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## ‘Filial ingratitude’: Marina Carr’s Bond with Shakespeare

Willy Maley and Stanley van der Ziel

Now to Marina bend your mind,  
Whom our fast-growing scene must find.  
*(Pericles, IV.0.5-6)*

In her pioneering work *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (1983), Lisa Jardine pushed beyond the character studies of previous scholarship and what she called ‘an all too familiar sameness in their reverence for the realism of Shakespeare’s plays’, arguing that earlier feminists had failed to ‘break with the conventions of orthodox Shakespeare criticism, except in their single-minded preoccupation with the female characters in the plays, and their hostility to the chauvinistic attitudes the plays incorporate.’<sup>1</sup> Jardine’s dissatisfaction with realism, reverence, and an exclusive focus on the representation of women finds an echo in the drama of Marina Carr, an Irish playwright born in the quatercentenary of Shakespeare’s birth in 1964, whose response to Shakespeare could, from a patriarchal perspective, be characterized as ‘filial ingratitude’ (*King Lear*, III.iv.14). She never sets out to please through flattery. Like Cordelia, Carr loves Shakespeare according to her bond, no more (*King Lear*, I.i.93). Yet she channels the tragic spirit of Shakespeare; she homes in on, and tunes into, the wildness at the heart of his plays that a more conservative critical culture can sometimes overlook or downplay.

Carr's relationship with Shakespeare has been well documented, as the critics cited in this essay attest. Shakespeare looms large in her list of formative influences and remains a persistent presence in her work. But his is a feral, fleeting, fugitive and furtive presence, more an anxiety than an influence, almost an absence. At times, Shakespeare is a bad influence, a foreboding figure who exemplifies a patriarchy – at once domestic and foreign – against which she must struggle. In what follows, we propose to trace some hints and glints of the English bard in this Irish writer's work while reviewing the critical responses that her versions and subversions have elicited. Discussing her earliest encounter with Shakespeare, and her 'favourite lines', from *The Merchant of Venice*, Carr comments that 'other lines have been learnt and forgotten over the years while these ones have stayed':<sup>2</sup>

In Belmont is a lady richly left  
And she is fair, and fairer than that word [...]  
Her name is Portia, nothing undervalued  
To Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia;  
Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth  
For the four winds blow in from every coast  
Renowned suitors [...]

(I.i.161-9)

Elsewhere she has commented on how encountering the name Belmont in this speech spoke to her because it uses the name of the tiny village in County Offaly near which she grew up, and on how 'In a sense *Portia Coughlan* is based on that speech because I've always loved it. She lives by the River Belmont. She has suitors. She has everything a woman could desire.'<sup>3</sup>

Like her eponymous creation in *Portia Coughlan* (1996), Carr likes to delve beneath surfaces. Her family dramas enact intense engagements with memory and play with the pulling power of the past. Or as that titular heroine puts it:

I read subtext, Mother, words dropped be accident, phrases covered over,  
sentences unfinished, and I know the topography of your mind as well as I  
know every inch and ditch and drain of Belmont Farm [...]<sup>4</sup>

This knowledge of the local – and the national – is key to Carr’s conception of Shakespeare. Toponyms and titles, place names and proper names, preoccupy her. Carr’s slant on storytelling and on Shakespeare recalls the distinction the Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh drew between the ‘provincial’, which ‘has no mind of his own’ and merely apes the manners of the metropolis, and the ‘parochial’ mentality of those who are certain of the importance of ‘fundamental’ experiences that can be found in even the remotest localities; because ‘To know fully even one field or one lane is a lifetime’s experience. In the world of poetic experience it is depth that counts, not width. A gap in a hedge, a smooth rock surfacing a narrow lane, a view of a woody meadow, the stream at the junction of four small fields – these are as much as a man can fully experience.’<sup>5</sup> In this sense Carr is a parochial writer, and so too is Shakespeare. Her localism is a dynamic that draws from deep wells, and from a subterranean subtext.

The relationship between Shakespeare and women writers is complex, a complexity compounded when the writer is Irish.<sup>6</sup> Contemporary Irish perspectives on Shakespeare can be direct, often confrontational, or sidelong and shifty. Male Irish writers, playwrights in particular, have, at least since Shaw, responded with a mix of resentment, rivalry and bold defiance.<sup>7</sup> In terms of literary legacies, father-son relationships are more often explored than father-daughter or mother-daughter relations, not to mention husband-wife or brother-sister ones; yet these are all domestic dynastic dynamics explored in Carr’s drama. Thomas Kilroy’s *Tea and Sex and Shakespeare* (first staged 1976, published 1998) is one approach to the anxiety of influence, in which the Bard features as a blocking character in the Shavian tradition. This play is set in the present, but Kilroy had previously shown an interest in historical drama depicting the early modern period in *The O’Neill* (written 1966, first staged 1969, published 1995).<sup>8</sup> Likewise Frank McGuinness’s *Mutabilitie* (1997), although a

contemporary take on Shakespeare, shares with Kilroy's *The O'Neill* and with Brian Friel's *Making History* (1989) a desire to connect the present with the early modern past, one Elizabethan period with another. In all these plays, history is written as allegory.<sup>9</sup> Yet still in each case, even when gender relations are complicated and masculinity and sexuality interrogated, the emphasis is on 'his-story'. Anne Fogarty dubs this 'the romance of history'.<sup>10</sup>

Female authors occupy a different position in relation to history and the canon, and their representations of gender and nation are harder to map on to the dominant – colonial – culture. For the male writers we have just mentioned, Shakespeare is in a very concrete sense 'our contemporary', translated into the present; Carr, on the other hand, plunges exactly into the strangeness of Shakespeare's work rather than domesticating his drama in the act of rendering him her contemporary. There is, in this assertion of literary independence, something of Shakespeare's rebellious daughters, from *The Merchant of Venice* to *Pericles*. In her study of Irish women writers and tradition, Ann Owens Weekes points to the way Maria Edgeworth's Jessica Rackrent maintains 'her economic independence' by 'acting contrary' to her namesake in *The Merchant of Venice*:

Shakespeare's control of his discourse allowed him to depict approvingly a young woman's robbing of her revengeful but protective father and abandonment of family, race, and creed for romantic love. Traditional interpretation has followed Shakespeare's lead, implying by its silence the wisdom of Jessica's choice and commenting only on the rough fate of Shylock. Edgeworth's reversal, her female text, in which Jessica is incarcerated for her refusal to surrender her ducats, suggests the hideous alternative to the fantasized happiness. Invoking Shakespeare in the first place, Edgeworth recalls for us the romantic myth; revising him in a shocking manner, she implies the dangerous consequences of a woman's accepting the myth.<sup>11</sup>

Carr shares Edgeworth's inclination to revisit and revise Shakespeare rather than merely revere or resent him. Her indebtedness to Shakespeare is never singular or ego-driven; her responses are always nuanced and nimble. She has acknowledged in interviews that it 'goes without saying' that Shakespeare is her greatest influence.<sup>12</sup> But this is not to say that he is a straightforward, unproblematic influence; rather, he is at times a baleful one, an intrusive author to be adapted, confronted or resisted, and not merely admired.

Just as Frank McGuinness's *Mutabilite* can be read as counter-history, so too can Carr's drama be considered in those terms, as she also 'restages, deconstructs, and makes over Shakespeare's texts, transforming them into resonant vehicles for reflection on the seemingly intractable political divides in Irish society'.<sup>13</sup> Too few critics have commented on the extent to which McGuinness, like Carr, is concerned with gender as much as, or more than, nation.<sup>14</sup> And if the male writer responds to Shakespeare as a challenge or threat, then female writers are well advised to be even more wary of his example. Carr comes closer to an earlier female playwright like Teresa Deevy, who approached Shakespeare in *A Disciple* (1931) in the same sideways fashion favoured by Carr.<sup>15</sup> *A Disciple*'s Ellie Irwin is a spirited young woman inspired by a convent production of *Coriolanus* in which a female plays the part of the male protagonist, in keeping with the setting. But as critics like Caoilfhionn Ní Bheacháin and Cathy Leeney have observed, Deevy's play actually demonstrates that there is a limit to how far Shakespeare can be useful as a model for female rebellion. Ellie Irwin may enjoy the thrill that acting on the stage affords, and she may even tap into Coriolanus' anger with the malaise of the early Roman republic, in which positive action is subservient to politic talk, in giving shape to her own feelings of frustration with life in an independent Irish state in which the revolutionary promise for change has given way to stagnation and conservatism, as women, in particular, were firmly marginalized from public and intellectual life after 1922. Yet in identifying with Shakespeare's virile Roman warrior, she is affirming precisely those restrictive, patriarchal values against which she struggles.<sup>16</sup> In Deevy, then, Shakespeare's plays are a dead end, an avenue that may suggest a limited degree of performative liberation for women, but which actually just affirm the dysfunctional male

values of the world of *Coriolanus*. Carr shares Deevy's preoccupation with the aspirational and empowering aspects of theatre, as well as the cul-de-sacs and cornerings, dead-ends and hauntings of her female protagonists. As Mark Cuddy observes, 'Carr's women are both cognizant of their cultural captivity and determined to leave a mark',<sup>17</sup> while for Brecken Rose Hancock, Carr is struggling against patriarchal authority and tradition and one of the ghosts she has to contend with is Shakespeare.<sup>18</sup> Carr claims engagement as an artist rather than academic expertise. Speaking of her influences, she protests that she lacks 'sufficient knowledge especially where Shakespeare is concerned.'<sup>19</sup> Yet these artistic engagements of a canny fellow theatrical practitioner have a habit of identifying unsettling aspects of the plays which most academic criticism either misses or shies away from. Many of these have to do, in one way or another, with issues arising around gender.

Given the centrality of this concern with gender in her work, the two other plays – besides *The Merchant of Venice* – with which Carr has engaged most comprehensively are perhaps not exactly surprising. In her introduction to *Transforming Shakespeare: Contemporary Women's Re-Visions in Literature and Performance* (1999), Marianne Novy observes that *King Lear* and *The Tempest* have attracted by far the most attention from contemporary female authors and playwrights rewriting Shakespeare, partly because of the centrality in those two very different plays of the father-daughter relationship which 'make[s] it possible to criticize patriarchal heritage as well as colonial heritage'.<sup>20</sup> These are precisely the two plays that have drawn the most overt dramatic responses from Carr<sup>21</sup> – although her takes on this popular feminist source material have been more conflicted and ambivalent than that of many a contemporary. In *The Cordelia Dream* (2008), for example, Carr's bleak and oblique approach to *King Lear*, a daughter dreams of independence from a father who will not relinquish authority. An Irish angle on Shakespeare's great tragedy seems fitting when we recall that in one version of the play, the anonymous *True Chronicle History of King Leir* (published in 1605 and thus predating Shakespeare's tragedy), 'Cordella' was to wed Hibernia. In the 1605 play, Lear's 'darker purpose' (*King Lear*, I.i.35) is to lure his

youngest daughter into a loveless marriage across the Irish Sea, as a counsellor confides to her sisters:

For he supposeth that *Cordella* will  
(Striuing to go beyond you in her loue)  
Promise to do what euer he desires:  
Then will he straight enioyne her for his sake,  
The Hibernian King in marriage for to take.<sup>22</sup>

The older sisters conspire through flattery to force this Irish match upon their younger sibling, and Goneril tells Regan:

I smile to think, in what a wofull plight  
*Cordella* will be, when we answere thus:  
For she will rather dye, then giue consent  
To ioyne in marriage with the Irish King:  
So will our father think, she loueth him not,  
Because she will not graunt to his desire,  
Which we will aggrauate in such bitter termes,  
That he will soone conuert his loue to hate:  
For he, you know, is alwayes in extremes.<sup>23</sup>

If Lear – or ‘Leir’ in this early incarnation – is ‘alwayes in extremes’, then Carr’s modern Cordelia matches her father’s obstinacy, even going so far as to hang herself (unlike her counterpart in Shakespeare’s play who, as Carr’s characters are at pains to remind us, was hanged by her enemies, a passive figure of pathos) and then argue with her father about correct usage – ‘hanged’ or ‘hung’ – from beyond the grave.<sup>24</sup> Like her other tangential takes on Shakespeare – *Portia Coughlan* and *Ariel* (2002) – *The Cordelia Dream* offers no neat



solutions to intractable problems, just a profound meditation on influence and independence that doubles as an allegory of art and patriarchy. The rest of this essay shall try to establish how Carr's plays develop these recurring concerns, and how precisely Shakespeare features in this project.



Sometimes the tenuousness of the connection between Carr's characters and their Shakespearean sources leaves critics pondering the link, halfway between a mood and a mode, all shapes and shadows. Carr's use of sources is arch and ironic, always dramatic, never dogmatic. She has no interest in contextualizing or historicizing Shakespeare, or in making sense of him by shifting his plots to a contemporary scene. Rather, she draws out from her source-text the interplay of elements of family and sexuality, patriarchy and performance, that are often overlooked in conventional adaptations or analyses. Her focus is on female figures who are silent, sidelined or stifled. As Margaret Maxwell remarks of Portia Coughlan: 'Her demeanour recalls her Renaissance namesake's ennui, in that her "body is a weary of this great world" [*The Merchant of Venice*, I.ii.1-2].'<sup>25</sup> This ennui equally applies to other of Carr's female protagonists, bowed down by patriarchy and misogyny – not least to those in her two other Shakespeare-inspired plays, *Ariel's* Frances Fermoy and the unnamed female composer in *The Cordelia Dream*.

Brian Singleton's perceptive discussion of *The Cordelia Dream*, Carr's commission from the Royal Shakespeare Company, homes in on her approach to issues of gender and genre, an approach that not only steers clear of the cult of Cordelia as voiceless victim in Shakespeare criticism, but brings to the table the treatment of patriarchy already developed in her Midlands plays, so that 'her focus on the performance of patriarchy inter-generationally within the family remained constant.'<sup>26</sup> Singleton sees this RSC commission as inviting a change of scene but not style: 'Responding to the brief of writing a contemporary piece related to or inspired by the Shakespeare canon, Carr chose the relationship between Lear and his youngest daughter Cordelia as her inspiration, although her "daughter" generically named Woman encapsulated also aspects of Lear's other

daughters Goneril and Regan.<sup>27</sup> Singleton's insightful analysis overlooks the fact that this brief was one with which Carr was already engaged in earlier plays such as *Portia Coughlan*, *By the Bog of Cats* (1998) and *Ariel*, all of which explore family history and gender dynamics, which might explain the RSC commission.

Critics have acknowledged the multiplicity of influences and interests in Carr's work. *Ariel* is a case in point. Zoraide Rodrigues Carrasco de Mesquita comments on how Carr's version of Ariel – in which the title character is not an airy servant but an actual flesh-and-blood daughter, perhaps as much an inheritor of *The Tempest's* Miranda as of Ariel – emphasizes the aspect of youth, and reveals Carr's capacity for getting to the heart of generational and gender politics in Shakespeare. De Mesquita's reading stresses how Fermoy Fitzgerald's capacity to murder his daughter to further the cause of his political career is a sign that he is 'giving up feelings and reason and is intensifying his obsession for power'.<sup>28</sup> Conversely, Singleton does not remark on the Shakespearean aspects in *Ariel*, preferring to see it as 'an invention of pure fiction' set in post-economic-boom contemporary Ireland.<sup>29</sup> And if the daughter is called Ariel, then this more than hints that her father must be read as some version of a Prospero figure. Shakespeare's Prospero has sometimes been viewed in biographical terms by critics of Shakespeare's late work as a projection of the playwright in maturity, the word-magician at the height of his powers; but rather than that later critical-biographical projection, Fermoy is more akin to the slavemaster-torturer of the original play. The eloquent, manipulative, bookish, displaced patriarch, out of sorts with his environment and willing to trample on others to maintain power is beautifully captured by Carr.

In *The Cordelia Dream*, Carr's focus on Cordelia is a way of bringing out the larger questions of patriarchy and gender conflict. Asked why, in her 'transformation' of *King Lear*, she had decided to focus on the youngest daughter, and not on her two sisters, Carr replied, 'I think the heartbeat of *King Lear* is that relationship'.<sup>30</sup> In an earlier interview, Carr reflected on 'the ghost of Shakespeare' in a way that suggested her role as literary daughter was to challenge the father figure and turn influence into invention, even subversion:

I decided to write a play which captured that unique moment, which is in essence the blood bond between a father and a daughter. [...] The father demands a test of love and devotion from his daughter, he asks her to be silent [...] the sacrifice that the father demands from his daughter and which eventually kills her.<sup>31</sup>

In *The Cordelia Dream*, a two-hander depicting a meeting between a father and daughter called simply Man and Woman (for once, it seems, resisting the usual Carr obsession with allusive naming) who are both composers, Man asks Woman, 'So what was the dream?' and her answer leads to an exchange on genius and gender.<sup>32</sup> Carr puts her finger on the patriarchal pulse of Shakespeare's play when she has Woman reply to Man's condescending 'You romanticize yourself' in a way that opens out the issue of gender well beyond Cordelia:

Do I? Women's hatred, at least mine, goes inward. It's directed at myself. Never underestimate how badly women feel about themselves. And how could we feel otherwise, when you look around you? It's not a good time to be a woman right now. It hasn't been a good time to be a woman since the Bronze Age.<sup>33</sup>

Woman's dream is bound up with art and invocation, as her career as composer is overshadowed by Man's insistence on the primacy of male genius and its patrilineal anxieties with the need to 'cut [my father] out of me. [...] drain every last drop of his blood from mine.'<sup>34</sup> Woman's idea of art is, one suspects, like Portia Coughlan's reading of subtext, also Carr's conception. When her father calls her 'charlatan' and plagiarist, she retorts:

That's what Art is. Plagiarism and cunning disguise, a snapping up of unconsidered trifles. [...] You think it's loose living, bad behaviour and the

jottings of your hungover soul. It isn't. Artists are the most disciplined people on the planet. And I hope some day to call myself one.<sup>35</sup>

Here, Carr's Cordelia quotes a character from *The Winter's Tale* justifying the act of borrowing:

My father named me Autolycus; who  
being as I am, littered under Mercury, was likewise a  
snapper-up of unconsidered trifles.

(IV.iii.24-6)

Man merely calls her a 'vicious ingrate' – echoing Lear's 'filial ingratitude' – and makes all sorts of wild accusations:

You have come into my lair and savaged me again. You have come sauntering in with *Lear* on your lips and the pretence of reconciliation, when really you have come like the cuckoo to foul my nest, to clock and make sure I have not risen above the place you have allotted me.<sup>36</sup>

Shakespeare's plays are full of bird imagery, metaphors and puns, and there may be a multitude of possible Shakespearean echoes and allusions at work here. In its obsession with the despoiling of familial 'nests', the line perhaps most neatly echoes Thomas Percy, Earl of Worcester's audacious criticism of Henry IV after the decisive battle of Shrewsbury. As Worcester reminds Henry, their two houses had once been closely tied, until the king betrayed his oath of friendship and

used us so

As that ungentle gull the cuckoo's bird

Useth the sparrow – did oppress our nest,  
Grew by our feeding to so great a bulk  
That even our love durst not come near your sight  
For fear of swallowing.

(1 *Henry IV*, V.i.59-64)

But the cuckoo reference in Man's accusation of his daughter in *The Cordelia Dream* is also supported by the play's obsession with *Lear*. With that intertext firmly established before the play even begins through the title, readers and audiences cannot but hear the Fool's 'The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long, / That it had its head bit off by its young' (I.iv.206-7) – a comment that refers to the relationship of fathers and daughters, a relationship that is seen on this occasion and on others from the hysterical vantage point of the old man as a violent and exploitative one in which daughters unjustly usurp the position of their fathers – or even Cordelia's comment about her father 'Crowned with [...] cuckoo-flowers' (IV.iv.3-4). Of course, it is the space allotted to Woman rather than to Man that is at issue in *The Cordelia Dream*. This is shown when Woman asks Man to check his diary for details of her death and he says 'Well, there's nothing', before going on to read an entry dwelling on his obsession with *King Lear* that begun during his boyhood, concluding with 'That's all that's there for the seventeenth.'<sup>37</sup> Woman is silenced by this homage. 'That's all that's there': a memory of a performance, a single role, a solitary figure onstage, a sense of entitlement, of performative privilege. Here the act of patriarchy entails the silencing of the female voice, and the depiction of her death solely through her father's reaction, or non-reaction.

For Rhona Trench, the father-daughter relationship crucially informs – and inflames – Carr's appropriations of Shakespearean scenes and themes.<sup>38</sup> Siobhán O'Gorman, too, comments insightfully on Carr's revising and revisiting of Shakespearean material – including the 2003 children's play, *Meat and Salt* – and remarks on her refusal to treat her source as a sacred text. Instead, Carr's work is committed to digging out its radical elements and showing the sometimes buried potential for undercutting patriarchy. As O'Gorman

observes with reference to Carr's tendency to 'plunder and re-imagine' canonical works by a range of male authors, and those by Shakespeare in particular:

Carr's *King Lear*-inspired works [...] succeed in interrogating the male-biased nature of Western artistic representation, showcasing the feminist efficacy of literary appropriation. Carr achieves this by deliberately revealing within these works the inevitable links and borrowings between diverse texts, as well as by rereading (or wilfully misreading) Shakespeare's Cordelia as confrontational rather than passive.<sup>39</sup>

Here again we see Carr's double need for being 'confrontational' with Shakespeare as a woman and as an Irish writer. In the end, she may rewrite Shakespeare in a partial or fragmented way not only because she is a woman reclaiming female characters, but also because she is an *Irish* woman addressing a different kind of power balance. Carr's engagement with Shakespeare, like Lisa Jardine's, goes beyond character into voice and space and the world of women struggling with a male-dominated culture in the broadest sense.

Carr certainly brings something new to the table, but that freshness is more than the envious admiration of Irish male predecessors like Joyce and Shaw. In Carr's 'misreading', gender and nation are intertwined in complex ways, and complicated further by a rich mix of classical and contemporary allusion. Critics like Mary Noonan have located Carr's response to Shakespeare between classical and contemporary poles, and emphasized the fact that while she may 'take her lead' from Shakespeare and the Greeks, her plays are 'doing something new: they represent the tragedy of the feminine condition in contemporary culture. What they give us are women expressing, through words, their rage, their longings, their unresolved grief.'<sup>40</sup> What is clear from a response such as this is that Carr's encounter with Shakespeare is part of the ghostly imprint of the theatrical tradition in which she works, one that is full of hints and hauntings, innuendos and asides.<sup>41</sup> Michael Ragussis places

Carr's treatment of Shakespeare within a longer tradition when he describes *Portia Coughlan* as 'a kind of revisionary sequel or afterpiece to *The Merchant of Venice*'.<sup>42</sup> And it is the implied *looseness* of Carr's connection with her Shakespeare source texts that is crucial in understanding the nature of the filial 'bond' that exists between her work and that of Shakespeare.

This sense is well articulated by Melissa Sihra in a reflection on her experience of acting as advisor on a 2001 production of *Portia Coughlan* directed by Timothy Douglas. Sihra comments on the 'multiple layers of possibility' – real, fantastic or both – on which Carr's *mises en scène* operate, and is perceptive in acknowledging that rooting the play in historical or biographical specificity – such as the knowledge that Belmont is a real place in County Offaly, and that Carr grew up somewhere near it – can 'constrict' one's understanding of the work rather than deepen it:

Carr's landscape hovers between memory and imagination; between literary allusion and topographic realism. In one of our first discussions, Douglas asked about the links with *The Merchant of Venice* – was this a sub-plot? My response suggested that while the allusion is there, it is not a narrative or structural template. While *Portia Coughlan* was 'inspired' by the suitor's speech, crucial from a directorial standpoint is that this play [...] [is] 'loosely' based on *Merchant* [...]<sup>43</sup>

But loosely based, like wilfully misread, downplays Carr's art. On the other hand, in a short critical essay entitled 'Fatal Commission' which reviews the plays in negative terms, Marianne McDonald, despite her lack of enthusiasm for Carr's project, nevertheless captures the richness of her classical and Shakespearean allusions when she observes how:

Many other plays and works echo in *Ariel*, from the Old Testament to Martin McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* or *A Skull in Connemara*. [...] We

find traces of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (with the father's ghost and Elaine's 'Alas, poor Ariel' scene in which she speaks to Ariel's skull), besides other Shakespearean allusions, not the least of which is the name Ariel to denote a figure of light in a dark landscape [...]'<sup>44</sup>

Despite finding all these allusions and recognizing the artistry with which they are applied, McDonald finally finds *Ariel* too bleak and wonders whether as a commissioned piece it drew a darker strain of drama from Carr than her earlier plays. The fact is, though, that the bleakness in Carr was there from the beginning, as were the traces of Shakespearean tragedy. In *By the Bog of Cats*, for example, when the ghost of Hester Swane's murdered brother tells her that he has not come across their mother in the afterlife because 'Death's a big country [...] She could be anywhere in it', this both echoes Hamlet's description of death as 'The undiscovered country' and gives the lie to the Danish prince's certain belief in his most famous soliloquy that no traveller can return from it (III.i.78-9) – as, of course, had Shakespeare's play itself, set in motion as it is by the ghostly encounter in Act 1.<sup>45</sup> And in *Ariel* there is an equally obvious echo of *Hamlet* when Hannifan tells Fermoy, 'There's somethin rotten in you, Fitzgerald.'<sup>46</sup> Such elusive asides and intimations can all too easily blind us to the larger patterns Carr discerns in the Shakespearean canon, the threads – not loose but tightly woven – that find their way into the texture of her work.

Kelly Marsh points out that Carr's choice of source material is bound up with a particular predilection for tragedy.<sup>47</sup> *The Cordelia Dream*, according to Marsh, 'emphasizes the continuity between life and death by offering us a heroine who, although she remains one of only two characters throughout the entire play, has actually died between the play's two acts', and whose suicide, moreover, is bound up with her death as an artist.<sup>48</sup> Nor is this the only occasion in Carr's dramatic oeuvre where the heroine dies mid play. In *Portia Coughlan*, the title character's body is pulled out of the river at the start of Act 2 (her watery end among the waterlilies wearing nothing but a 'slip' recalling that of the passive Ophelia),<sup>49</sup> only for her to reappear in Act 3, in a feat of dramatic resurrection that would baffle even *The*



*Winter's Tale's* Hermione. Yet this focus on the tragic arguably overlooks the other Shakespeare plays that have attracted Carr, including *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Tempest*. Carr's *Ariel* deals with the layering of power and division of loyalties – familial, political – in ways that speak to recent colonial readings of *The Tempest*, and in particular interpretations that place it within an Irish context.<sup>50</sup> The depiction of the daughter in Carr's play as a figure who combines the role of one character from Prospero's entourage in *The Tempest* (that of Miranda, the daughter) with the name of another (the ethereal slave Ariel) makes it a multilayered and complex addition to the ever-growing canon of postcolonial texts that draw on the dormant colonial paradigm at work in that late Shakespeare play – one that takes heed of unsettling questions about gender as well as race or nationality arising from the original.<sup>51</sup>

Carr's angled approach to Shakespeare – infuriatingly obtuse for the straightforward source-hunter – offers an intriguing way of thinking about dialogues between authors from different periods. Carr's approach to temporality – through memory, dreams, ghostly hauntings and counter-history – also brings her into dialogue with Shakespeare, albeit in ways that are phantom and fleeting. She has commented in an interview on how: 'In memory time is different, in sleep and dreams time is different, the way you look back on childhood and the summers were longer. And the older you get it seems like time is colliding and it's all coming to a close. [...] I'm trying to figure out another kind of time.'<sup>52</sup> That 'other kind of time' is 'out of joint' (*Hamlet*, I.v.186), and thus eminently Shakespearean. We are speaking, after all, of a dramatist who, in *Cymbeline*, a bizarre cross-period play, has Sicilius, the ghostly father of a character called Posthumous, appeal to Jupiter on behalf of 'poor ghosts' (V.iv.60). This is Carr's world too. So many of her major plays – from *The Mai* (1994) and *Portia Coughlan* in the 1990s, to more recent plays like *The Cordelia Dream* – feature characters who are dead but still act on the stage alongside the cast of living characters that their inclusion is the norm of Carr's dramaturgy rather than the exception. Her approach to Shakespeare, and to time and memory, takes ghosts and haunting and communing with the dead seriously, and in this it chimes with Jacques Derrida's deconstructive reading of

*Hamlet*: “The time is out of joint”: [...] *deranged*, both out of order and mad. Time is off its hinges, time is off course, beside itself, disadjusted.<sup>53</sup> Like Derrida, Carr takes the spectral nature of Shakespeare seriously, and her take on him is appropriately excessive and unhinged.



Names are vital to establishing the authority and source of a text. As Michel Foucault remarks: ‘The author’s name is a proper name, and therefore it raises the problems common to all proper names’.<sup>54</sup> Not only the names of authors carry a charge and a stamp of ownership. Characters’ names are also associated with authors, even when, as in the case of ‘Macbeth’ or ‘Julius Caesar’, they are historical as well as dramatic figures. We may bear this in mind, too, in relation to Carr’s most recent RSC commission, a translation of Euripides’ *Hecuba* (2015). The name in that title comes with all sorts of historical and dramatic baggage. And its connotations are not only of the mythological queen of Troy, or the play by Euripides, but also – and perhaps more strongly than either of those, especially to modern audiences ill-versed in Greek and Latin antiquity but reasonably conversant with the major works of Shakespeare – of Hamlet’s response to the Player’s dramatic rendition of the Greek myth, which pays almost obsessive attention to the name: ‘and all for nothing – / For Hecuba? / What’s Hecuba to him, or he to her, / That he should weep for her?’ (*Hamlet*, II.ii.492-5).<sup>55</sup> So while *Hecuba* is not strictly speaking Carr’s fourth titular tribute to Shakespeare, it is about as close to being one as it gets.

Carr’s borrowing of names from Shakespeare goes deeper than mere mention. Derrida’s deconstruction of the claim against the name in *Romeo and Juliet* is apposite here. ‘A rose remains what it is without its name [...]’<sup>56</sup> So Derrida paraphrases Juliet’s famous line; but does it? On the contrary, names count, even after death, including Shakespeare’s: ‘It belongs to a series, to the still-living palimpsest, to the open theatre of narratives which bear his name.’<sup>57</sup> The name captures author, character, and title: ‘The absolute aphorism: a proper name.’<sup>58</sup> With her Shakespearean Christian name, Carr understands the power of naming and renaming better than most. In an interview with Mike Murphy, while pointing out her

chief source for *Portia Coughlan* – ‘The plot is completely *Medea*’ – she comments: ‘It was the name that came to me, that’s all I had, and I thought it would be lovely to write a play about a woman called Portia Coughlan.’<sup>59</sup> Her comments on influence and appropriation are also intriguing in this context: ‘Apollo gave [Shakespeare] so much that I think he grew jealous and decided never to do that again and ever since has fed the rest of us on scraps [...] And yet Shakespeare too paid homage. He took from everywhere, but what he did with his plunder!’<sup>60</sup> That mixture of admiration, acute awareness of an overweening influence, recognition of the borrowing that begets borrowing, and the resentment it can give rise to in some cases, is reflected in Carr’s complex response. Three of her plays – *Portia Coughlan*, *Ariel* and *The Cordelia Dream* – not only take their eponymous titles from secondary characters in Shakespeare plays, but engage with Shakespeare in playful yet purposeful ways, through asides and soliloquies, and Shakespeare’s presence in Carr’s work goes well beyond those three titular tributes.

*Portia Coughlan* is a play full of poetry – foul-mouthed, wild, dirty, savage and lyrical. Portia herself, with ‘a wolf tooth growin’ in me heart’, curses like one of Shakespeare’s female prophets.<sup>61</sup> (That line, moreover, may itself be subtly defiant of the authority of the male canon of English literature, in that it *almost* quotes Shakespeare (cf. *King Lear*, I.iv.280)<sup>62</sup> and *almost* quotes Yeats’s description of historical derangement in ‘Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen’: ‘We, who seven years ago / Talked of honour and of truth, / Shriek with pleasure if we show / The weasel’s twist, the weasel’s tooth.’<sup>63</sup>) And at the heart of the play lies a legacy of women’s lives, storytelling, family history and memory, struggling with a prosaic present. And as always with Carr, names are there to be conjured with. When Portia asks the philistine Fintan Goolan, ‘Ever hear tell of how the Belmont River came to be called the Belmont River?’, his reply is characteristically dismissive:

Heard tell alright. Miss Sullivan used to tell us in school. Fuckin’ hated English and all that auld poetic shite she used drum into us – wasn’t it about some auld river God be the name of Bel and a 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.<sup>64</sup>

Portia rounds on Fintan and counters his version of events:

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.<sup>65</sup>

The irony here is that neither Portia nor Fintan recall an English lesson in which the Shakespearean analogue of the name may have come up. There is something odd going on here, in that Carr *nearly* repeats the anecdote about the play's origin that she repeatedly rehearses in interviews about the play *in the play itself*, but stops just short of actually putting it in. We might say that the anecdote about the real-life 'English lesson' in Carr's youth from which the play grew is present in *Portia Coughlan* only as a Derridean 'spectre'. Or perhaps something more subversive still is going on here, as Carr is not only silencing Shakespeare but silently 'trumping' his authority over the name Belmont by providing a more ancient etymology. Thus she is using toponymy as a way of (post)colonial 'writing back'<sup>66</sup> in a manner suggested as a possibility by Friel's *Translations* (1980).

Another of Carr's patriarchs, Fermoy Fitzgerald, the brooding figure at the corrupt heart of *Ariel*, appears to share Fintan's approach to the arts, but has higher ambitions and even rises to the post of Minister for Arts and Culture. He is clear about these ambitions from the beginning. Interviewed by Verona – another shade of Shakespeare – he admits that he 'love[s] power',<sup>67</sup> and some of his ideas about power and the business of being a politician have distinct Shakespearean overtones. His role model may be Napoleon (whom he comically quotes and paraphrases in his thick Midlands accent all through the interview), but in his refusal to succumb to what he calls the 'national disease' of 'Wantin to be liked'

from which so many career politicians suffer – ‘Ya’d swear thah was the politician’s job these days. To be liked. Well, ud’s noh. The politician’s job is to have a vision and to push thah vision through, for wudouh a vision the people perish’<sup>68</sup> – he comes closer to Shakespeare’s Coriolanus’ contempt not only for the *populus* whose interests he seeks to serve but for the popularity contest that is at the heart of modern politics. In the 1930s *Coriolanus* was sometimes co-opted to the anti-democratic cause of European Fascism – including by W.B. Yeats in Ireland – as a ‘hymn to strong leadership’.<sup>69</sup> Carr’s despicable Fermoy is a throwback to Shakespeare’s least politic politician, and a reminder of the way his strong rhetoric continues to echo in modern-day debates about the nature of government and the bond between public representatives and their electorate.

In the same interview with Verona, *Ariel*’s Fermoy further waxes lyrical on his time as Minister for Arts and Culture, and it is here that his philistinism as well as his hunger for power is addressed. He had gone into that ministry without knowing anything about the brief, but when he arrives he is grounded enough not to be taken in by the dazzling personae of the artists and poets with whom he has to deal. The character’s distance from the artistic fraternity allows the playwright a certain levity in speaking about the literary tradition. In fact, Carr’s treatment of the lives of ‘artists and poets’ through Fermoy’s interview in Act 2 of *Ariel* is as aggressively deconstructive of the romantic myth of the artist as Woman’s condemnation of her father’s equation of being an artist with ‘loose living, bad behaviour and the jottings of your hungover soul’ in the later play *The Cordelia Dream*. Because Fermoy has a gift for bringing the idealized image of the lofty god-like artist-creator crashing down to earth through his crude outsider perspective: ‘I used look up to artists and poets before I got to know em. Ih was a greah education to realize they’re as fickle and wrongheaded as the rest of us. Thah said, ih was a huge learnin curve for me and, I’ll tell ya, it’s hard to beah a pride a poets and a tank a wine for good conversation.’<sup>70</sup> Pressed further on the ‘good conversation’ Fermoy says: ‘It’s noh aisy puh a finger on ud, but I think ud’s their attempts, mostly banjaxed mind you, buh an attempt anyway to throw eternihy on the table.’<sup>71</sup> Quite apart from anything else, it is clear how the last phrase contains Carr’s ironic mockery of writers –

like Shakespeare and Joyce – whose egos are sufficiently inflated to address a concept as vast and inhuman as ‘eternity’. We are a long way here from Carr’s own more modest ‘parochial’ ambitions.

Asked how he found the transition from Arts and Culture to Minister of Finance, Fermoy answers: ‘Well, there’s more fiction written in Finance than in Arts and Culture, so the transition wasn’t that difficult.’<sup>72</sup> And the transition Fermoy makes in the rest of Act 2 from poetry to power shows that he is no lowbrow. Asked by Verona if he is anti-British, Fermoy responds thus:

If ya have to be colonized ya migh as well be colonized by somewan wud a bih a vision. [...] And, like ud or noh, the legacy the Brihish have left us is the till, [...] Look, the outsize ego a this nation is built on sand and wind, a few dramers, natin else. We nade to go back to first principles. We nade to re-imagine ourselves from scratch.<sup>73</sup>

Such self-loathing is central to the colonial experience.<sup>74</sup> Issues of civility and masculinity go to the heart of the discourse of colonialism itself, and particularly to the role played by an education system that privileged Shakespeare and held up his plays as evidence of their own national-cultural superiority, and therefore their moral right to conquest and colonization, while at the same time imposing poverty and violence on the Calibans whose response condemned them as uncivil. Here is the paradox of colonial experience. Being invaded and occupied sets up a relationship of dominance and subservience in which the native is feminized. As Ernest Renan revealingly remarked: ‘If it be permitted us to assign sex to nations as to individuals we should have to say without hesitance that the Celtic race [...] is an essentially feminine race.’<sup>75</sup> And yet resistance is often couched in hyper-masculine and heroic terms. Together with damaged masculinity goes the silenced woman, doubly colonized and doubly marginalized, and out of this paradigm the Irish woman writer speaks.<sup>76</sup>



If, in a way that is at once more frugal and more fruitful than her male counterparts, Carr is indeed a dramatist in the lineage of Shakespeare, walking in his steps, and writing in his spirit, then that should not seem strange to us, for stranger things have happened:

PERICLES                      How! A king's daughter,

   And called Marina?

[...]

MARINA                      Called Marina

   For I was born at sea.

*(Pericles, V.i.140-7)*

Of course, the name Marina in Shakespeare's day meant more than marine, and the undertow of Catholic connotations – 'Marian associations' – has not gone unnoticed.<sup>77</sup> Estranged daughters and mothers disowned or disappeared are key to Carr's re-imaginings of Shakespeare. And if Marina Carr was in some way named 'by' Shakespeare, then her strategy for getting her own in a man's world through artful manipulation of patriarchal narratives and codes is merely an updating of the subterfuge used by the heroines of the late romances, who must exile themselves from the metropolis and from their fathers in order to fully realize their own potentialities – including even, perhaps, in some cases the potentiality for challenging the authority of the father. Growing up in that 'other' Belmont in County Offaly, Carr was certainly placed out of the way of Shakespeare's immediate paternal authority, and perhaps the Irish woman writer's ability to be at times even more subversive of the Bard than Shakespeare's English sisters and daughters stems from the license that such distance bestows. What comes through in Carr's drama is her irreverence as a writer who does more than cite or recite, but who rather offers insights into the structures of thought that underpin Shakespeare's drama and call for creative and critical reappraisal. As an Irishwoman, Carr finds many things that speak to her in the work of this male English

writer active four centuries before her, and she wants to adopt, adapt, and prove adept with them, while at the same time being appalled by the omissions (particularly surrounding women, often speechless or underdeveloped) in the same writer's work. Her plays, then, become a record of an uneasy struggle – a struggle with herself as much as with Shakespeare – between the impulse to reference Shakespeare and the things she loves about him and finds important, and the equally strong need to set Shakespeare straight.

Ironically, a certain strand of feminist criticism on Shakespeare suggests that Carr's critique may also be a kind of homage, more so than the Bardolatry of male critics, bringing the daughter of Erin and the Bard of Avon closer together. Feminist critics of Shakespeare have argued that he too was engaged in a critique of patriarchy, which makes Carr's meditations on his work all the more relevant. According to Claire McEachern, summarizing a whole tradition of feminist responses:

Much like Cordelia, Shakespeare exposes and investigates the coercive pressures of patriarchy. Shakespeare does not become another patriarchal bard. He responds to his sources in a way that consciously rebukes and revises patriarchal authority.<sup>78</sup>

Carr's encounter with Shakespeare goes beyond the jealousy or resentment of Irish authors rooted in the male tradition. While the Anglo-Irish fraternity fret and strut like Caliban, Carr plays Cordelia to Shakespeare's Lear, a dramatic daughter unbowed by patriarchy, not rendered speechless but empowered and articulate.



## Notes:

- 1 Lisa Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Brighton: Harvester, 1983), p. 1.
- 2 Marina Carr, 'Dealing with the Dead', *Irish University Review* 28.1 (1998), 190-6, p. 196.
- 3 Mike Murphy, 'Marina Carr', in *Reading the Future: Irish Writers in Conversation with Mike Murphy*, ed. Clíodhna Ní Anluain (Dublin: Lilliput, 2000), 43-57, p. 51.
- 4 Marina Carr, *Portia Coughlan* [1996], rev. edn (Oldcastle: Gallery Press, 1998), p. 27.
- 5 Patrick Kavanagh, 'Mao Tse-tung Unrolls His Mat', *Kavanagh's Weekly* 7 (24 May 1952), p. 1; Kavanagh, *By Night Unstarred: An Autobiographical Novel*, ed. Peter Kavanagh (The Curragh: Goldsmith Press, 1977), p. 8.
- 6 See Beth C. Schwartz, 'Thinking Back through Our Mothers: Virginia Woolf Reads Shakespeare', *ELH* 58.3 (1991), 721-46.
- 7 See Willy Maley, 'A Few Shakes of a Bard's Tale: Some Recent Irish Appropriations of Shakespeare', in *No Country For Old Men: Fresh Perspectives on Irish Literature*, ed. Paddy Lyons and Alison O'Malley-Younger (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2008), 69-85.
- 8 See Phil Dunne, 'An Uncluttered Window on Irish Life: The Work of Thomas Kilroy', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 89.354 (2000), 140-7.
- 9 On the ways in which Friel and McGuinness play with history, see Ulrich Schneider, 'Staging History in Contemporary Anglo-Irish Drama: Brian Friel and Frank McGuinness', in *The Crows Behind the Plough: History and Violence in Anglo-Irish Poetry and Drama*, ed. Geert Lernout (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1991), 79-98. See also Anthony Roche's essay on the Politics of Translation in Friel's *Translations* and Shakespeare's Henry plays elsewhere in this collection.
- 10 Anne Fogarty, 'The Romance of History: Renegotiating the Past in Thomas Kilroy's *The O'Neill* and Brian Friel's *Making History*', *Irish University Review* 32.1 (2002), 18-33.
- 11 Ann Owens Weekes, *Irish Women Writers: An Uncharted Tradition* [1990] (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2009), p. 56.
- 12 Valentina Rapetti, 'Chasing the Intangible: A Conversation on Theatre, Language, and Artistic Migrations with Irish Playwright Marina Carr', *Studi Irlandesi* 4 (2014), 247-57, p. 255.
- 13 Anne Fogarty, 'Brushing History against the Grain: The Renaissance Plays of Frank McGuinness', *Irish University Review* 40.1 (2010), 101-13, p. 109.
- 14 Joan FitzPatrick Dean recognizes that McGuinness is unpacking gender stereotypes as well as unpicking realist narrative: 'Just as *Mutabilitie* challenges what we know of Irish poets (they were men), and of

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- Shakespeare, it also openly defies the conventions of realism'. Dean, 'Advice to the Players (and the Historians): The Metatheatricality of McGuinness's *Mutabilitie*', *Irish University Review* 40.1 (2010), 81-91, p. 87.
- 15 See Teresa Deevy, 'A Disciple', *The Dublin Magazine* 12.1 (1937), 29-48.
- 16 See Caoilfhionn Ní Bheacháin, 'Sexuality, Marriage and Women's Life Narratives in Teresa Deevy's *A Disciple* (1931), *The King of Spain's Daughter* (1935) and *Katie Roche* (1936)', *Estudios Irlandeses* 7 (2012), 79-91, p. 84; and Cathy Leeney, 'Ireland's "Exiled" Women Playwrights: Teresa Deevy and Marina Carr', in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Irish Drama*, ed. Shaun Richards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 150-63, p. 152.
- 17 Mark Cuddy, 'Tough, Impossible Love: The Theater of Marina Carr', *World Literature Today* 86.4 (2012), 51-2, p. 52.
- 18 Brecken Rose Hancock, "'That House of Proud Mad Women!': Diseased Legacy and Mythmaking in Marina Carr's *The Mai*", *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 31.2 (2005), 19-26, p. 25 (n. 5).
- 19 Carr, 'Dealing with the Dead', p. 195.
- 20 Marianne Novy, Introduction, in *Transforming Shakespeare: Contemporary Women's Re-Visions in Literature and Performance*, ed. Marianne Novy (New York, NY: St Martin's Press, 1999), 1-12, p. 2 and *passim*.
- 21 Even her attraction to *The Merchant of Venice* may not be unconnected with this interest in Shakespeare's troubled father-daughter relationships. Both of the father-daughter pairings in the play – that between Shylock and Jessica, a captive in her father's frugal household, and that between Portia and the late father who ties up his daughter's future in the cruel casket test – are examples of the restrictive strategies placed by fathers on their daughters' movements.
- 22 Anon, *The True Chronicle History of King Leir, and his Three Daughters, Gonorill, Ragan, and Cordella* (London, 1605), A4r.
- 23 Anon, *True Chronicle History of King Leir*, A4v.
- 24 Marina Carr, *The Cordelia Dream* (Oldcastle: Gallery Press, 2008), p. 42.
- 25 Margaret Maxwell, "'The Claim of Eternity': Language and Death in Marina Carr's *Portia Coughlan*", *Irish University Review* 37.2 (2007), 413-29, p. 417. See also Paula Murphy, 'Staging Histories in Marina Carr's Midlands Plays', *Irish University Review* 36.2 (2006), 389-402.
- 26 Brian Singleton, *Masculinities and the Contemporary Irish Theatre* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 67. See also Melissa Sihra, "'Nature Noble or Ignoble": Woman, Family, and Home in the Theatre of Marina Carr', *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* 11.2 (2005), 133-47.

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- 27 Singleton, *Masculinities and the Contemporary Irish Theatre*, p. 67. See also Brian Singleton, 'Sick, Dying, Dead, Dispersed: The Evanescence of Patriarchy in Contemporary Irish Women's Theatre', in *Women in Irish Drama: A Century of Authorship and Representation*, ed. Melissa Sihra (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 186-200.
- 28 Zoraide Rodrigues Carrasco de Mesquita, 'Violence and hope in *Ariel*, by Marina Carr', *Ilha do Desterro* 58 (2010), 289-308, p. 300.
- 29 Singleton, *Masculinities and the Contemporary Irish Theatre*, p. 63.
- 30 Rapetti, 'Chasing the Intangible', pp. 255-6.
- 31 Patricia Novillo-Corvalán, 'The Theatre of Marina Carr: A Latin American Reading, Interview, and Translation', *Irish Migration Studies in Latin America* 7.2 (2009), 145-53, p. 147.
- 32 Carr, *The Cordelia Dream*, p. 18.
- 33 Carr, *The Cordelia Dream*, p. 20.
- 34 Carr, *The Cordelia Dream*, p. 22.
- 35 Carr, *The Cordelia Dream*, p. 24.
- 36 Carr, *The Cordelia Dream*, p. 25.
- 37 Carr, *The Cordelia Dream*, p. 43.
- 38 Rhona Trench, *Bloody Living: The Loss of Selfhood in the Plays of Marina Carr* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), p. 26.
- 39 Siobhán O'Gorman, 'Writing from the Margins: Marina Carr's Early Theatre', *Irish Studies Review* 22.4 (2014), 487-511, p. 501.
- 40 Mary Noonan, 'Women and Scarecrows: Marina Carr's Stage Bodies', in *Perspectives on Contemporary Irish Theatre: Populating the Stage*, ed. Anne Etienne and Thierry Dubost (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 59-72, p. 67.
- 41 Clare Wallace, 'Tragic Destiny and Abjection in Marina Carr's *The Mai*, *Portia Coughlan* and *By the Bog of Cats*', *Irish University Review* 31.2 (2001), 431-49, p. 437.
- 42 Michael Ragussis, 'Jews and Other "Outlandish Englishmen": Ethnic Performance and the Invention of British Identity under the Georges', *Critical Inquiry* 26.4 (2000), 773-97, p. 778.
- 43 Melissa Sihra, 'Reflections across Water: New Stages of Performing Carr', in *The Theatre of Marina Carr: 'before rules was made'*, ed. Cathy Leeney and Anna McMullan (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2003), 92-113, p. 100.
- 44 Marianne McDonald, 'Fatal Commission', *Arion* 10.3 (2003), 125-41, pp. 125-6.
- 45 Marina Carr, *By the Bog of Cats* (Oldcastle: Gallery Press, 1998), p. 60.

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- 46 Marina Carr, *Ariel* (Oldcastle: Gallery Press, 2002), p. 34.
- 47 Kelly A. Marsh, “‘This posthumous life of mine’”: Tragic Overliving in the Plays of Marina Carr’, *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 30.1 (2011), 117-39, p. 118.
- 48 Marsh, “‘This posthumous life of mine’”, p. 137.
- 49 Carr, *Portia Coughlan*, p. 40.
- 50 See for example David J. Baker, ‘Where is Ireland in *The Tempest*?’, in *Shakespeare and Ireland: History, Politics, Culture*, ed. Mark Thornton Burnett and Ramona Wray (London: Macmillan, 1997), 68-88
- 51 For a history of ‘colonial’ readings of *The Tempest*, and for an appraisal of some twentieth-century postcolonial re-writings of that play, see Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Shakespeare’s Caliban: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Among recent readings of *The Tempest* as a drama rich in potential for Irish readers and writers, an essay by Benedicte Seynhaeve and Raphaël Ingelbien on Lady Morgan’s appropriations of Shakespeare’s play stands out as concomitant with Carr’s stealthy response because it homes in on the way an Irish woman writer approaches the English dramatist, feminizes Prospero and divines ‘Irish subtexts’. Seynhaeve and Ingelbien, “‘Doing her spiriting’: Lady Morgan’s Irish Tempests’, *Irish University Review* 45.2 (2015), 242-62, pp. 250, 242.
- 52 Nancy Finn, ‘Theater in Eleven Dimensions: A Conversation with Marina Carr’, *World Literature Today* 86.4 (2012), 42-6, p. 46.
- 53 Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 18. See also Jacques Derrida, ‘The Time is Out of Joint’, trans. Peggy Kamuf, in *Deconstruction is/in America: A New Sense of the Political*, ed. Anselm Haverkamp (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1995), 14-38. This essay is not the first to detect a Derridean dimension in Carr’s work. See for example Murphy, ‘Staging Histories in Marina Carr’s Midlands Plays’, pp. 392-3.
- 54 Michel Foucault, ‘What Is an Author?’, in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. Josué V. Harari (London: Methuen, 1980), 141-60, p. 145. On the ways in which names are bound up with authorship, see Willy Maley, “‘Malfolio’: Foul Papers on the Shakespeare Authorship Question’, in *Shakespeare and His Authors: Critical Perspectives on the Authorship Question*, ed. William Leahy (London: Continuum, 2010), 23-40.
- 55 Hamlet’s curiosity about Hecuba, and his obsessive naming of her (especially in the Folio text, which uses the name once more than the Q2 text favoured by the Arden editors, at the end of line 494), may show a sentimentality alien to Carr’s brutal treatment of the myth. But his desire to recover a real, complex human being who can arouse genuine sympathy from a stock figure of Renaissance drama is not so far removed

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from Carr's revisionist motives for tackling the same material, as her introductory remarks to the play attest: '[*Hecuba*] is an attempt to reexamine and, in part, redeem a great and tragic queen. History, as they say, is written by the winners. Sometimes I think myths are too and the fragile Greek state circa 500 BC needed to get certain myths in stone to bolster their sense of themselves and validate their savage conquests. It was easy to trash her. She was dead. She was Trojan. She was a woman. No doubt she was as flawed as the rest of us but to turn a flaw to a monstrosity smacks to me of expedience. This is my attempt to show her in another light, how she suffered, what she might have felt and how she may have reacted.'

Marina Carr, Introduction in *Plays 3* (London: Faber & Faber, 2015), pp. ix-x.

- 56 Jacques Derrida, 'Aphorism Countertime', in *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (London: Routledge, 1992), 416-33, p. 427.
- 57 Derrida, 'Aphorism Countertime', p. 433.
- 58 Derrida, 'Aphorism Countertime', p. 433.
- 59 Murphy, 'Marina Carr', p. 51.
- 60 Carr, 'Dealing with the Dead', pp. 195-6.
- 61 Carr, *Portia Coughlan*, p. 55. See Shirley Carr Mason, "'Foul Wrinkled Witch": Superstition, Scepticism, and Margaret of Anjou in Shakespeare's *Richard III*', *Cahiers élisabéthains* 52.1 (1997), 25-37.
- 62 Lear's 'How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is / To have a thankless child' (I.iv.280-1) is also echoed in *The Cordelia Dream*, where Man describes his youngest daughter as 'The dog-hearted one. [...] The vicious snake-eyed ingrate'. Carr, *The Cordelia Dream*, p. 28.
- 63 *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W.B. Yeats*, ed. Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1968), p. 431.
- 64 Carr, *Portia Coughlan*, p. 35.
- 65 Carr, *Portia Coughlan*, p. 35.
- 66 See Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989).
- 67 Carr, *Ariel*, p. 41
- 68 Carr, *Ariel*, p. 44.
- 69 See Michael Dobson and Stanley Wells, eds, *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 92, on the various productions of *Coriolanus* with overt political agendas – both Fascist and Bolshevik – in 1930s Europe. On Yeats's uses of *Coriolanus* in his non-fictional prose and drama during that decade, see Stanley van der Ziel, "'a scene of tragic intensity": Shakespeare in *Purgatory*'

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*Yeats Annual no. 21: Yeats's Legacies*, ed. Warwick Gould (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2018), pp. 000-000.

70 Carr, *Ariel*, p. 38.

71 Carr, *Ariel*, p. 38.

72 Carr, *Ariel*, p. 39.

73 Carr, *Ariel*, p. 42.

74 More specifically, the terms of Fermoy's answer may be indebted to Mark Renton's notorious rant in Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* (1993), or perhaps to its rendition in the ubiquitous 1996 film version: 'It's nae good blamin it oan the English fir colonizing us. Ah don't hate the English. They're just wankers. We are colonized by wankers.' Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting* [1993] (New York, NY: Norton, 1996), p. 78.

75 Ernest Renan, *The Poetry of the Celtic Races* (1896), cited in David Cairns and Shaun Richards, *Writing Ireland: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 46.

76 On the challenges facing female writers from the Celtic fringes in engaging with the English literary canon, see Marilyn Reizbaum, 'Canonical Double Cross: Scottish and Irish Women's Writing', in *Decolonizing Tradition: New Views of Twentieth-Century 'British' Literary Canons*, ed. Karen R. Lawrence (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 165-90

77 Ruben Espinosa, *Masculinity and Marian Efficacy in Shakespeare's England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 163.

78 Claire McEachern, 'Fathering Herself: A Source Study of Shakespeare's Feminism', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39.3 (1988), 269-90.