> 1985)
1916	Easter Rising; execution of leaders	
1919	War of Independence begins, Irish groups versus British troops	
1920	Government of Ireland Act gives separate northern and southern Irish parliaments--- both within Britain. British Black and Tan soldiers perpetrate first Bloody Sunday	
1921	Anglo-Irish Treaty signed	
1922	Michael Collins involved in	(see Barry's <i>Steward of Christendom</i>)

DATE	Political Events	Theatrical Events
	negotiations re-creation of Irish Free State, leaving (6 counties) Northern Ireland as part of Britain. Civil War	1995)
1923	Civil War ends.	O'Casey <i>Shadow of a Gunman</i>
1926		O'Casey <i>Plough and the Stars</i>
1929		Johnston <i>The Old Lady Says No!</i>
1930		The Gate Theatre opens its own premises
1934		Flaherty's film <i>Man of Aran</i>
1937	De Valera's Fianna Fail government creates New Irish Constitution, names country as Eire, asserts right to claim Northern Ireland.	
1938		Artaud writes <i>Theatre and Its Double</i>
1938-45	Second World War--- Eire remains neutral, Northern Ireland involved	(see McGuinness's <i>Dolly West's Kitchen</i> 1999)
1949	Ireland leaves British Commonwealth, becomes a Republic	Brecht forms The Berliner Ensemble
1951-1961	The highest emigration rates yet from Ireland	
1952		Ford's film <i>The Quiet Man</i>
1953		Pike Theatre established
1954		Behan's <i>The Quare Fellow</i>
1955		Beckett's <i>Waiting for Godot</i>
1956-1962	IRA Border campaign	
1958		Behan's <i>The Hostage</i>
1962		(see Lynch <i>Dockers</i> 1981 set in Belfast)
1963		Brook's Theatre of Cruelty season in London
1964		Friel's <i>Philadelphia, Here I Come</i>
1965		Keane's <i>The Field</i> (stage)
1966		New Abbey Theatre opens
1968		Murphy's <i>Famine</i> Grotowski's <i>Towards a Poor Theatre</i>
1969	Civil Rights campaign in Northern Ireland marks start of violence and 'the Troubles'	
1972	Bloody Sunday, Derry--- British troops shoot civilians Period of Direct Rule of Northern Ireland from Westminster	
1973	Ireland joins the EEC--- which will influence its move towards a 'Celtic Tiger' Economy	

DATE	Political Events	Theatrical Events
	Sunningdale agreement sets up Power-sharing Executive on Northern Ireland. From early 1970s decline of the North's manufacturing base leads to huge unemployment during 1980s and early 1990s	
1974	Power-sharing Executive brought down through Ulster Worker's Council action	(see Parker's <i>Pentecost</i> 1988)
1975		Druid Theatre Company, Galway formed Friel's <i>Volunteers</i>
1977		Kilroy's <i>Talbot's Box</i>
1980		Friel forms Field Day Theatre Company Friel's <i>Translations</i>
1981	Hunger Strikes in Northern Ireland	
1982		Lynch's <i>The Interrogation of Ambrose Fogarty</i>
1982-4		Reid, G.'s <i>The Billy Plays</i>
1983	Republic has referendum on divorce	Reid, C. <i>Tea in a China Cup</i> Charabanc Theatre Company formed
1984		Hutchinson's <i>Rat in the Skull</i> Rough Magic Theatre Company receives funding Passion Machine's first production
1985	Hillsborough Anglo-Irish Agreement attempts to pave way for devolved government More liberal Amendment to 1979 Health (Family Planning) Act in Republic	Murphy's <i>Bailegangaire</i> McGuinness's <i>Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching</i> Reid, C.'s <i>Did you Hear the One</i> Devlin's <i>Ourselves Alone</i>
1986		Barry's <i>Boss Grady's Boys</i> MacIntyre's <i>The Great Hunger</i>
1987	Tax incentives for creative writers, filmmakers, etc. introduced in Ireland	Parker's <i>Pentecost</i>
1988	60,000 migrants leave Republic	Burke-Kennedy's <i>Women at Arms</i> Tinderbox Theatre Company formed
1988-1991		Roche's <i>Wexford Trilogy</i> Macnas Theatre Company formed
1989		Bolger's <i>Lament for Arthur Cleary</i>
1990	Mary Robinson President of Republic	Barry's <i>Prayers of Sherkin</i> Bolger's <i>In High Germany</i> Friel's <i>Dancing at Lughnasa</i>
1991		Dubbel Joint Productions Company

DATE	Political Events	Theatrical Events
		formed Dock Ward Story Company formed Murphy's <i>The Patriot Game</i>
1992	Republic referenda on divorce and abortion	Barry's <i>White Woman Street</i>
1993	Secret talks between British and Irish Prime Ministers and IRA sign Downing Street Declaration---Britain concedes has no strategic interest in Northern Ireland Legalisation of homosexuality in Republic	Murphy's <i>Brothers of the Brush</i> PanPan Theatre Company formed Barbbas Theatre Company formed
1994	Ceasefire by IRA and Loyalists Economic improvements begin in North	(see Reid, C's <i>Clowns</i> 1996 and Carville's <i>Language Roulette</i> 1996) Carr's <i>The Mai</i> Kabosh Theatre Company formed Lynch's <i>Pictures of Tomorrow</i> O'Kelly's <i>Asylum, Asylum</i>
1995	Republic Referendum removes ban on divorce	Barry's <i>Stewards of Christendom</i> Devlin's <i>After Easter</i>
1996	Underbelly of Celtic Tiger revealed in urban and rural plays	Murphy's <i>A Picture of Paradise</i> Mercier's <i>Buddleia</i> Carr's <i>Portia Coughlan</i> McDonagh's <i>The Beauty Queen of Leenane</i> McDonagh's <i>The Cripple of Inismaan</i> Jones' <i>Women on the Verge of HRT</i> Stembridge's <i>The Gay Detective</i>
1997		Barabbas' <i>White Headed Boy</i> Hughes' <i>Halloween Night</i> Jones' <i>One Night in November</i> Kilroy's <i>The Fall of Constance Wilde</i> Macnas' <i>Diamonds in the Soil</i> McDonagh's <i>The Lonesome West</i> Meehan's <i>Mrs. Sweeney</i> Mitchell's <i>In a Little World of Our Own</i> Walsh's <i>Disco Pigs</i>
1998	Good Friday Peace Agreement signed in Belfast--- Peace Process involving London, Dublin, and Belfast	Barry's <i>Our Lady of Sligo</i> Carr's <i>By the Bog of Cats</i> McGuinness's <i>Mutabilitie</i> McPherson's <i>The Weir</i> Mercier's <i>The Dublin Trilogy</i> Murphy's <i>The Wake</i> Wood's <i>At the Black Pig's Dyke</i>
1999	January: Ireland joins EMU December: Irish Government	Croghan's <i>Paddy Irishman, Paddy Englishman, Paddy...?</i>

DATE	Political Events	Theatrical Events
	<p>relinquishes territorial claim to Northern Ireland Devolved Northern Ireland Cabinet meets for 1st time at Stormont 42,000 migrants enter Republic</p>	<p>Jones' <i>Stones in His Pockets</i> Mitchell's <i>Trust</i></p>
2000-01	<p>Ulster: Peace process continues, some disruption from both sides British elections increase DUP and Sinn Fein M.Ps Decommissioning of weapons still problematic, prompting resignation of Assembly First Minister David Trimble (UU) 1/07/01, further unsettling Peace Process. Republic votes against EEC enlargement. Economic growth continues both sides of the border.</p>	<p>Carr's <i>On Raftery's Hill</i> Kabosh's <i>Kicking Space</i> Workshop Macnas' <i>Ollie Deasy</i> McDonagh's <i>Lieutenant of Inishmore</i> McPherson's <i>Dublin Carol, Port Authority</i> Mercier's <i>Down the Line, We Ourselves</i> Mitchell's <i>The Force of Change</i> Pan Pan International symposium Tinderbox's <i>Convictions</i></p>

APPENDIX B

GENERAL SYNOPSIS OF THE MOTIF INDEX OF FOLK LITERATURE

A. MYTHOLOGICAL MOTIFS

A0--A99. Creator

A100--A499. Gods

A100--A199. The gods in general

A200--A299. Gods of the upper world

A300--A399. Gods of the underworld

A400--A499. Gods of the earth

A500--A599. Demigods and culture heroes.

A600--A899. Cosmogony and cosmology

A600--A699. The universe

A700--A799. The heavens

A800--A899. The earth

A900--A999. Topographical features of the earth

A1000--A1099. World calamities

A1100--A1199. Establishment of natural order

A1200--A1699. Creation and ordering of human life

A1200--A1299. Creation of man

A1300--A1399. Ordering of human life

A1400--A1499. Acquisition of culture

A1500--A1599. Origin of customs

A1600--A1699. Distribution and differentiation of peoples

A1700--A2199. Creation of animal life

A1700--A1799. Creation of animal life--general

A1800--A1899. Creation of mammals

A1900--A1999. Creation of birds

A2000--A2099. Creation of insects

A2100--A2199. Creation of fish and other animals.

A2200--A2599. Animal characteristics

A2200--A2299. Various causes of animal characteristics

A2300--A2399. Causes of animal characteristics: body

A2400--A2499. Causes of animal characteristics: appearance and habits

A2500--A2599. Animal characteristics--miscellaneous

A2600--A2699. Origin of trees and plants

A2700--A2799. Origin of plant characteristics

A2800--A2899. Miscellaneous explanations

B. ANIMALS

B0--B99. Mythical animals

B100--B199. Magic animals

B200--B299. Animals with human traits

B300--B599. Friendly animals

B300--B349. Helpful animals--general

- B350--B399. Grateful animals
- B400--B499. Kinds of helpful animals
- B500--B599. Services of helpful animals
- B600--B699. Marriage of person to animal
- B700--B799. Fanciful traits of animals
- B800--B899. Miscellaneous animal motifs

C. TABU

- C0--C99. Tabu connected with supernatural beings
- C100--C199. Sex tabu
- C200--C299. Eating and drinking tabu
- C300--C399. Looking tabu
- C400--C499. Speaking tabu
- C500--C549. Tabu: touching
- C550--C599. Class tabu
- C600--C699. Unique prohibitions and compulsions.
- C700--C899. Miscellaneous tabus
- C900--C999. Punishment for breaking tabu

D. MAGIC

- D0--D699. Transformation
 - D10--D99. Transformation: man to different man
 - D100--D199. Transformation: man to animal
 - D200--D299. Transformation: man to object
 - D300--D399. Transformation: animal to person
 - D400--D499. Other forms of transformation
 - D500--D599. Means of transformation
 - D600--D699. Miscellaneous transformation incidents
- D700--D799. Disenchantment
- D800--D1699. Magic objects
 - D800--D899. Ownership of magic objects
 - D900--D1299. Kinds of magic objects
 - D1300--D1599. Function of magic objects
 - D1600--D1699. Characteristics of magic objects
- D1700--D2199. Magic powers and manifestations
 - D1710--D1799. Possession and employment of magic powers
 - D1800--D2199. Manifestations of magic power

E. THE DEAD

- E0--E199. Resuscitation
- E200--E599. Ghosts and other revenants
 - E200--E299. Malevolent return from the dead
 - E300--E399. Friendly return from the dead
 - E400--E599. Ghosts and revenants--miscellaneous
- E500--E699. Reincarnation
- E700--E799. The Soul

F. MARVELS

- F0--F199. Otherworld journeys
- F200--F699. Marvelous creatures
 - F200--F399. Fairies and elves
 - F400--F499. Spirits and demons
 - F500--F599. Remarkable persons
 - F600--F699. Persons with extraordinary powers
- F700--F899. Extraordinary places and things
- F900--F1099. Extraordinary occurrences

G. OGRES

- G10--G399. Kinds of ogres
 - G10--G99. Cannibals and cannibalism
 - G100--G199. Giant ogres
 - G200--G299. Witches
 - G300--G399. Other ogres
- G400--G499. Falling into ogre's power
- G500--G599. Ogre defeated
- G600--G699. Other ogre motifs

H. TESTS

- H0--H199. Identity tests: recognition
- H200--H299. Tests of truth
- H300--H499. Marriage tests
- H500--H899. Tests of cleverness
 - H500--H529. Test of cleverness or ability
 - H530--H899. Riddles
- H900--H1199. Tests of prowess: tasks
 - H900--H999. Assignment and performance of tasks
 - H1000--H1199. Nature of tasks
- H1200--H1399. Tests of prowess: quests
 - H1200--H1249. Attendant circumstances of quests
 - H1250--H1399. Nature of quests
- H1400--H1599. Other tests
 - H1400--H1449. Tests of fear
 - H1450--H1499. Tests of vigilance
 - H1500--H1549. Tests of endurance and power of survival
 - H1550--H1569. Tests of character
 - H1570--H1599. Miscellaneous tests

J. THE WISE AND THE FOOLISH

- J0--J199. Acquisition and possession of wisdom (knowledge)
- J200--J1099. Wise and unwise conduct

- J200--J499. Choices
- J500--J599. Prudence and discretion
- J600--J799. Forethought
- J800--J849. Adaptability
- J850--J899. Consolation in misfortune
- J900--J999. Humility
- J1000--J1099. Other aspects of wisdom
- J1100--J1699. Cleverness
 - J1110--J1129. Clever persons
 - J1130--J1199. Cleverness in the law court
 - J1200--J1229. Clever man puts another out of countenance
 - J1230--J1249. Clever dividing
 - J1250--J1499. Clever verbal retorts (repartee)
 - J1500--J1649. Clever practical retorts
 - J1650--J1699. Miscellaneous clever acts
- J1700--J2749. Fools (and other unwise persons)
 - J1700--J1749. Fools (general)
 - J1750--J1849. Absurd misunderstandings
 - J1850--J1999. Absurd disregard of facts
 - J2000--J2049. Absurd absent-mindedness
 - J2050--J2199. Absurd short-sightedness
 - J2200--J2259. Absurd lack of logic
 - J2260--J2299. Absurd scientific theories
 - J2300--J2349. Gullible fools
 - J2350--J2369. Talkative fools
 - J2370--J2399. Inquisitive fools
 - J2400--J2449. Foolish imitation
 - J2450--J2499. Literal fools
 - J2500--J2549. Foolish extremes
 - J2550--J2599. Thankful fools
 - J2600--J2649. Cowardly fools
 - J2650--J2699. Bungling fools
 - J2700--J2749. The easy problem made hard
- J2750--J2799. Other aspects of wisdom or foolishness

K. DECEPTIONS

- K0--K99. Contests won by deception
- K100--K299. Deceptive bargains
- K300--K499. Thefts and cheats
- K500--K699. Escape by deception
- K700--K799. Capture by deception
- K800--K999. Fatal deception
- K1000--K1199. Deception into self-injury
- K1200--K1299. Deception into humiliating position
- K1300--K1399. Seduction or deceptive marriage
- K1400--K1499. Dupe's property destroyed
- K1500--K1599. Deceptions connected with adultery

K1600--K1699. Deceiver falls into own trap
 K1700--K2099. Deception through shams
 K1700--K1799. Deception through bluffing
 K1800--K1899. Deception by disguise or illusion
 K1900--K1999. Impostures
 K2000--K2099. Hypocrites
 K2100--K2199. False accusations
 K2200--K2299. Villains and traitors
 K2300--K2399. Other deceptions

L. REVERSAL OF FORTUNE

L0--L99. Victorious youngest child
 L100--L199. Unpromising hero (heroine)
 L200--L299. Modesty brings reward
 L300--L399. Triumph of the weak
 L400--L499. Pride brought low

M. ORDAINING THE FUTURE

M0--M99. Judgments and decrees
 M100--M199. Vows and oaths
 M200--M299. Bargains and promises
 M300--M399. Prophecies
 M400--M499. Curses

N. CHANCE AND FATE

N0--N99. Wagers and gambling
 N100--N299. The ways of luck and fate
 N300--N399. Unlucky accidents
 N400--N699. Lucky accidents
 N410--N439. Lucky business ventures
 N440--N499. Valuable secrets learned
 N500--N599. Treasure trove
 N600--N699. Other lucky accidents
 N700--N799. Accidental encounters
 N800--N899. Helpers

P. SOCIETY

P0--P99. Royalty and nobility
 P100--P199. Other social orders
 P200--P299. The family
 P300--P399. Other social relationships
 P400--P499. Trades and professions
 P500--P599. Government
 P600--P699. Customs
 P700--P799. Society--miscellaneous motifs

Q. REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS

- Q10--Q99. Deeds rewarded
- Q100--Q199. Nature of rewards
- Q200--Q399. Deeds punished
- Q400--Q599. Kinds of punishment

R. CAPTIVES AND FUGITIVES

- R0--R99. Captivity
- R100--R199. Rescues
- R200--R299. Escapes and pursuits
- R300--R399. Refuges and recapture

S. UNNATURAL CRUELTY

- S0--S99. Cruel relatives
- S100--S199. Revolting murders or mutilations
- S200--S299. Cruel sacrifices
- S300--S399. Abandoned or murdered children
- S400--S499. Cruel persecutions

T. SEX

- T0--T99. Love
- T100--T199. Marriage
- T200--T299. Married life
- T300--T399. Chastity and celibacy
- T400--T499. Illicit sexual relations
- T500--T599. Conception and birth
- T600--T699. Care of children

U. THE NATURE OF LIFE

- U0--U99. Life's inequalities
- U100--U299. Nature of life--miscellaneous

V. RELIGION

- V0--V99. Religious services
- V100--V199. Religious edifices and objects
- V200--V299. Sacred persons
- V300--V399. Religious beliefs
- V400--V449. Charity
- V450--V499. Religious orders
- V500--V599. Religious motifs--miscellaneous

W. TRAITS OF CHARACTER

W0--W99. Favorable traits of character

W100--W199. Unfavorable traits of character

W200--W299. Traits of character--miscellaneous

X. HUMOR

X0--X99. Humor of discomfiture

X100--X199. Humor of disability--physical

X200--X599. Humor of social classes

 X200--X299. Humor dealing with tradesmen

 X300--X499. Humor dealing with professions

 X500--X599. Humor concerning other social classes

X600--X699. Humor concerning races or nations

X700--X799. Humor concerning sex

X800--X899. Humor based on drunkenness

X900--X1899. Humor of lies and exaggeration

Z. MISCELLANEOUS GROUPS OF MOTIFS

Z0--Z99. Formulas

Z100--Z199. Symbolism

Z200--Z299. Heroes

Z300--Z399. Unique exceptions

Z400--Z499. Historical, genealogical or biographical motifs

Z500--Z599. Horror stories.

APPENDIX C

AUTHOR AND NATIONALITY OF AUTHORED INDEX

Author	Nationality
Baughman	English
Campbell	Scottish
Childs	Scottish
Cross, T.P	Early Irish
Jacobs, Joseph	Celtic
Loomis, R.S.	Celtic
MacCulloch	Celtic
O'Sullivan	Late Irish
Plummer	Irish
Sebillot	Briton
Wells	Middle English

APPENDIX D

RAW RESULTS

THE MAI:

Abandonment

- F1041.1.1 Death from a broken heart in Cross.
- P214.1 wife commits suicide on death of husband in Cross.
- R131.18 pious woman rescues
- S322 children abandoned in Cross
- T211.9.1 Wife dies of grief for death of husband in Cross
- T213 wife sickens as a result of separation from spouse in Cross.
- T249.2 husband and wife each unfaithful to other in Cross.

Swan

- A1021.2 Birds as scouts
- A132.6 and a132.6.1 Bird deity in Cross
- A132.6.2 Goddess in the form of a bird in Cross
- A165.2.2 Birds as messengers of the gods in Cross
- B147.2 Birds furnish omens in Cross
- B151.2.0.2 Birds show way to otherworld
- B172 Magic bird in Cross
- B172.2 Magic bird's song in Cross, Plummer, MacCulloch
- B172.2.1 Magic bird's song brings sleep in Cross
- B172.2.2 Magic bird's song dispels grief in Cross
- B172.7 Magic birds chained in couples in Cross
- B192.0.1 Magic birds die when owner is killed in Cross
- B251.2.9 Birds lament saint's departure in Cross
- B291.1 Bird as messenger in Child, MacCulloch, and Cross
- B292.5 Swan sings to console man in Cross and Plummer
- B33.1.4 Devastating birds with poisonous spells on their wings in Cross
- B469.2 Helpful swan in Cross and Plummer
- B50 Bird-men in Cross
- C841.5 Taboo: killing a swan in Cross
- D161.1 Transformation of man to swan in Cross and Wells
- D361 Transformation of swan to person in Cross
- D361.1 Swan Maiden transforms herself at will into a maiden. Resumes form by putting on her swan coat
- D531 Transformation by putting on a skin
- E732 soul in the form of a bird in O'Sullivan,
- F234.1.15.1 Fairy as swan in Cross
- H411.17 Swan as chastity test in Cross
- K1335 Seduction by stealing clothes of bathing swan maiden in Cross
- V331.9 Swans (transformed children) do not suffer in harsh weather after conversion to Christianity in Cross

Needle

D1181 Magic needle in Cross

Flower

F814 extraordinary flower in Cross.

F979.10 flower from otherworld miraculously appears to persons in Cross

Owl Lake

A810 In the beginning everything is covered with water in Cross, MacCulloch (this might explain all the water in her plays...).

A911 Bodies of water from tears in MacCulloch.

A920.1.11 Woman transformed into pool of water in Cross.

A920.1.8.1 Lake formed from violating taboo in Cross.

B232 Parliament of birds including the owl in Cross and Sebillot

B575 owl as the constant attendant of man in Cross and Campbell

D1242.1 Magic water in MacCulloch, Plummer, Cross, O'Sullivan.

D1338.1.1.1 Magic lake rejuvenates in Cross.

D1500.1.18 Magic healing water in MacCulloch and Cross.

D153.2 Transformation of man to owl in Cross and MacCulloch

D2161.4.14.2 Magic cure by bathing in consecrated lake in Cross.

D2161.4.14.2 Magic cure by bathing in consecrated water in Cross.

D283.1 Transformation of woman into pool of water in Cross.

D683.2 Transformation by witch in Cross.

D921.1 Lake produced by magic in Cross.

F234.2.1 fairy in the form of a hag

F420.5.2.1 Water spirits lure mortal into water.

F566.2 Land where women live separate from men under water in Cross.

F713 Extraordinary lake in Cross

F952.7 Eyes restored by bathing in lake in Cross.

F989.13 Animal dives into lake and disappears in Cross.

G233 Witch lives in fairy mound

M101.3.1 Death by drowning as punishment for broken oath in Cross.

M341.2.3 Prophecy: death by drowning in Cross.

Q428.1 Drowning as punishment for adultery in Cross.

Q552.19 miraculous drowning as punishment in Cross.

Mother

D1123 magic ship in Cross, MacCulloch, Sebillot, and Child

T640 illegitimate children in Cross

T646 illegitimate child taunted by playmates in MacCulloch and Cross

N655 waves break caul of abandoned child, rescued in Cross

S312 Illegitimate child exposed in Cross.

T646 Illegitimate child taunted by playmates in MacCulloch, Cross.

F130.2 Spain as otherworld in Cross

S351.1 Abandoned child cared for by grandmother in Cross and McCulloch

P526.2 to every son belongs his mother in case of suspected illegitimacy in Cross
 F552.1.1 hands with unusual number of fingers in Cross
 T584.2 Child removed from body of dead mother in Cross,
 T640.2 Mother of illegitimate child given as pledge for his crime in Cross.
 E481.0.1 Spain as the land of the dead in Cross

Music

A1461 acquisition of music in Cross
 D1275.1 Magic music in Cross, Plummer and O'Suilleabhain
 D1336.3 Magic music gives weakness in Cross
 D1359 Magic music causes mourning in Cross and Baughman
 D1359.3.1 magic music causes joy
 D1374.1 Magic music causes longing
 D1402.11.1 magic music kills person in Cross
 D1514.1 Magic music relieves pain
 K776.1 Capture with aid of sleep-bringing music in Cross
 R22.2 Abduction by means of sleep-giving music in Cross

Ashes

C927.2 falling to ashes as punishment for breaking taboo in Cross
 D1311.4.1.1 Ash used by druids for divinations in Cross
 F981.5 Ashes thrown into stream dissolve animals in Cross

Cow

A132.9 Bull god in Cross
 B16.1.5.2 Destructive cow possessed by demons in Cross
 F234.1.1 Fairy in the form of a cow
 Q552.3.0.3 Failure of crops and milk as punishment for adultery in Cross.

Graveyard

A1541.1.1 origin of grave-digging in Cross
 D2151.1.2.3 Grave on shore rises with the tide in Cross

Oar

F841.2.4 Golden oar in Cross.

Nine

A651.1.6.1 Nine ranks of heaven in Cross
 D911.1.1 magic virtue of nine waves in Cross.
 Z71.6.3 Nine wonders of Ireland in Cross

Fate

N101.2 Inexorable fate: death from violating tabus in Cross.
 N121 Fate decided before birth in Cross
 T71.1 Accidental death fate of woman scorned in love in Cross.

PORTIA COUGHLAN:

Twin

A116.2 Twin Goddesses in Cross (only Irish)
 A116 Twin Gods in Cross (lots of cultures)
 F523 Two persons with bodies joined in Cross
 F601.5 Extraordinary companions
 T587 Birth of twins prophesized
 T587.2 Twins born with ear of other in mouth
 H412.1 Unchaste woman bears twins in Cross, MacCulloch
 A164.1 brother-sister marriage of the gods in Cross, MacCulloch
 A1002.2 fifteen signs before the day of judgment in Cross
 Z71.16.11.3 fifteen signs before doomsday in Cross
 M371.0.2 male of f-m twin pairing thrown into river to avoid the evils of a twin birth in Tessman

Incest

H582.2.1 Enigmatic statement betrays incest in Cross
 N365.3 unwitting brother-sister incest in Cross, MacCulloch
 T415 brother-sister incest in MacCulloch, Cross

Song

V65.4.1 Funeral song sung over dead in Cross
 E402.1.1.4 Ghost sings in Baughman
 E371.3 Poet sings after his death in Cross
 E546 The dead sing in Cross
 F262.1 Fairies sing in Cross, Baughman, Sebillot
 D1962.4.2 song (cro'na'n) used to lull children to sleep in Cross
 Ghost/death
 C319.2 taboo seeing dead man not killed by weapons
 E234.3 return from dead to avenge death in Cross, Baughman
 E300 friendly return from the dead in Cross
 E310 Dead lover's friendly return in Cross
 E326 Dead brother's friendly return in OSullivan
 E574 Ghosts moan as a death omen
 E342 dead return to fulfill bargain in Cross
 E379.1 return from dead to rescue from drowning in Cross
 E545 the dead speak in Cross
 E546 the dead sing in Cross (repeat from song motif above)
 F1041.1.1.4 Hearts break when lovers are old beloved is dead in Cross
 E425.2 revenant as man in O'Sullivan
 E425.3 revenant as child in Baughman and O'Sullivan
 P253.9 woman dies of sorrow for death of brother in Cross
 F401.6 spirit in human form in Cross,

F402.1.10 spirit pursues person in Cross
 M301.6.1 Banshees as portents of misfortune in Cross.
 E752 lost souls in Cross
 T249.1 adulterous wife commits suicide in Cross
 E334.4 ghost of suicide seen at death spot or nearby in Baughman
 E411.1.1 suicide cannot rest in grave in Baughman
 E334 non-malevolent ghost haunts scene of former misfortune, tragedy in
 E266.1 ghost of suicide drags people into river in Baughman
 E437.2 ghost laid in body of water in Baughman
 F1041.1.2 death from grief for death of lover or relative in Cross
 F402.1.11 spirits cause death in Cross

Raphael

V221.0.2.1 crippled saint miraculously receives horse and chariot in Cross
 A128.3.1 god with one foot in Cross
 F517.1.1.1 person with one foot in Cross
 T232 woman deserts husband for unworthy lover
 R168 angels as rescuer
 K1550.1 husband discovers wife's adultery in Cross.

Belmont River

F930.2 waters rise to drown wrongdoer in Cross
 C923 death from drowning for breaking taboo in Cross
 M101.3.1 death by elements (exposure, drowning, etc) as punishment death
 caused for broken oath in Cross
 F141 river as barrier to otherworld in Cross
 F93 water as entrance to the underworld in Cross
 F321.1.4.1 Changeling thrown into water and thus banished in Baughman,
 MacDougal, and Carter.
 M341.2.3 prophecy: death by drowning in Cross
 Q428.1 drowning as punishment for adultery in Cross
 M451.2 curse death by drowning in O'Sullivan
 F932.8.4 Treacherous river drowns victims in Cross
 Q552.19.5 miraculous drowning as punishment for haughtiness in Cross
 A425.1 river goddess in Cross
 D915 magic river
 D915.1 river produced by magic in Cross, Sebillot
 F141.1.1 perilous river as barrier to otherworld
 M476 curse on river in Cross
 A671.2.2.4 rivers of black water in hell in Cross
 A420 god of water in Cross, MacCulloch
 S142 Person thrown into water and abandoned in MacCulloch, Cross
 (types 450, 506, 612, 667, 707)
 G229.4.1 witch can be killed only by certain lance in Cross
 G261 witch steals children in Cross
 G275 witch defeated in Cross
 G275.1.1 witch carried off by devil's crew in Cross

BY THE BOG OF CATS:

Fate

N101.2 inexorable fate death from violating taboos in Cross
 N121 fate decried before birth in Cross
 C930 loss of fortune for breaking taboo in Cross
 D1812.5 future learned through omens in Cross, O'Sullivan
 D1813 magic knowledge of events in distant place in Plummer, Cross
 C987 curse as punishment for breaking taboo in Cross
 D2065.7 insanity from curse in Cross
 M411.1 curse by parent in Cross
 M411.5 old woman's curse in Cross
 M412.1 curse given at birth of child in Cross
 M415 irrevocable curse in Cross
 D1812.0.1 foreknowledge of hour of death in Cross, Baughman, Sebillot.
 M341 death prophesied
 M161 vow never to flee in fear of death in Cross

Swan

C841.5 taboo killing a swan in Cross
 B469.2 helpful swan in Cross, Plummer
 B147.2 birds furnish omens in Cross
 B524.4 bird prevents mother from killing babe in Cross
 D2171.3.2 magic adhesion to swan
 B143.0.1 prophetic swan in MacCulloch
 E423.3.2 revenant as swan in Baughman
 B535 animal nourishes abandoned child in Cross, Wells, Sebillot

Catwoman

B147.1.2.2 cat as beast of ill omen in Cross
 D1814.1 advice from fortune teller in Cross, Wells
 B29.4 woman-cat in Cross
 D142.0.1 transformation of woman to cat in Cross
 G211.1.7 witch in the form of a cat in Cross, Baughman
 B225.3 cat as servant of witch in Baughman
 B29.4 man-cat in Cross
 P511.2.2.1 Person with cat's ears in Cross
 P514.3 person with cat's snout in Cross
 G262.1 witch sucks blood in Baughman
 D1825.5 magic power to see death circumstances of absent person in Baughman

Ghost

E413 murdered person cannot rest in grave in Baughman
 E411.10 persons who die violent deaths cannot rest in grave in Baughman
 E334.4 ghost of suicide seen at death spot or nearby in Baughman
 E334 non-malevolent ghost haunts scene of former misfortune, tragedy in Baughman
 S142 Person thrown into water and abandoned in MacCulloch, Cross (types 450, 506, 612, 667, 707)
 Q211.0.2 enormity of kin murder in Cross
 E723.6 appearance of his wraith as announcement of person's death in Baughman
 K2212 treacherous sister in Cross

Destruction

S112.0.2 House burned with all inside in Cross
 A1000 world catastrophe in Cross
 Q552.13.2 destruction of property by fire from heaven as punishment in Cross
 Q585.2 destruction of property got through immoderate request in Cross
 Q552.18 punishment: disappearance of ill-gotten gains in Cross
 C934.3 Elves set country afire because of broken taboo in Cross
 E765.4.3.1 Mother will die on same day as daughter in Cross

ON RAFTERY'S HILL:

The Hare/Rabbit

E423.2.2 tells the tale of a hare as revenant in O'Sullivan
 E612.3 Reincarnation as a hare
 D117.2 focuses on the transformation of a man into a hare in Cross.
 F234.1.12 fairy in the form of a hare in Cross
 F401.3.6 demon in the form of a hare in Cross
 G211.2.7 witch in the form of a hare in Cross and in Baughman
 D655.2 witch transforms herself into a hare to suckle cows

The Cattle/Livestock

F343.9 Fairy gives man cattle in Cross
 F365.5- Fairies steal cattle
 Q595.2- Cattle killed, crops burned as punishment for abduction
 Numerous- cows are linked with Saints, nuns and the apostles
 F234.1.1 Fairy in the form of cow in MacDougall and Cross
 E611.2.1.0.1 – Divinity reincarnated as cow MacCulloch and Cross
 F234.1.11 Fairy in the form of a sheep in Cross
 C841- killing animals in a cure for children
 Q285.3- Cruel mutilation punished in Cross
 F567- Man lives like beast (type 502) in Cross

Incest

D1741.6- monstrous births from brother sister incest in Cross

T411- father-daughter incest in Cross, MacCulloch
 N365.3 brother-sister incest in Cross, MacCulloch (W) & (C)
 S312.1 child of incest exposed in Cross
 T410- Incest in Cross, MacCulloch
 R156- Brother saves sister from defilement in Cross
 T92.6 mother and daughter as rivals in love in Cross
 T69.3 man gives daughter in return for his release in cross
 T491 man has son not his wife's in Cross

Fairies and Fairyforts

F211.0.1- Prehistoric burial mounds as dwellings of fairies in Cross
 F222.1- Fairies underground palace
 F241.2 fairies' cows in Cross
 F271.2.2 fairies build causeway (fairyroad)
 F271.5 fairies clear land
 F360 malevolent or destructive fairies because offended (c46)
 F316 Fairy lays curse on family
 F361.3 Fairies take revenge on person who crosses them Tear out eyes
 F361.4 Fairies take revenge on trespassers on ground they claim as theirs
 in Cross, MacDougall, and Baughman
 F361.9 Fairies take revenge for being dishonored in Cross
 F361.12 Fairies take revenge on mortals who destroy their homes in
 Cross
 F362 fairies cause disease in Cross
 F362.2 fairies cause insanity in Cross
 F366.4 fairies control prosperity in Cross
 F369.2 Fairies defile water in Cross
 F369.5 Fairies destroy crops in Cross
 C987- Curse as punishment for breaking tabu in Cross
 M422 curse transferred to another person in Plummer, Cross and
 O'sullivan

Cruelty

S11 types 451, 516, 617, 706, 725, 870) Cruel father in Cross
 Q552.3.1.1 Sterility of the land as punishment for parricide in Cross

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