Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences

Department of English Language and Literature

VIOLENT MOTHERS IN MARINA CARR'S PLAYS: *THE MAI*, *PORTIA COUGHLAN* AND *BY THE BOG OF CATS...*

Kübra VURAL

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2015

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KABUL VE ONAY

Kübra Vural tarafından hazırlanan "Violent Mothers in Marina Carr's Plays: *The Mai, Portia Coughlan* and *By the Bog of Cats*..." başlıklı bu çalışma, 11 Haziran 2015 tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda başarılı bulunarak jürimiz tarafından Yüksek Lisans Tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

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ÖZET

VURAL, Kübra. Marina Carr'ın Oyunlarındaki Şiddet Dolu Anneler: *The Mai*, *Portia Coughlan* ve *By the Bog of Cats...*. Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2015.

Abbey Tiyatrosu'nun 1904'te kuruluşundan beri annelik kavramı İrlanda sahnesinde sıklıkla işlenen konulardan biri olmuştur. Yirminci yüzyıl başlarında, bazı İrlandalı oyun yazarları milliyetçi ideolojileri doğrultusunda mükemmel anne figürlerini İrlanda'yla bağdaştırmışlardır. Daha sonraları, Abbey'nin ilk yıllarında oluşturulan kusursuz, tek yönlü annelik temsilinden tamamen vazgeçilmemekle birlikte, modern İrlandalı oyun yazarları anne karakterlerin kişisel özelliklerine nispeten çeşitlilik katar ve İrlandalı annelerin farklı deneyimlerine parmak basarlar. 1990'lardan bu yana İrlanda sahnesindeki annelik tasviri, yazarların anne karakterlerin psikolojilerini açık bir şekilde vurgulamaya başlamalarıyla daha da derinleşir. Günümüz İrlanda oyun yazarları arasında ise, Marina Carr (1964-) İrlanda sahnesinde pek görülmemiş anne tasvirleriyle öne çıkar. *The Mai* (1994), *Portia Coughlan* (1996) ve *By the Bogs of Cats...* (1998) başlıklı oyunlardan oluşan Midlands üçlemesinde yazar, başkişi anne karakterlerin tasvirlerinde, mükemmelleştirilen ve romantikleştirilen annelik kavramlarını sergilemeyi reddeder. Kendisini feda eden, özverili ve kusursuz anne tiplerine karşı çıkışına ilişkin olarak, Carr anne karakterlerinin kişisel sorun ve isteklerini öne çıkarır; annelik kimliklerini katı ve net bir biçimde reddeden karakterleri tasvir ederken onları şiddetle harmanlar. Bu tez Carr'ın bahsi geçen üç oyunundaki anne konumundaki başkarakterleri incelemeyi amaçlar ve bu annelerin, İrlanda'daki geleneksel annelik algısına ve mükemmeliyetçi özelliklerine farklı tür ve yoğunlukta görülen şiddet aracılığıyla meydan okudukları fikrini savunur. Üçlemenin incelemesi şiddet teorisi bağlamında şekillendirilmiştir ve annelerin şiddet içeren davranış tarzını açıklamak için, kişiyi intihara yönlendiren sebeplerin incelenmesi anlamına gelen "psikolojik otopsi" tekniği kullanılmıştır. Bu çalışmanın giriş bölümünde öncelikle İrlanda'da ortaya çıkan annelik kavramıyla ilişkilendirilerek saldırganlık ve şiddet konuları tartışılır, ardından Marina Carr'ın tiyatro kariyeri tanıtılır. I. Bölümde *The Mai* adlı oyunun başkişisi "the Mai" – Türkçeleştirmek gerekirse "O Mai" – ailesinin diğer

kadın üyeleriyle karşılaştırmalı olarak incelenir. Karakterin annelik kimliği çocuklarının hayatında olup olmaması bağlamında vurgulanır ve bariz şekilde yıkıcı olan aşık kişiliği, sözel, fiziksel ve kişinin kendisine yönelik şiddet türleri çerçevesinde dikkate alınır. II. Bölümde ise, karakterle aynı isimle anılan oyunda, Portia Coughlan, bir sebep-sonuç ilişkisi içinde açımlanmaktadır. Portia'nın topluma aykırı davranışları, aile içi cinsel ilişkiye, karakterin ölen ikiz erkek kardeşi Gabriel ile olan saplantılı ilişkisine ve alkol sorununa bağlanır. Portia'nın anneliğe şiddetle karşı çıktığı olgusu, örseleyici söylemi, ölümcül tehditleri ve intiharıyla örneklendirilir ve ölüm içgüdüsünü açığa vurma şekliyle ilişkilendirilir. *By the Bog of Cats…* adlı oyunun incelemesine ayrılan III. Bölüm ise, bir kız çocuğu ve anne olarak Hester Swane'i ele almaktadır. Annesinin yokluğu, Hester'ın hayatını kökten etkileyen sarsıntının kaynağı olarak tartışılır. Karakterin sergilediği ve onu İrlanda'daki mükemmel annelik özelliklerinden uzaklaştıran sözel şiddet, cinayet ve intihar örnekleri üzerinde durulur. Midlands üçlemesinin etraflı incelemesinin ardından, sonuç bölümünde Marina Carr'ın oyunlarında şiddet ve annelik konularını işleyerek İrlanda tiyatro geleneğine katkıda bulunduğu, Carr'ın betimlediği kendinden emin şiddet dolu annelerin İrlanda'daki geleneksel annelik anlayışını yıktıkları ve yıkıcı davranışlarıyla bireysellik ve özgürlük istediklerini anlattıkları vurgulanır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Marina Carr, *The Mai*, *Portia Coughlan*, *By the Bog of Cats...*, İrlanda tiyatrosu, annelik, şiddet

ABSTRACT

Vural, Kübra. Violent Mothers in Marina Carr's Plays: *The Mai*, *Portia Coughlan* and *By the Bog of Cats*.... Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2015.

Since the foundation of the Abbey Theatre in 1904, the concept of motherhood has been one of the frequently represented subjects on the Irish stage. In the early twentieth century, a number of Irish playwrights associated the ideal mother figures with Ireland in line with their nationalistic ideology. Later on, although unable to totally abandon the one-dimensional representation of perfect motherhood articulated in the early years of the Abbey, modern Irish dramatists relatively extended the variety of the characteristics of the maternal figures and drew attention to the different experiences of mothers in Ireland. From the 1990s onwards, the depiction of motherhood on the Irish stage has become more intensified as the dramatists began to stress the psychology of mother characters overtly. Among the contemporary Irish playwrights, Marina Carr (1964-) is prominent with her unconventional mother portraits on the stage. In her Midlands trilogy, namely *The Mai* (1994), *Portia Coughlan* (1996) and *By the Bog of Cats...* (1998), she refuses to present the idealised and romanticised notions of maternity in her depictions of mother protagonists. With regard to her opposition to the images of self-sacrificing, self-denying and perfect mothers, Carr puts forwards the individual troubles and desires of her mother characters and embeds violence in their representations showing them as forcefully rejecting their identity as a mother. The present thesis aims to analyse the mother protagonists in Carr's aforementioned three plays and argues that these mothers challenge the conventional perception of motherhood in Ireland and its ideals by means of violence of different types and degrees of intensity. The analysis of the trilogy is framed within the theory of violence and the technique of "psychological autopsy," which refers to the investigation of the reasons driving one to suicide, is particularly used to explain the violent conduct of mothers. The introduction part of this study presents the discussion of aggression and violence relating the discussion to the concept of motherhood as is conceived in Ireland, and next it introduces Marina Carr's dramatic career. In Chapter I, *The Mai* is examined in a comparative approach in which

the protagonist the Mai is compared and contrasted with the other female members of her family. Her maternal identity is highlighted in relation to her absence/presence in her children's lives and her distinct personality as a destructive lover is underlined through her exposition of violence in the forms of verbal, physical and self-violence. Chapter II is dedicated to the analysis of Portia Coughlan, in the play of the same name, in a cause-and-effect relationship. Portia's nonconformist attitudes are related to the presence of incest in her family, her obsessive relationship with her late twin brother Gabriel and her drinking problem. Her violent opposition to motherhood is illustrated in her destructive discourse, murderous threats and suicide and is related to her display of the death drive. In Chapter III, the analysis of *By the Bog of Cats...* centres on the examination of Hester Swane's identity as a daughter and as a mother. The absence of Hester's mother is claimed to be a source of trauma radically affecting the protagonist's life. Hester's violence is revealed in the examples of verbal violence, homicide and suicide, all of which distance her from the ideals of maternity in Ireland. After the in-depth analysis of Carr's Midlands trilogy, it is finally concluded that the playwright's use of violence and the issue of motherhood contributes to the Irish dramatic tradition in that Carr's assertive mothers as perpetrators of violence subvert the traditional understanding of motherhood in Ireland and reclaim individuality and autonomy with their destructive conduct.

Key Words: Marina Carr, *The Mai*, *Portia Coughlan*, *By the Bog of Cats...*, Irish drama, motherhood, violence

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INTRODUCTION

> We are the cruellest and most ruthless species that has ever walked the earth.
>
> --Storr, *Human Aggression*

> Marina Carr is a writer haunted by memories she could not possibly possess, but they seem determined to possess her. This haunting is a violent one, intensified by the physical attack on the conventions of syntax, spelling, and sound of Standard English.
>
> --McGuinness, "Introduction"

> The Ireland [Marina Carr] imagines is a porous place, its people seeping out, stray bits of the world streaming in.
>
> --O'Toole, "*The Mai*"

Marina Carr (1964-) is one of the most prolific and original contemporary Irish playwrights. In the 1990s, when the Irish theatre's revolt against traditional representations was at its peak (Trotter, *Modern* 154), her innovative voice was heard in her women-centred plays in which she projects various feelings and experiences of women. She creates an alternative world on the Irish stage with "her evocative mingling of the everyday with the other-worlds of myth, folk-tales, ghosts and fairies" (Sihra, "Introduction" 19). Among the male dramatists of Irish theatre, Carr as a female playwright who, Matt O'Brien suggests, "reveals herself to be an anti-romantic poet, recognizing the folly of hopes and 'happy endings' for those who lay victim to their own longings, and presenting audiences with a challenge to re-consider the 'ideal' characterizations of [women characters]" (214) within the frame of her plays. Thanks to the "fresh boldness in [her] pen" (Intrye, "*Portia*" 80), Carr writes dark stories of female figures and eradicates the stereotypical images of womanhood and motherhood associated with Irish nationalistic aspirations. The peculiarity of Carr's works – especially the Midlands trilogy, *The Mai* (1994), *Portia Coughlan* (1996) and *By the Bog of Cats…* (1998) – is that the playwright "go[es] against the grain of traditional

Irish theatre" (McDonough 182). The "holy" icon of Mother Ireland represented in the mainstream of Irish theatre is subverted in Carr's plays not only with the presentation of intricacies of women's lives, but also, more remarkably, with the explicit use of violence in the portrayal of her "unmotherly" mother characters on the Irish stage.

Before proceeding with Marina Carr's ouevre, it is necessary at this point to dissect the issue of violence as it will contribute to the theoretical background of this thesis. Violence, as a destructive force, has always been a taboo subject. Yet its existence cannot be denied as it is a part of life. From verbal expressions of destruction to the "dropping explosive bombs upon museums and churches, upon great buildings and little children" (Menninger 4), violence penetrates into the human life, and the history of the world is shaped by violence. Even myths and religious narratives recount violent cases:

> To provide just a few examples of our embeddedness in a history of violence: Aeschylus writes of the violence of the house of Atreus, the *hubris* of Agamemnon, his wife Clytaemnestra's terrible revenge for his sacrifice of their daughter, the demands of the Furies for the head of Orestes when he in turn kills her, and on and on, the violence of blood justice, and its eventual replacement with the enlightened, but no less terrible, justice of Athena, daughter of Zeus. The test of Abraham's faith by God was his willingness to kill his son Isaac. (Isaac, his favored son of his old age, displaced the illegitimate Ishmael, who, driven into exile, founded the lost tribe, the violent outliers of Israel.) Indeed, Freud tells us that the foundation of civilization itself rests on the killing of the father by the sons. (Basler, Dumm, and Sarat 1)

Therefore, violence becomes a topic of utmost importance in many fields of study such as psychology, sociology, biology and politics. The discussion of violence has been entrenched in a wide range of ideas by philosophers, psychologists, biologists and sociologists.

One may begin the examination of violence, which seems to occupy an undeniable place in man's life, with the etymology and meaning of the word. "Violence" derives from "the Latin noun *violentia* ('vehemence', 'impetuosity') and the adjective *violentus* ('vehement', 'forcible', 'violent') and it appears to have become an independent word in Anglo-French and Old French somewhere around the fourteenth century" (Schinkel 19). Although it seems plausible to define "violence" in broad terms as a cruel conduct with the aim of giving harm, it is still hard to define it thoroughly as a concept (Keane 67; Reemtsma 16). The reason for this is that violence is interpreted in various ways

(Derriennic 369) within different contexts. To illustrate, while the *OED* defines violence as a "force or strength of physical action or natural agents" ("Violence"), Elizabeth Kandel Englander delineates it as an "aggressive behaviour with the intent to cause physical or psychological harm" (93), and Felicity de Zulueta as "the extreme expression of human rage" (7) which possibly refers to the aggressive side of human nature.

Like its definition, the origin of violence, too, is a complicated issue since diverse views about the roots and motives of violence have been suggested. It has long been discussed whether human beings have an innate tendency for destructive behaviour, or are led to violence by environmental factors. These two views approach violence from different points of view, the former converging on the aggressive pattern from the biological aspect of human nature within the analysis of primeval hostility and the latter from a social learning perspective. Yet, with regard to the fact that violence is a manifestation of aggression, both of the arguments delve into the psychology of human beings to a certain extent as these factors sometimes comply with each other and thus lead to destructive behaviour.

From the vantage point of psychoanalytic theory, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) is on the side of the claim that people have an inborn predisposition to violence, and he holds instincts responsible for violent behaviour. Although Freud is not the first one to propose this innate state of aggression and violence – as the idea of destructive instinct was previously suggested by Alfred Adler (1870-1937) and Sabina Spielrein (1885-1942) (Boothby 5) – his theory of "biological psychology" (Freud, *New Introductory Lectures* 95) can be deemed critical in understanding violent human nature, and his studies can be regarded as the beginning of violence theory. In his analysis of human psychology, Freud explains that people are under the influence of two contradictory instincts which "function from within stimuli that exert a continual force upon an organism" (Ryan, *Shadow* 54): the life instinct, Eros and the death instinct, Thanatos. In *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (1938), he contends that

> [a]fter long hesitancies and vacillations we have decided to assume the existence of only two basic instincts, *Eros* and the *destructive instinct.* [. . .] The aim of the first of these basic instincts is to establish ever greater unities and to preserve them, thus – in short, to bind together; the aim of the second is, on the contrary, to undo

> connections and so to destroy things. In the case of the destructive instinct, we may suppose that its final aim is to lead what is living into an inorganic state. For this reason we call it the *death instinct.* [. . .] In biological functions the two basic instincts operate against each other or combine with each other. [. . .] This concurrent and mutually opposing action of the two basic instincts gives rise to the whole variegation of the phenomena of life. The analogy of our two pair of opposing forces-attraction and repulsion-which rule in the inorganic world. (148-49)

In this dualistic division of instincts, Freud relates sexual desires and the urge to follow pleasure to Eros. He explains that tending to avoid pain, people pursue what pleases them and "[t]he pleasure principle long persists [. . .] as the method of working employed by the sexual instincts" (*Beyond* 10). Eros, also called the life instinct, "comprises not merely the uninhibited sexual instinct proper and the instinctual impulses of an aim-inhibited or sublimated nature derived from it, but also self-preservative instinct" (Freud, *The Ego* 40). Therefore, it aims to provide unanimity in human life as a vital force. Considering Freud's above allegation, the death instinct appears as a destructive force and an aggressive drive. In *The Ego and the Id* (1923), the psychologist defines the death instinct as "an instinct of destruction directed against the external world and other organisms" (41). In this way, the death drive does not sustain the pleasure principle; on the contrary, it causes displeasure through the works of aggression and destruction. Moreover, Buss claims that "[t]he stronger the death instinct in a person, the more necessary [it is] for him to direct aggression outward against objects and people" (185). And externalising the death instinct in the form of aggression can be triggered by the repetition of painful and traumatic events in one's life according to the Freudian concept of aggression.

However, the death drive does not aim to destroy other beings all the time. It can turn on itself, too, because, Freud claims, "any restriction of this outward-directed aggression would be bound to increase the degree of self-destruction" (*Civilization* 71). When the outward aggressive tendencies are suppressed, the death drive attacks its own self. That is to say, the destructive impulse reverts to its main source and hence violent conduct incorporates one's self in a way that the individual destroys his/her own self. In this respect, it is inescapable to state that the death instinct directs violent tendencies to the self which results in the wish to return to the inanimate state of being in Freud's understanding. Thus, self-destruction also becomes part of the death instinct.

Freudian drive theory is closely connected to his division of the human psyche, too. In his theory of defence mechanism, Freud divides the unconscious mind into three parts: id, ego and superego, describing them as “the three realms, regions, provinces, into which we divide an individual’s mental apparatus” (*New Introductory Lectures* 72). The id refers to the basic instincts beyond man’s control. It includes impulsive forces, sexual drives and other untamed passions, and hence “the pleasure principle serves the id” (Freud, *The Ego* 46). The superego, on the other hand, seems to function as the opposite of the id in the sense that it is like a restrictive control mechanism including “a set of moral values and self-critical attitudes, largely organized around internalized parental imagoes” (Mitchell and Black 20). It is also the voice of “every moral restriction, the advocate of a striving towards perfection” (Freud, *New Introductory Lectures* 67). Finally, the ego balances the id and the superego as the medium that regulates the demands of the id and the superego. It is related neither to the pleasure principle and the uncontrollable instincts of the id nor to the moral restrictions of the superego. In other words, as Freud argues in his *New Introductory Lectures* (1933)*,* the ego “has dethroned the pleasure principle [. . .] and has replaced it by the reality principle” (76).

In this structure of the mind, the id and the superego seem to clash with each other because of the judgemental nature of the superego; however, Freud claims that “the superego is always close to the id and can act as its representative *vis á vis* the ego. It reaches down into the id and for that reason is farther from consciousness than the ego is” (*The Ego* 48). That is to say, what connects the id and the superego is the extreme tension between them in comprasion to the ego. Moreover, the superego is associated with the id as regards the “aggressive impulses of the id” (Boothby 168) in that the repressive structure of the superego comes out in violent urges. This idea can be traced in Freud’s statement in *The Ego and the Id* that “the ego ideal [superego] displays particular severity and often rages against the ego in a cruel fashion” (51) which relates the death instinct with the id. Therefore, Freud’s claim that “the superego is, as it were, a pure culture of death instinct” (*The Ego* 53) supports this association. Furthermore, the superego as the controlling mechanism limits the self in a way that it destroys itself. In other words, as Barbara Ryan comments, “[t]he superego retains parental qualities of power, severity, and tendency to watch over and punish, and is fueled by the sadism of the death instinct unbound as libido is desexualized” (86). That is to say, according to

Freud, violence manifests itself by means of the death drive that is embodied in the id with aggressive uncontrollable compulsion directed towards others as well as in the superego by means of the punishment of the self when the superego directs aggression towards the ego.

Closely allied to Freud's analysis of destructive tendencies is his examination of dreams. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), he talks about the self-centredness of dreams: "They [dreams] are all of them absolutely self-centred; in all of them the self, our own dear self, makes an appearance, even though disguised" (205). In other words, from Freud's perspective, dreams which belong to the unconscious mind are nothing but the fulfilment of wishes, disguised wishes, repressed desires and/or repressed aspirations coming from childhood. For Freud, "there is a want and a prohibition. A wish is the result" (Campbell 55) and "the dream represents a wish as fulfilled" (Freud, *Interpretation* 98).What is forbidden in daily life is repressed and the wishes reveal themselves in dreams. According to this account, it can be asserted that the influence of restrictions dissolves in dreams. Thus, the death drive or destructive impulsions can be revealed in dreams as wish-fulfilments. As an illustration of the violent tendencies in dreams, Freud refers to the dreams in which the intimates are dead. Such dreams, for him, can be regarded as a projection of the supressed destructive tendencies and they "have to be interpretted as wish-fulfilments, despite their unwished-for content" (*Interpretation* 122). Moreover, although some dreams do not apparently reflect hostile intentions, it is possible to trace destructive wish-fulfilments from the symbols in dreams. Campbell gives the example that in dreams, there are symbols allusive to death such as a chasm, the abyss or journeys (68-70).

Like Freud, Robert Ardrey (1908-1980), an American anthropologist, is of the view that there is in man an inborn tendency to become violent. Ardrey asserts that innate aggressiveness leads man to violent action and it "is the principal guarantor of survival" (*Social* 258). He personally believes that violence is a type of aggression and this innate urge is found in all living beings. Thus, he draws certain parallels between human beings and animals in terms of instinctive aggression and violence. For Ardrey, mankind "is a preditor whose natural instinct is to kill with a weapon" (*African* 316) and "[h]uman thought is an extension of the animal debate of instincts" (*African* 344). Like

Ardrey who emphasises the murderous nature of beings, Konrad Lorenz (1903-1989), an Austrian scientist, also endorses the idea that aggression is an instinct that triggers violent action and he is interested in the aggressive behaviour in both man and animals. Lorenz defines aggression as ‘‘the fighting instinct in beast and man which is directed *against* members of the same species’’ (x). He also assumes that the instinct at issue is dangerous because it comes from within spontaneously (47). Unlike Freud and Ardrey, however, Lorenz acknowledges the fact that people's living conditions in a particular society can trigger aggression in addition to the biological aspect of aggression. For example, the offensive manners of particular groups and the othering process incite people to violent action (Lorenz 75-76).

Adrian Raine, a contemporary critic, also peers into the biological roots of violence. In his anatomical analysis, he sheds light on the function of genes as the cause of violence: "Biology is also critically important in understanding violence, and probing through its anatomical underpinnings will be vital for treating the epidemic of violence and crime afflicting our societies. [. . .] Genes shape physiological functioning, which in turn affects our thinking, personality, and behavior" (8). However, it will perhaps be justifiable to state that violence is not a simple issue to deal with only on biological grounds. In fact, the motivations behind violence have a complicated structure which cannot only be formulated only within instinctive tensions. It is, accordingly, possible to find various reasons at the bottom of violent actions. Considering this fact, Raine illustrates other factors that initiate the chaos of violence and makes the assertion that "[s]ocial factors *interact* with biological factors in predisposing someone to violence" (251). Among these factors which play a significant role in violent actions and crimes and which Raine calls ‘‘social elements’’ (267), loss of social position (81), use of alcohol (204), environmental factors (261) and the harmful attitudes of parents towards children (349) can be counted.

As can be observed from Raine's claims, aggression and violence may be learned, an idea expressed also by Englander as follows: "[P]eople learn how to behave as a result of the psychological environment they live in, both as children and as adults" (95). Ashley Montagu also advocates that "human nature is what man learns to become as a human being" (15). Raine, Englander and Montagu's statements exemplify some of the

arguments that only support the view that violence, as a behaviour prompted by aggression, is learned. Such assertions exclude instinctual or biological views of violence and aggression. Joseph de Rivera alleges that

> [f]rom the perspective of social learning theory, aggression is neither instinctive nor produced by frustration. It is a pattern of learned behavior [. . .] Although emotional conditions often precede aggression, numerous studies have shown that loss, frustration, or anger lead to aggression only when an aggressive pattern of behavior has been learned and reinforced. (570)

Likewise, Larson and McCay, who assert that violence is not a biological phenomenon, but a learned conduct, refer to "family influence, social skill development, psychological impariments, [. . .] and social influences" (122) as causes of violence. In this view of violence, the effects of family have to be recognised in particular because parents' attitude toward their children has a long term impact in shaping children's personality and manners. Anthony Storr affirms this view by pointing out that

> the propensity to violence was much accentuated by the ill-effects of an unhappy childhood. People who had no love, or not enough; people who have been deprived by death of one or both parents; people who have suffered cruelty or indifference in their earliest years-all these undoubtedly carry with them into adult life [. . .]. (*Destructiveness* 76)

That is to say, childhood is a period of life that is influential in determining the characteristics of a person to such an extent that aggressive tendencies may be inherited from familial attitudes in the formative years of childhood. In this way, it can also be claimed, from a social learning perspective, that pain, suffering or any kind of trauma caused by dysfunctional families operates as one of the reasons for violent behaviour. Additionally, parents' cruel and violent tendencies can be imitated by their children, which means that "[m]odeling [becomes] one of the many ways of acquiring aggressive behavior" (Souza 16) observed in children. Similarly, the leaving or refusal of the parental figures, mostly of the mother as a caregiver, causes worry, animosity and unhappiness (Kobak and Madsen 24). Thus, aggressive and destructive behaviour springs from the disruption of the attachment between the child and the caregiver. The same reactions are observed also in adulthood when a person is abandoned by a person close to him/her. This is especially noticed in marriages or other types of romantic relationships. Frustration caused by a separation may direct the person to violent or

destructive actions. More interestingly, when people feel entrapped by certain problems and do not believe in solutions, they tend to act violently (Erşen 133).

To further argue, particular disorders in, to use Larson and McCay's phrase, "social skill development" (122) can be counted among the reasons for violent behaviour. Doretta Caramaschi writes that "individuals with antisocial personality disorder and/or psychopathic personality are among the most common violent types" (23). In other words, introverts or people alienated from society are said to be more inclined to violence. Proceeding from this assertion, they disrupt the order of society when they act violently. On the other hand, the approach of society to particular types of people may itself cause violence. When someone is alineated or marginalised in a particular society, he/she suffers from the negative effects of the othering process. Subsequently, emotional suffering and repression may drift the person to destructive actions as a reaction against society because there is a connection between "the experience of pain, particularly psychic pain, and the expression of violence" (Zulueta 53). In other words, "destructive behavior becomes a mode of expression" (Souza 7) for the "other." In such circumstances, violence as a behaviour is learned or acquired.

Similar to varied stimulations of violence, there are different types of violent actions because Guggisberg and Weir indicate that violence appears in many shapes (ix). In broad terms, in line with Rivera's division of violence into four basic categories, personal violence, community violence, societal violence and structural violence can be accounted as types of destructive conduct (Rivera 574-83). Personal violence springs from individual conflicts and problems. Murder, rape, homicide, suicide and verbal expressions of destruction comprise this type of violence. On the other hand, wars, riots, gang-fighting and police violence are accepted as what Rivera calls community violence as they do not stem from personal problems, but relate to the violent actions within a society (577-79). Furthermore, terrorism, genocide, interstate warfare and media violence constitute societal violence which represents the "forms of violence that occur throughout the society in which communities are embedded" (Rivera 579). Violence out of political and economic troubles is part of structural violence. It is "exhibited when large portions of human population are prevented from fulfiling their potential due to economic and social structures based on inequality and exploitation" (Galtung and

Jacobsen 270). Such violence especially concerns this thesis. In relevance to the forms of violence practised in Marina Carr's plays which are the topic of discussion in the rest of the thesis, it is necessary to identify three kinds of personal violence: verbal violence, homicide and suicide.

The manifestations of violence on a verbal pattern are related to verbal aggression. Indeed, it is the most common way of violence that people are exposed to though "verbal aggression is insufficient to achieve the desired social goal (the opponent is not deterred by the use of violence) or inefficient [. . .] or the opponent is not perceived as dangerous to the aggressor (for example when the aggressor is strong and the opponent weak)" (Winstok and Enosh 277). The illustrations of violence in speeches refer to yelling, cursing, swearing and threatening that include words correlated with the act of violence. As a mode of aggressive behaviour, verbal violence arises from emotional turmoils such as frustration, disappointment and annoyance. Verbal violence is mostly observed in depressed people (Weissman and Paykel 35) who tend to manifest their hostility and despair by the means of discursive practices.

Verbal aggression and violence are also related to physical violence in two ways. As regards the first of these two ways, Jan E. Stets argues that "[r]ather than repressing these feelings, which may build up over time and eventually be released in a physically aggressive incident, a person may be able to avoid aggression and at the same time deal with negative feelings by venting them verbally soon after they emerge" (502). From Stets' point of view, the demonstration of violence verbally avoids physical harm as the person feels relieved after displaying the repressed tendencies of violence. It is also possible to assume that the statements of verbal hostility can be used as a tool to have a kind of control over the opponent (Winstok and Perkis 177). However, the second argument rests entirely on the possibility that verbal violence may precede physical violence. Threats of attack and statements of negative intentions may take place after they are verbally declared. Especially "when they [the arguing parties] do not have the skills necessary for dealing with the normal frustrations of interpersonal interactions" (Palazzolo, Roberto, and Babin 358), people tend to act violently in both verbal and physical ways.

Homicide is, according to the *OED* definition, “the action, by a human being, of killing a human being” (“homicide”). This deliberate act of killing, as a form of violence, frequently occurs all around the world. Homicidal violence, which is motivated by different causes, is seen in two different ways: The act of murder may be planned or it can be a spontaneous action. Some killers tend to plan their violent action beforehand. As a result of proactive agression, some killers are, in Raine’s terms, “cold-blooded and dispassionate. They’ll carefully plan the heist they have been thinking through, and they’ll not think twice about killing if need be” (76-77). In other cases, the murderer decides to act violently at the moment of rage. Uncontrollable forms of anger may result in lethal action and in such cases, “[h]omicides [are] usually spontaneous acts carried out with whatever weapon came to hand” (Conley 71). Woodworth and Porter encapsulate this fact as follows:

> Homicide is a heterogeneous phenomenon, associated with different contexts, motivations, and types of perpetrators. For example, some homicides are highly calculated, instrumental acts, whereas others are characterized by an apparent lack of premeditation, occuring in the context of an emotion-laden dispute or in response to a situational provocation. (436)

Although violence is most probably not the ideal way to dissolve troubles, people tend to apply violent action in certain cases. The reasons for murder have a wide range from personal problems to societal traumas. Leenaars lists frustrated personal relationship, ambivalance, jealousy, separation, depression, helplessness and guilt as the stimuli for homicide (104-06). In a similar manner, Brookman argues that

> [t]he effect of a socially disadvantaged family life, emotional deprivation and inadequate nurturing all apparently contributed to the existence of a defective conscience, causing the killer extreme frustration that could lead to murder. Here the murderer deliberately chooses homicide as a method of coping with and resolving psychological conflicts. (77)

In some cases of murder, the use of alcohol also plays an active role. As Conley exemplifies, “[a]lcohol [is] actually reported as a contributing factor in 28 percent of Irish homicide cases” (74).

Infanticide is a category of homicide in that it refers to the intentional murder of children, and the *OED* defines this violent act as “the killing of infants” (“Infanticide”). Those who are accepted legally as infants are killed most of the time by their own parents because, as Hunnicutt claims, when children come of age, “family members are

less likely to be perpetrators" (6). The reasons for infanticide can be traced to disgrace, isolation, economic problems, malignant aims and psychological abuse (Kilday 153-82). Furthermore, infanticide becomes a gendered-issue when mothers are found guilty of the murder. Especially, new-born child murder is associated with women as they tend to kill unwanted children immediately after they give birth. Daly and Wilson affirm this idea as follows: "Poor, unwed mothers have certainly disposed of unwanted infants during the entire history of the English-speaking world, as they have done elsewhere" (64). Moreover, desperate conditions can lead parents to murder in the case that they are anxious about the security of their children. Wars, famine and terrorist acts can be counted among the factors leading parents to murder. To illustrate, Almond states that the Goebbels, a Nazist German family, decided to kill their six children to prevent the Russians from damaging them after the fall of Hitler; the mother poisoned all of their children, and then, the parents committed suicide (203).

Suicide or self-annihilation, which may be deemed as the apex of violence/violent action, is "obviously a *murder* [. . .] committed *by* the self as murderer. It is a death in which are combined in one person the murderer and the murdered" (Shneidman "Orientations" 38). As a type of violence, self-murder is also "the primary form of aggression" for Freud (Ryan, *Shadow* 164). In *An Outline of Psychoanalysis,* Freud explains that "self-destructiveness is brought about by diverting the aggressiveness against himself [. . .] till at last it succeeds in killing the individual" (150). As discussed previously, Freud's death drive theory provides an explanation for suicide: "Under certain conditions the death-wish comes to predominate over the life-wish, and suicide is the manifestation" (Martin 93). Unquestionably, suicide is the result of an abnormal psychological state.

In addition to instinctual impulses, an examination of the diverse causes behind the wish to destroy one's own self is of significance here to understand what lies at the root of self-murder. Considering the suicidal person as "unusually rigid and inflexible, with a negative view of himself, lacking in hope, manipulative" (Lester and Lester 50), it will probably be accurate to examine behavioral problems and certain circumstances which push people to suicide.

First of all, an individual inclines to suicide when his/her life is in a desperate situation as a result of diverse complications. Problems at work, at home or in any kind of personal relationship, as well as economic troubles, may cause thoughts of suicide. Elizabeth Kilpatrick articulates that "[l]ife for these individuals contain one failure after another in educational, economic, and personal relationships. Consequently there is very real suffering. Suicide may seem to be the only solution" (164). That is to say, when people find themselves in a hopeless situation, they tend to end their lives which they see as the ultimate solution. Suicide also indicates that the person refuses to suffer more and that, as Choron writes, it is "a matter of personal decision [and choice]" (102). As another factor that is influential in the decision to kill oneself, depression is worthy of mention. Suicidal inclinations are mostly observed in depression (Choron 76; Lester and Lester 46; Shneidman and Farberow 217) because people lose the joy and meaning of life in the said medical condition. They tend to become introverted and their interest in life abates. In their isolated lives, those in depression are "withdrawn, apathetic, apprehensive and anxious, often 'blue' and tearful, somewhat unreachable and seemingly uncaring" (Shneidman, "Preventing Suicide" 260). Therefore, their wish to destroy themselves and end their suffering force them to self-annihilation. Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) describes this type of suicide as melancholy suicide. He clarifies melancholy suicide as follows:

> This is connected with a general state of extreme depression and exaggerated sadness, causing the patient no longer to realize sanely the bonds which connect him with people and things about him. Pleasures no longer attract; he sees everything as through a dark cloud. Life seems to him boring or painful. As these feelings are chronic, so are the ideas of suicide; they are fixed and their broad determining motives are always essentially the same. [. . .] From that moment [the person] contracts an extreme disgust, a definite desire for solitude and soon an invincible desire to die. (10)

With the help of Durkheim's above statement it becomes more obvious that depression and melancholic state may result in self-murder. Freud, too, relates melancholy to suicidal impulses in the sense that melancholic feelings after a love object is lost trigger aggression towards one's own self. He states that "[t]he analysis of melancholia now shows that the ego can kill itself if [. . .] it is able to direct against itself the hostility which relates to an object and which represents the ego's original reaction to objects in the external world" ("Mourning" 252). In reference to Freud's conviction, Harding also

states that "the ego identifies with loved aspects of the lost one and the superego absorbs the hostility towards the lost object and directs it onto the ego" (7). Moreover, suicide may be seen as a kind of reunion with the dead beloved ones. When one is separated from his/her parents, relatives, friends or lovers by means of death, the same event can be perceived as an instrument for reuniting with them. Thus, "suicide, with its dark motivations for immortality, punishment, and reunion, is spun from the same loom" (Shneidman "Suicide" 542). Additionally, intense feelings such as shame, guilt or remorse, especially after a murder, lead some to commit suicide. Finally, suicide occurs as a kind of revenge. Edward Westermark, for instance, comments on suicide as a vengeful action, providing a list of the factors that may make one seek revenge. The list includes

> disappointed love or jealousy; illness or old age; grief over the death of a child, husband and wife; fear of punishment; slavery or brutal treatment by a husband; remorse, shame or wounded pride; anger or revenge. In various cases an offended person kills himself for the express purpose of taking revenge on the offender. (232-33)

As can be understood from the quotation, suicide, in many cases, emanates from personal matters. However, Durkheim adds a different dimension to the explanation of suicidal tendencies by pinpointing the relation between the individual and society. He divides suicide into three types – egoistic suicide, altruistic suicide and anomic suicide (Durkheim 98-104) – and relates suicide to the conditions of the society that a person lives in.[1] Within the scope of this thesis, it is better to deal with egoistic suicide because it "results from lack of involvement with the society and concern with it" (Choron 66). Egoistic suicide is associated with individualistic desires against the norms of society. Durkheim explains that "[w]hen society is strongly integrated, it holds individuals under its control, considers them at its service and thus forbids them to dispose wilfully of themselves. Accordingly it opposes their evading their duties to it through death" (168). However, if an individual decides to kill him/herself, this becomes a kind of disruption to the social order as he or she no longer serves society by rejecting the social roles attributed to him/her. Therefore, those who favour suicide stemming from their individualism turn into "the admitted masters of their destinies, it is the privilege to end their lives" (Durkheim 168). Thus, suicide can be considered a kind of individual reaction against the social order.

Another issue within the discussion of violence is that brutal actions are generally gendered by society in that the use of violence by men is thought to be more prevalent in comparison to women's use of it. Raine asserts that men tend to be more violent compared to women (33). Similarly, Eric Schneider states that "[w]hen we look across time and space, at preliterate peoples and at modern ones, at developing countries and at developed ones, at cities and at the countryside, we see that men commit approximately 90 percent of all homicides" (35). To state the same thing differently, violent incidences are associated with males in a general framework. Furthermore, given the claim that men take advantage of their physical strength while acting violently (Dutton 32), male violence is linked to power and control. Therein, the use of violence by men is related to such issues as superiority and authority. As for the position of women in gendered analyses, they are widely victimised because the association of violence with the male power "meant that women cannot participate effectively in male group activities" (Zulueta 41). The social construction of identity is also of utmost importance in regard to gendered violence. Englander claims that

> [g]irls are much more likely to be taught to be expressive caregivers in preparation for their role as the central parent of children. They are also taught to be the spouse who is the emotional watchdog in marital relationships. Individuals who are socialized in this way are undoubtedly less likely to be violent and assultive. (109)

As social norms lead women to turn into "good" mothers and wives, they are expected to behave in a humble way in service to their children and husbands. So negative feelings or behaviours are not identified with females: "Aggression in women – the behavioral manifestation of their hating feelings – is generally considered problematic, that is, not feminine" (Almond 4). Additionally, as Rike states, the claim that "women tend to express their inner splitting in more passive, subtle, and less openly violent ways than men [. . .] has encouraged us to overlook them" (34). Unless "overlooked," accordingly, it becomes clear that women can act as violently as men, and they are not victims of violence at all times. They, too, can be perpetrators. Dutton even asserts that "[w]omen are three times more likely to use severe violence [. . .] as men" (32). Thus, violent tendencies of women cannot be ignored. Among the types of violence, verbal aggression is more common among women (Stets 508). Verbal violence reflects women's feelings of hostility in everyday life contexts. As regards murder, women kill "those closest to them, with whom they live (or have lived) – that is, intimate partners

(or ex-partners) and family members (specifically their children)" (Brookman 162-63). So in contrast to certain assumptions, women appear as murderers. They can even kill their infants as referred to earlier on in the definition of infanticide. This amounts to saying that stereotypical descriptions of motherhood lose their validity when violent tendencies of women are deeply examined.

In a general framework, motherhood, one of the identities and roles ascribed to women, is defined in general, as related by Thurer, as "women's 'natural' biological destiny" (256). The reproductive aspect of the female body characterises women's position as mothers in social life though it is a reductive and essentialist view. "Only one person is pregnant with a baby, only one carries it in her body for all those months, only one births it" (Rothman 7), and hence only one is held responsible for mothering throughout one's lifetime. In other words, as it is the woman who is capable of giving birth, she is "naturally" the one expected to devote her life to childrearing. Thus, it becomes inevitable to think about the "woman=mother equation" (Pierson, Lévesque, and Arnup xx) which is particularly supported by the discourse of the dominant patriarchal ideology and its practices in that they associate maternal instinct with motherhood. Such an instinct refers to "the inner promptings which induce women to care for their offspring" (Whitbeck 186). By means of maternal instinct, women's identity as mothers is thought to be natural as, Douglas and Michaels explain, "[t]he maternal instinct is supposed to be so wired into mothers that motherhood is not some role they perform; they just *are* mothers" (164). From this vantage point, it becomes crystal clear that motherhood is credited with instinctual feelings which, supposedly, enable women to develop unconditional affection for the offspring and, hence the presence of love in mother's relation to her child is thought to be the essence of maternity (Woollett and Phoenix 41). Women's biology not only leads them to becoming mothers, but also imprisons them within the ideals of a serious commitment because motherhood requires constant care and absolute love. In "Maternal Thinking," Sara Ruddick reveals that "[t]he identification of the capacity of attention and the virtue of love is at once the foundation and the corrective of maternal thought" (223). As a result of the conception that women instinctively turn into mothers after giving birth, they are supposed to naturally grow attached to their children. Thus, the maternal instinct is thought to enable them to connect with the child and to initiate a lifelong love relationship between the

mother and the child. While enjoying motherhood, the nurturing woman dedicates herself to the child, and her bond with her/him is based on maternal love. Harriette Marshall pinpoints that "[i]t is characterized as 'natural', 'taken for granted' that mothers feel love for their children, not necessarily at once, but in time" (69). She further argues that "[t]his love is said to be hard to hold back, ready to 'burst out', it is 'total' [. . .] While the joy of *parenting* is discussed, the manuals suggest a special relationship between mother and child, and *maternal* love is emphasized" (69). However, Brookman suggests the necessity of considering such cases as a seventeen-year-old mother who killed her baby immediately after giving birth and left it in a plastic bag, and another woman, who killed her baby by stabbing and burying it after birth, raising the question whether or not these reflect maternal instinct (190-91). Considering these examples, it would most probably be misleading to claim that maternal behaviour is only based on instinctive feelings. Thereby, it has to be recognised that motherly love, or so-called maternal instinct, is actually used as part of "the ideology of," what O'Reilly calls, "natural-intensive mothering" (6) that is constructed by the patriarchy, in Hollingworth's words, to "characterize all women equally, and to furnish them with an all-consuming desire for parenthood, regardless of the personal pain, sacrifice, and disadvantaged involved" (20).

While motherhood is related to the biological functions of the female body, women's role as mothers is shaped by male-dominated society. From the standpoint of patriarchal ideology, motherhood is thought to be an important step in women's lives to achieve a mature identity. Anne Woollett denotes that "[m]otherhood is highly valued symbolically as the key to adulthood: having a child makes a woman a mother *and* an adult. [. . .] Having children and bringing them up grants women into a world of female knowledge and experience and enables them to share a common identity" (53, 55). Thus, this phase of life is appreciated since motherhood forms a respectable identity for women. Therefore, it is taken for granted that women have to be main caregivers of their children for the sake of their identity formation, and motherhood is idealised within certain qualities. This limited view of womanhood acquires a good deal of sacrifice and devotion as "motherhood has been constructed as an intensely private, full-time activity" (Nelson 181). In the realm of motherhood, there is no place for women's personal wishes or desires; instead, they have to live in accordance with the

requirements of society's perfect image of mothers. The social construction of maternal identity suggests that motherhood is also a learned role rather than the achievement of women's biology in that "[t]he good mother is reinvented as each age or society defines her anew, in its own terms, according to its own mythology" (Thurer xv). That is to say, the factors that define requirements of motherhood may change in accordance with the society that women live in or the conditions that surround them; therefore, maternal identity shaped by different determinants may have its learnt aspects. Moreover, Woollett and Phoenix argue that

> the desire to be a mother is not so much a part of women's 'natural' biological inheritance but is learned, along with the skills of motherhood, as women grow up. Women learn that being a mother is a normal and proper part of being adult for women and that, for those in heterosexual relationships, motherhood is an integral part of their relationships, even though becoming a mother may trigger development crises. (41)

Thus, women learn how to become good mothers, the idealised image of which comprises many impossible criteria. However, as such portrayals have a simplistic and one-dimensional notion of motherhood, it is an easy task to identify them. In accordance with stereotypical images, a mother has to be selfless; being a good mother is her sole aim in life. She dedicates herself to her children and her husband at home. This domestic woman loves her family unconditionally. She is never selfish and she is purified from negative feelings such as anger, hatred and jealousy. While looking after her children, she always loves them. Moreover, she does not hesitate to sacrifice herself for them. Her offspring become the centre of her life while she lives under their shadow. Although her life is "governed by 'interests' in satisfying 'demands' for the preservation, growth, and acceptability of children" (Ruddick, "Preservative" 233), she is content with this commitment because motherhood is her only means of self-achievement and self-fulfilment. Warner explains the dedication or burden of mothers as follows:

> The ideal Mom [. . .] had no boundaries. She wore kids' clothes-overall shorts, and sneakers, and jumpers or smocks. She decorated her home in bright-colored plastics. She embraced boredom and repetition, and eschewed speedy action (and artifical thinking) in order to run, more smoothly, on babytime. [. . .] She accepted that she might never realize her dreams for her life. She relinquished desire. [. . .] She would not let her child feel loneliness or pain. She would keep connection going at all times. [. . .] She relinquished all thoughts that were 'selfish.' (68, 69, 70)

In this domestic and devoted way of existence, mothers do not give importance to their own needs, but they rather concentrate on the demands of their children. Otherwise stated, “the mother has committed the cardinal sin of motherhood: putting herself, however temporarily, before her child” (Douglas and Michaels 83).

The “morality” of mothers is also a determining factor among the ideals of motherhood in that only married mothers are mostly put on a pedestal and become acceptable in society. Gorham and Andrews pinpoint this fact by describing the general attitude of “those who emphasize woman’s special nature as mother, and who wish to strengthen what they see as a unique woman’s moral and social culture” (239). In other words, the reproductive agency of women is only appreciated within the institution of marriage. Interestingly, “[a]lthough motherhood could not coexist with virginity, mother as an ideal were nevertheless associated with sexual purity” (Holmes 37). Hence, as sexual activity would destroy the perfect image of maternity, mothers are treated as asexual. Moreover, if a woman does not accord with moral rules, she is not idealised as a good mother even though she loves and takes care of her child. Therefore, it is possible to think that the archetype of ideal motherhood, especially in Christian societies, is derived from the image of the Virgin Mary who is praised for her moral qualities and motherhood although she is not married. She is accepted as the mother of God’s Son and “her brand of motherhood is embedded in our [the Christian] psyche. The Virgin’s way of nurturing has become *the* maternal ideal, the pinnacle of feminine ambition” (Thurer 82). Along with her pure nature and womanhood, her commitment to and love for Christ determines the perfect image of motherhood. In this respect, it can be understood that maternal love based on motherly instinct is actually constructed. Rather than an instinctive bond, the boundless love appears to be a requisite of perfect motherhood. Similarly, Glenn claims that “[i]n the 1960s, child development researchers ‘discovered’ maternal bonding. The concept was used to argue that the infant needed a single caretaking figure, preferably the biological mother, to develop a healthy sense of self and an ability to relate to others” (9).

The burden of motherhood assumes another rigorous function as the mother determines the personality of the child with the way she rears him/her. The mother is in charge of the child’s development and has an enormous influence on her/his life, both present and

future. A Freudian analysis of the mother-child relationship also indicates this claim in the sense that the bond between the two in the early stages of childhood "is the basis of all future love relationships [and] [. . .] the basis for the mental health or emotional problems that appear later in life" (Birns and Hay 14). In a similar vein, there is the assertion that children who are not reared by "good" mothers may have some psychological problems (Woollett and Phoenix 34). From the discussion of maternity and its ideals given above, it can be understood that the attitude towards motherhood, based on female biology, limits women to a certain role to satisfy the requirements of motherhood. Patrice DiQuinzio defines this essential approach to women using the term "essential motherhood" which refers to "women's motherhood as natural and inevitable. It requires women's exclusive and selfless attention and care of children based on women's psychological and emotional capacities for empathy, awareness of the needs of others, and self-sacrifice" (xiii).

In line with the dominant ideology and its expectations from mothers, the image of "bad" mothers appears in many contexts so long as women do not fit into the ideals of maternal responsibility. In fact, this image is the flip side of the one-dimensional motherhood concept as those labelled as "bad" or "evil" mothers have a totally different understanding of motherhood, which is not idealised or romanticised in that they are said to be selfish, tempting, neglectful and destructive. A thirty-two-year-old Jewish mother Susan in the feminist critic Meryle Mahrer Kaplan's study of mother figures describes a typical bad mother: "The bad mother she [Susan] describes is the mother of a childhood friend who sounds both unconventional and depressed. She drank, did not want to be 'bothered' by her daughter and her friends, did not guide their behavior, and was not actively involved in her child's life" (46). In contrast to the angelic good mother, the bad mother does not follow maternal responsibility as her motherly commitment does not satisfy her (Francus 60). She is not domestic or silent; on the contrary, she is very demanding, passionate and individualistic. Discarding her maternal identity, she does not want her life to be dominated by endless devotion to children. She is also concerned with her own personal problems which may lead her to depression and negligence of responsibility at home. Therefore, those indifferent to their children are accused of being empty of "maternal instinct" (Allison 37) or of rejecting "a 'natural desire' for motherhood" (Allison 37) as they do not exhibit motherly affection or love in

a way that society expects them to. In addition to uncaring figures, women "unable to replicate, or find happiness in, the idolized stereotypical role of mother" (O'Reilly 128) are categorised as bad mothers because their behaviour threatens the social order that is controlled by the dominant patriarchal ideology. What is more, as stated previously, morality becomes an important factor to determine whether a woman is good enough for mothering. Mothers transcending the moral codes of society turn into bad mothers. As previously touched upon, motherhood out of wedlock is not always tolerated although the number of single mothers is on the increase in recent years. Moreover, Thurer portrays another type of "bad" mother: She is "the unwed, sexually active mother, who trigger[s] virulent hatred in her society, and who, unable to satisfy her own or her child's basic needs for food and shelter, sacrifice[s] her child" (181). The mother figure in this depiction disregards the child's necessary needs for protection and nutrition and transgresses moral conventions. As a result, she becomes a misfit in society. By virtue of such examples, it can be asserted with precision that "the desire for the development of interests and aptitudes other than the maternal is stigmatized as 'dangerous,' 'melancholy,' 'degrading,' 'abnormal,' 'indicative of decay'" (Hollingworth 24) which leads to the construction of the bad mother archetype.

In literary works, especially in fairy-tales, there is a tendency to attribute the characteristics of bad mothers to stepmother figures rather than biological mothers. In such descriptions, "female maliciousness" (Francus 124) is shown as a feature of stepmothers who represent the "monstrous" side of motherhood. Illustrations of bad mothers can be observed in the narrations of Greek mythology as well. The stories of Gaea, Rhea, Medea and Clymnestra (Rich 122) draw attention to abnormal mother psychology rather than depicting maternal irresponsibility. It is possible to trace negative feelings like jealousy, revenge and anger in these narrations. Especially, the myth of Medea, which is also used by Carr in the last play of the Midlands trilogy, turns into an archetype characterising the bad mother image. According to the myth, Medea is desperately in love with Jason for whom she does not hesitate to sacrifice everything. To help him get the Golden Fleece, she kills her own brother (Hamilton 132) and later, she runs away with Jason and their children from her father's kingdom to Corinth. However, Jason makes a big mistake in Corinth by deserting Medea and finding a new bride, the princess of Corinth (Almond 202). Witnessing that her lover is not loyal to

her, Medea seeks revenge as Euripides (480-406 BC), the famous Athenian tragedian, describes in his play *Medea* (431 BC): “Oh, may I see Jason and his bride / Ground to pieces in their shattered palace / For the wrong they have dared to do to me, unprovoked!” (165-67). She plans to kill not only her female enemy by sending her poisonous gifts, but also her own sons as a punishment for Jason:

> I will kill my sons.
>
> No one shall take my children from me. When I have made
>
> Jason’s whole house a shambles, I will leave Corinth
>
> A murderess, flying from my darling children’s blood.
>
> Yes, I can endure guilt, however horrible;
>
> The laughter of my enemies I will not endure. (792-97)

She even justifies her violent action: “For they must die, / In any case; and since they must, then I who gave / Them birth will kill them.” (1241-43). As the Roman poet Ovid (43 BC-AD 17/18) later describes in his *Metamorphoses*, Medea’s “revenge must act a tragic part” (VII. 449) in that Medea, as a mother, plays an extraordinary role by using her children as a means of taking revenge from her husband. Thus, asserting herself as a vengeful lover, she becomes the “monstrous mother to the end – powerful, unpredictable, meddling” (Francus 70). Her love for Jason metamorphoses into hatred and she turns into a murderess who even sacrifices her own children with the intention of taking revenge. Denys L. Page states that “[t]he murder of children, caused by jealousy and anger against their father, is mere brutality [. . .]. But the emotions of the woman whose love has turned to hatred, and equally those of the man who loves no longer, represent something eternal and unchangeable in human nature” (xiv-v), that is violence.

Although motherhood actually has many facets, women are still imprisoned within limited stereotypes. While women as mothers are imprisoned by unrealistic ideals, they are defamed as soon as they contravene such ideals: “Mothers are romanticized as life-giving, self-sacrificing, and forgiving and demonized as smothering, overly involved, and destructive” (Glenn 11). However, the experience of motherhood is a complex issue which cannot be reduced to a couple of ideals as women have diverse identities and personalities outside their maternal role. Birns and Hay clarify this point as follows:

> Motherhood wears different faces. The experience of being a mother is affected by a woman's personal history, by the position she holds in her society, and by the social and economic forces operating in her culture. The experience of motherhood is also affected by the mother's health and present circumstances, by the quality of her relationships with family and friends, and, not least important, by the unique characteristics of her children. (1)

Although the images of maternity create stereotypical representations, women's real experiences as mothers tell a different story. For example, Warner recounts the reaction of a mother worn out by her experiences of mothering: "The woman moved her hands in circles, helplessly, 'What I'm trying to figure out-' she paused. 'What I'm trying to remember . . . is how I ended up raising the princess . . . how I got into . . . how to get out of . . . this, this, this . . . *this mess*'" (4). In other words, the "holy" duty of mothering means only chaos, turmoil and disorder for a woman. Obviously, in line with the circumstances by which a mother is surrounded, her attitude towards motherhood changes, and she takes an ambivalent stance on maternity. Rozsika Parker, a psychotherapist and writer, coined the term "maternal ambivalence" which refers to "a complex and contradictory state of mind, shared variously by all mothers, in which loving and hating feelings for children exist side by side" (17). Even though a mother feels connected with the child, it is inevitable to be overcome by feelings of anger, frustration and violence at the moments in which

> the burden of caring for children can become routine drudgery or emotional torment when it is done constantly, repeatedly, because of one's obligations, and when it consumes nearly all of one's energies and time, as when a mother does nothing else than care for children and household [. . .]. (Held 11)

Adrienne Rich (1929-2012), the American feminist essayist and poet, affirms the ambiguity that a mother may encounter by reflecting her own experience as a mother:

> My children cause me the most exquisite suffering of which I have any experience. It is the suffering of ambivalence: the murderous alternation between bitter resentment and raw-edged nerves, and blissful gratification and tenderness. Sometimes I seem to myself, in my feelings toward these tiny guiltless beings, a monster of selfishness and intolerance. Their voices wear away at my nerves, their constant needs, above all their need for simplicity and patience, fill me with despair at my own failures, despair too at my fate, which is to serve a function for which I was not fitted. And I am weak sometimes from held-in rage. [. . .] And yet at other times I am melted with the sense of their helpless, charming and quite irresistible beauty – their ability to go on loving and trusting – their staunchness and decency and unselfconsciousness. *I love them.* But it's the enormity and inevitability of this love that the sufferings lie. (21-22)

As can be observed, the maternal bond is not always linked with motherly love and unconditional affection, but it is inclined to be fraught with frustration. Therefore, as Almond affirms, aggressive behaviour in mothers is introspectively unavoidable (11). Parker explains that "[c]ultural expectations are partly responsible for the times when the anxiety associated with ambivalence becomes unbearable and anxiety on behalf of the child transforms into aggression against the child or the self" (34). Aggressive tendencies of mothers may lead to destructive actions displaying neglected terrain of motherhood that includes "a dark side – irrational, chaotic, and destructive" (Thurer 10). Hence, violent incidences take place in different forms in relation to the personal story of a mother. Indeed, "the depths of the dark side" of motherhood may be "expressed in behaviors ranging from psychological abuse to child murder" (Almond 9-10) or in suicide of mothers (O'Reilly 8-9; Girardi et al. 512). Therefore, the examination of various stories based on women's real experiences is of importance to understand relatively unknown dimensions of motherhood. Especially, the incidences of infanticide committed by mothers prove that "a woman can reject her biological destiny and refutes assumptions regarding motherhood and domesticity as the natural, preferred way of life for women" (Francus 74).

The story of Andrea Yates, a mother from Texas, is an interesting case in the sense that her responsibility of mothering leads her to murder her own children. Her anxiety as a mother appears to be the motivation behind her violent action. As Renata Salecl narrates, Yates drowned her five children at home after her husband went to work in the summer of 2001: "To the sergeant she said that she did not hate her children and was not mad at them; she killed them because they were not developing correctly" (95). Her extreme devotion to appropriate behaviour in line with her religious ideals blinded her so much that she defended the murder by saying, "'[m]y children weren't righteous. They stumbled because I was evil. The way I was raising them they could never be saved [. . .]. They were going to perish'" (Salecl 95). Along with her excessive commitment, apparently, her sense of motherly responsibility drove Yates to this end because she felt guilty of the way that she raised her children. She did not deny her role as a mother, but social and moral conventions drove or rather forced her to destroy her own children which also discloses the psychological burden that a mother experiences.

In the case of Joanne Michulski that Adrienne Rich analyses (256-58), the brutal murder of children is caused by a different motivation. Michulski was a mother of eight children, but she claimed to have been exhausted and depressed after the birth of each child. Instead of preventing pregnancy, she finally decided to kill them and terminated her motherhood in this way. Although she was not sentenced as she was charged with insanity (Rich 257), it is obvious that motherly duty caused her to go through a mental breakdown.

A more striking instance of infanticide by mothers is that of a Susan Smith. Smith's murder of her children is a complicated issue in which the denial of motherhood is easily witnessed:

> Sweet-faced, white Susan Smith told South Carolina police in 1994 that she was desperate to find her young children, who had just been abducted by a black male stranger. Tabloid and mainstream media went wild, casting Smith as an innocent small-town victim of big-time crime. Later, the "Susan Smith Case" became sensational news when it turned out that Smith had been lying, had invented a menacing black stranger to cover up the fact that she had deliberately drowned her children by locking them in her car and letting it roll into a lake. Suddenly, Smith was much more complex than the media had initially thought. She was a traditional southern woman who seemed cut out for the role of mother, yet nevertheless decided to kill her two sons. (Newitz 336-37)

It was later on revealed that after Susan Smith separated from her husband, she had a sexual affair with another man who refused to marry her as she had children (Newitz 337). Her affair led this woman to relinquish her identity as a mother by killing her children. This extraordinary case exemplifies that in certain situations women's female identity as a lover does not comply with her identity as a mother, and thus, modern versions of Medea are duplicated in different ways. Moreover, women's denial of maternity and the act of slaughtering their offspring can be evaluated in a symbolic way in the sense that

> [t]he murdering mother is more than just a killer of children; she can be understood as an outlaw figure, a romantic antihero. She is a killer of tradition, a woman whose crimes seem to protest social values which make women into mothers against their wishes or under conditions not of their own choosing. (Newitz 336)

Although the reality of brutality and violence cannot be ignored, here it is evident that identity crises can lead women to destruction. Particularly, when they are overshadowed by the requirements of their motherly status, they attempt to escape from their position

as mothers, and suicide looks like a way out. Mothers especially tend to feel anxious and distressed following delivery as a result of “identity reformation, endocrine changes and role transition” (Walther 100). The condition experienced in this period is called postpartum or postnatal depression in which suicidal inclinations are witnessed in women (Brockman 266; Walther 104; Pope et al. 483). In accordance with their analysis, Tavares et al. claim that “suicide is responsible for 28% of all female deaths [and it is] considered one of the three major factors in maternal mortality” (271). The trouble that a suicidal mother has is shown in the examples below:

> One woman remembered sitting on the floor in her bedroom rocking back and forth saying, ‘please let me die’. Another said she was sick of fighting herself to live. Torn between life and death, she described herself as being ‘on a fence’ between the two:
>
> Over there are all these thorns and they pick at your skin and they hurt and you can’t get any relief. Over there’s nice soft cotton and all you have to do is jump right over there. When you’re so desperate that’s the only way you can see out. You either stay in the thorns or you go to the cotton. And the only way you can go to the cotton is to end your life. (Wood et al. 314-15)

As exemplified in the above instances, mothers of new-born babies finding themselves in an ambiguous state tend to get out of this situation by means of self-destruction. What is more, this tendency is not limited to the period immediately after childbirth when mothers’ lives are shattered by the coming of the baby; their depressive state may have a longer-lasting impact that threatens them and their families continuously (Corwin et al. 79). Thus, aggression and destruction become part of mothering depending on mothers’ individual experiences and personality of mothers as well as external factors. As opposed to the powerful myths about motherhood, real experiences of mothers have different dimensions in which women’s biological role does not define them.

In Ireland, as in many other social and cultural contexts, being a mother has been ascribed to women as a solemn role in that “womanhood/motherhood is conflated and naturalised as a subject position [for Irish women] in the public domain” (Allison 35). Although this approach to motherhood is valid for many societies, the peculiarity of Irish motherhood is that it can be taken as a symbol of the Irish nation shaped by religious and political discourses. In fact, Ireland has always been associated with female figures as Edna O’Brien states: “Ireland has always been a woman, a womb, a

cave, a cow, a Rosaleen, a sow, a bride, a harlot, and, of course, the gaunt Hag of Beare" (11). As a case in point, according to *The Book of Druim Snechta,* an anonymous ancient lost Irish manuscript dating from around pre-Christian times, Ireland was established by a woman (Sawyer 1). Furthermore, the myth of Mother Earth was highly influential before the times of Christianity in Ireland (*Mother Ireland*). In Celtic mythology, Danu is believed to be a mother goddess who is associated with the earth and fertility (Squire 50). All Celtic gods come from her race. They are called Tuatha Dé Danann, the people of the goddess Danu (Rutherford 54) and are thought to have settled in the Irish land. As the mother of Irish gods, Danu "stands at the head of the tribe" (Matthews 24) which gives her a strong position. In the Ulster cycle of Irish mythology, Nessa, too, appears to be a strong mother figure as her son is not called after his patriarchal ancestry, but given his mother's name, Conchobar Mac Nessa, the son of Nessa. Éire, descending from Danu's lineage, is also the goddess of the Irish land and a figure of fruitfulness who is thought to have married the King of Tara (Dalton 343-44). She is also known as Ériu or Erin, and Ireland is personified and named after her (Matson 51; Bernard 30). She is described and praised also in Irish legends and poetic works like Deirdre, a beautiful Irish heroine who is associated with Ireland and Irish womanhood. According to the legendary story, Deirdre, the tragic figure portrayed in different works of Irish revivalists, falls in love with Noíse/Naoise, the nephew of Conchobar though Conchobar plans to marry her. Although Deirdre and Noíse unite happily for a while, their relationship has a tragic end: Conchobar kills his nephew, and Deirdre commits suicide after her lover's death (Matson 43; Fee 171).

After Christanity, however, the characteristics of mythological leading women were mixed with the image of the Virgin Mary, and the Catholic Church structured Irish women's identity accordingly (Allison 20). In the land where many lives were sacrificed for the Catholic faith in opposition to Protestant England, the Virgin Mary became the matron figure associated with Irish womanhood as the holy mother. Thus, the Church, the most powerful institution in Ireland, "provided models of behaviour and ideals of identity" (Innes 42) for Irish women. One of the articles in the 91st issue of *The Irish Monthly* of 1913 describes the standards set for motherhood as follows: "The true mother has no thought of self: all her life, all her love, are given to her husband and children" (O'Mahony 18). It even declares that "[a] mother's influence, a mother's

dignity, is very sacred and holy; hardly less so, one might say without irreverence, than that of the priesthood itself" (O'Mahony 19). Although motherhood was idealised by the Church, it was also manipulated by this institution for the purpose of increasing its own authority because

> the development of the Church and a rigorous moral discipline could not have been attained without the Irish mother. She became the sacred heart of Irish home. It was she who inculcated a ritualistic and legalistic adherence to the rules and regulations of the Church. She brought the family to prayer and enforced the Church's code of morality. She was the Church's representative in the home who supervised the moral conduct of her husband and children. She became the living embodiment of Our Lady – humble, pious, celibate and yet fecund. She gave herself to the Church, and in each succeeding generation produced the religious vocations that sustained the Church. [. . .]. The mother maintained her power within the home in the same way as the Church did in wider society. (Inglis 248-49)

While motherhood shaped by the ideals of the Virgin Mary seemed to give the Irish woman a kind of power at home, it actually restricted her agency and identity because "she was self-sacrificing and devoted to her family, a stoical figure who bore her suffering with silent dignity" (McKenna 43). Bronwen Walter remarks that the Virgin Mary's image as the perfect model for Irish mothers – a selfless, dutiful and nurturing mother – was promoted after the Great Famine (1845-1852) (18). Innes validates this fact saying, "[b]y the late nineteenth century, two female images had become potent social, political and moral forces in Catholic Ireland – the images of Mother Ireland or Erin, and the Mother of God, often linked through iconography to Mother Church" (41). In this construction of the Irish mother archetype, an asexual identity was always emphasised by means of moral conventions of religious ideals. Therefore, only married mothers were put on a pedestal in the Catholic Irish land, and "[w]ith the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922 the Catholic Church became particularly concerned with sexual immorality; they were especially anxious, as was the government, about the unmarried mother" (Luddy, "Unmarried" 112). In line with the Church's concern with motherhood, the Irish government later affected the way Irish mothers lived by means of certain laws. For instance, the Constitution of Ireland in 1937, during Éamon de Valera's (1882-1975) government, legally confined women to motherhood by exerting on them the Catholic teaching that "viewed women primarily as wives and mothers, and [. . .] reiterated the message that women's work should ideally take place either within the home or within its immediate vicinity" (Daly 104). With the Article 41 of the 1937

Constitution, the family was declared to be the guardian of morality; women as wives and mothers had an important place within the institution of family, and they were imprisoned within the territory of home. More notoriously, the use of contraceptives was constitutionally banned in Ireland until the Health and Family Planning Act in 1979 (Shannon 264). Abortion is still banned in Ireland, except for the cases in which the mother's life is in danger, although the Irish women's protest against the restrictive laws has continued since the "X Case" event. When a fourteen-year-old girl was raped and got pregnant in 1992, her travelling to England to terminate her pregnancy was prevented by means of the legislation (Ryan, "In the Line" 138; O'Connor 29). This traumatic event becomes the emblem of enforced motherhood in Ireland. As can be understood from such practices, the Church was supported by the state in its approach to motherhood. Together they determined women's role as self-sacrificing and sentimental mothers at home, and "the idealisation of motherhood [became] a significant feature of the rhetoric of politicians in the new Irish state" (Luddy, "Unmarried" 112).

The mutual strategy of motherhood of the Irish Church and State is not a coincidence. Especially after the Great Famine, nationalistic ideals were accentuated in Ireland. Particularly at the beginning of the twentieth century, colonised Ireland revolted against its coloniser, England, and attempted to determine its own faith over the debate of independence. For this reason, Irish nationalists tried to unite Irish people by providing certain symbols that they could associate with themselves during and after the struggle for freedom. Thus, the ideal portrait of motherhood was infiltrated into the minds of the Irish. Womanhood within the concept of nationalism, Mosse claims, was a perfect illustration as "the guardian of morality, and of public and private order" (17) since it stood for "the continuity and immutability of the nation" (18). Owing to this fact, "[i]n efforts to secure cultural autonomy and maintain the cultural purity of Ireland after independence, women became the measure of the nation" (Nash 115). Therefore, the icon of Mother Ireland in the process of creating a national identity was promoted by the Irish State with the support of the Catholic Church or "Catholicism" which "had played a vital role in the struggle for Irish independence and the construction of a national identity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It remained an important signifier of national identity after independence was achieved, and was

equally important as an organizing structure in the society that was shaped in its wake" (McKenna 42).

To further argue, the symbol of feminine Ireland, also derived from Irish myths, was blended with the iconography of religion and used by the writers of the Celtic Revival as Richard Kearney claims. Kearney argues that the Irish wanted to "return to the security of their maternal origins: the mother church of Catholic revival; the motherland of national revival; and the mother tongue of Gaelic revival" (118). In order to construct their own version of Irish identity, the writers of the time attempted to revive nationalist ideals. The dramatists, particularly, were able to reach more people by means of the public act of performance and female figures, as part of identity formation, took an important place in their works. Thus, as Nash points out, "[c]ountless female embodiments of Ireland called on stage and page for Irish men to forsake their individual interests for the immortality of heroic self-sacrifice for the nation. In this embodiment, the female allegory was desexualised and venerated as a pure mother" (114). In such texts, the figure of Mother Ireland comes from the characters of the ancient and well-known Irish mythic stories (Innes 16). Among various female representations of Ireland such as Hibernia, Éire and Roisín Dubh, Mother Ireland became the prominent figure "since she played a significant role (as a woman) in creating a new, colonially independent 'Irish identity' for the formerly 'colonised minds' of the Irish people" (Breninger 19). As a powerful means of presenting nationalist ideals, the Irish stage was occupied with the representations of Mother Ireland which dealt with the concept of motherhood, and over the course of time, from the beginning of the twentieth century, the portrait of mother characters in Irish plays was developed with more psychological depth.

To be more specific, since the foundation of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin in 1904, Irish dramatists have portrayed mother characters in their works. The first generation of the Abbey dramatists presented a one dimensional, "self-sacrificing mother whose world was bound by the confines of her home, a woman who was pure, modest, who valued traditional culture, [. . .] a woman who knew and accepted her place in society [and] served the purposes of the ruling Irish male elite" (Valiulis 178). These playwrights did not emphasise the psychology of Irish mothers in their works because, being concerned

with nationalistic ideals, they depicted stereotypical mother figures representing their nation. As a case in point, in *The Countess Cathleen* (1892), W. B. Yeats (1865-1930) presented an image of "Mother Ireland" in the character of Cathleen who sacrificed herself for her country without hesitation. In *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (1902), Yeats and Lady Gregory (1852-1932) bodied forth Ireland in the female protagonist of the play and promoted Irish nationalist spirit by showing that young men sacrificed their lives for Cathleen and for the freedom of Ireland. That is to say, "*Cathleen ni Houlihan*, which subordinated the interests of women to a sacrificial paradigm of male patriotism and invoked a literary tradition of political allegory, was enshrined as the exemplary nationalist play" (Quinn 44). In other words, the play strengthened the bond between motherhood and the Irish nation in that Cathleen as "the embodiment of an aspiring autonomous Ireland" (Bobotis 21) became a powerful medium of identification. Moreover, it created such a traditional image of Irish motherhood that dramatists constantly depicted this type of motherly figures for a long time on the Irish stage. Likewise, in *Riders to the Sea* (1904), John Millington Synge (1871-1909) pictured Maurya as a devoted and mourning mother whose only concern is her children and family. In *Juno and the Paycock* (1924), Sean O'Casey (1880-1964), too, remained loyal to the portrayal of a caring mother by juxtaposing Juno with an irresponsible father figure. In this epoch of Irish drama, accordingly, mother characters were a nexus of meanings as "a national icon in nationalist, rhetoric and symbolism. Mothering not only meant giving birth but [. . .] it also involved sacrificial mothering, mothering of martyrs, mourning of the dead" (Ryan, "In the Line" 61).

Later on, although unable to totally abandon the one-dimensional representation of motherhood observed in the early years of the Abbey, modern Irish dramatists extended the variety of the characteristics of the mother figures in their plays. They drew attention to the different experiences of mothers dealing with, albeit implicitly, the psychology of Irish mothers. For instance, in Teresa Deevy's (1894-1963) *The King of Spain's Daughter* (1935), Mrs. Marks, a mother character, voices that marriage does not gratify her as it limits her with the roles of wifehood and motherhood. In another play by Deevy entitled *Katie Roche* (1936), the void of Katie Roche's dead biological mother cannot be filled by Mrs. Roche who adopts the illegitimate Katie. In this mother-daughter relationship, the lack of maternal affection is emphasised, and this

leads Katie to marry and carry on a loveless marriage. In addition, in a later play by Sean O'Casey, *Red Roses for Me* (1943), Mrs. Breydon is portrayed as a mother overly anxious about her son. She is afraid that the political, social and economic upheavals as well as the religious controversy between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland may harm him. In *The Famine* (1968), Tom Murphy (1935-) depicts a desperate mother, called Mother, who suffers from the harsh living conditions during the time of the Great Famine. As she and her children are needy themselves, Mother seems to be hesitant to help others. Furthermore, Frank McGuinness' (1953-) *Factory Girls* (1982) exposes the problems of a working-class mother, Vera, who is troubled by her husband who cannot take care of their children while she is at work, a situation reminiscent of the patriarchal enforcement that mothers must stay at home with their children. Nevertheless, Vera, in a troubled state, neither defies nor submits to her role as a mother in the play. Christina Reid (1942-), in *Tea in a China Cup* (1983), gives the dynamics of gender roles from the different perspectives of Catholic and Protestant Irish women in three generations of Beth's family and her friend Theresa. The playwright touches upon the problems of unmarried single mothers in Ireland through Theresa who is depicted as a young unmarried Catholic mother, hiding her child from the Irish community by living and working in London. Brian Friel (1929-), in *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990), illustrates another typical female figure, Christina, who is forsaken by her lover and who takes care of her son Michael on her own. Christina appears as a caring mother, but she is too complacent to make any attempt to change for the better the circumstances in which they, mother and son, live.

From the 1990s onwards, the depiction of motherhood on the Irish stage has become more diversified as the playwrights began to stress overtly the psychology of the mother characters in line with the changing form of Irish family life. In *After Easter* (1994), Anne Devlin (1951-) depicts a mentally-disturbed mother, Greta, who tries to gain her children's custody, together with Rose, Greta's mother, who is extremely possessive and therefore jealous even of her dead husband. As for Martin McDonagh's (1970-) mother figure in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (1996), Mag comes to the fore with her selfish attitude towards her daughter. In the reversed mother-daughter relationship, the playwright sets a precedent for the bad mother archetype with Mag. She, in a sense, imprisons her daughter Maureen at home and somehow abuses her with her egoistic

behaviour. Consequently, as she has been psychologically tortured, Maureen, who initially appeared to be self-sacrificial, is driven to physical violence. Yet another young Irish playwright, Conor McPherson (1971-) portrays Valerie in *The Weir* (1997) as a troubled mother who accuses herself of her daughter's death and believes that she died because she, Valerie, lacked maternal responsibility.

When the representation of motherhood by the above-mentioned Irish dramatists from the establishment of the Abbey Theatre to contemporary times is surveyed, it becomes obvious that the first wave Irish playwrights did not generally deal with different aspects of Irish mothers, and the mothers they depicted lacked psychological depth as the dramatists idealised motherhood in accordance with patriotic ideals. Yet the second and third wave Irish dramatists expanded the variety of mother portrayals by gradually foregrounding the psychological dimensions of motherhood. Among the contemporary playwrights of Ireland, Marina Carr drew attention by pointing out the different experiences of women in her plays. She also refused the ideals of maternity by embedding violence in her representations of motherhood and attributing this violence to the burden of motherhood within dysfunctional family relations.

It probably is essential at this point to give a general survey of Carr's biography and her works since they are relevant to her development as a dramatist as well as her handling of the concept of motherhood. Born on 17 November 1964, Marina Carr grew up in Tullamore, County Offaly, in Midlands Ireland (Carr, *Reading* 45). She was the second of six children in her family. Carr's interest in literature was probably cultivated at home as her father, Hugh Carr, wrote novels and plays which were staged in the theatres of Dublin (Wood 62) and her mother, a teacher, also wrote poems in Gaelic although her works were not published (Clarity). As a child, Carr was enchanted by and drawn to theatre. In an interview, Carr expresses that she and her family would go to the Abbey Theatre to watch plays and she would also write plays with her siblings and friends (Finn, "Theater" 43). In the introduction of *Plays One,* she recalls her childhood days and relates how she, in the company of her friends, built a theatre: "When I was a scut we built a theatre in our shed; we lay boards across the stacked turf, hung an old blue sheet for a curtain and tied a bicycle lamp to a rafter at the side of the shed so its light would fall at an angle on the stage. For costumes we wore brown nylons over our faces"

(ix). Like her plays today, the plays she and her company produced at a young age, too, were about violence, but they had happy endings to a certain extent. Carr says:

> Our dramas were bloody and brutal. Everyone suffered: the least you could hope to get away with was a torturing. And still we all lived happily ever after. Good and bad got down from their ropes or off the rack or out of the barrel of boiling oil, apologized to the Goodie – who was usually more perverse than all the Baddies put together – and made long soliloquies about 'never doing it again'. [. . .] 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. But scuts also have a sense of justice – bar the Witch, I don't know what she was about – and hence our desire for the thing to end well. We loved the havoc, the badness, the blood spillage, but loved equally restoring some sort of botched order and harmony. (ix-x)

Carr's interest in theatre did not fade away in her school years; on the contrary, her educational background contributed to her career as a playwright. She attended University College Dublin where she took a degree in Philosophy and English in 1987 ("Marina Carr") and followed theatrical activities there. After college, she went to the United States where she worked as a teacher, like her mother, for a year (Clarity). She later continued her postgraduate studies on Samuel Beckett at Trinity College, Dublin, but she did not complete her thesis on Beckett (Roche, *Contemporary* 244). Instead she preferred writing plays, and her academic training enabled her to produce works sophisticated in terms of style and themes. In a very short time, thanks to the critical attitude in her works, Carr has become "one of a host of contemporary Irish iconoclasts whose works have flouted literary convention, subverted the pieties of church and state, and exposed the darker side of Irish life" (Howard 403-04). Thus, especially at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Carr's plays with their interesting contexts attracted considerable attention which introduced the playwright to a wide audience. Furthermore, the staging of her plays has extended the borders of Ireland earning a world-wide recognition. As Sihra recounts, "[h]er award-winning dramas have been translated into many languages and produced in places as diverse as Siberia, Estonia, Korea, Japan, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Iceland, Brazil, Germany, The Netherlands and the Czech Republic, as well as in the United States and London's West End" ("Introduction" 19).

In a general framework, it can be articulated that Carr works with the themes of death, violence, dysfunctional families and troubled relationships along with her specific emphasis on women characters. Yet her dramatic career hinges on different periods in

accordance with her style, the different use of dramatic and narrative techniques and thematic concerns. In the first phase of her dramatic career she delves into the themes of love and sex and the question of stereotypical gender roles in experimental forms and the Beckettian way of the Absurd Theatre. *Low in the Dark* (1989), *The Deer's Surrender* (1990), *This Love Thing* (1991) and *Ullaloo* (1991)[2] are her early plays all of which are "highly subversive in content, satirically excavating the interconnections of gender, customs and cultural histories" (O'Gorman, "Writing" 488). In these avant-garde plays, as in her further works, she focuses on women characters and subverts the embedded notion of Irish womanhood and motherhood. *Low in the Dark* was Carr's first produced work "written in collaboration with the actors of the Crooked Sixpence company" (Sierz 38). Here, in an experimental way, Carr employs Beckettian dialogue in the sense that this play includes stops, pauses and meaningless conversations which suggest the collapse of communication. Set in a bathroom, the play questions gender roles in a radical way as Carr oddly handles the issues of marriage, pregnancy, giving birth, abortion, maternity and violence. She refers to the problematic matters in Ireland such as the role of religion in social life, the control over fertility, the ban on abortion and women's captured position in motherhood. In addition to the character Curtains, who is literally wrapped like a curtain on the stage, Carr strikes the reader/audience with pregnant male characters, babies born in the bathroom, breastfeeding scenes and violent maternal figures. She also opposes an essentialist attitude against maternity as a female playwright who is a mother of four children. Therefore, after the performance of her first play, Carr emerges as a distinctive playwright as Tom Mac Intrye states: *Low in the Dark* "gave evidence of an original voice – zany, enquiring, free-wheeling as regards structure, the focus on love and the sensual" ("When" 75).

In her second play, *The Deer's Surrender,* Carr still continued experimenting. In this work, she plays with religious metanarrative by writing an alternative creation story: "God orders the specimen (Adam, presumably) to cook him something. His obedient subject puts some ribs in oven, which then explodes and 'the most despicable creature ever seen' emerges from the ashes, introducing herself as 'woman'" (O'Gorman, "Writing" 503). In her comic subversion, Carr satirises woman's condition in the patriarchal order by showing the world thrown into chaos after she is created by Adam. Moreover, Carr portrays the Mary and Jesus characters in an innovative manner. Jesus

appears to be a son who wants money from his mother to buy ice-cream, and Mary is portrayed as a mother who warns her son to be careful while crossing the street (O'Gorman, "Writing" 505).

Carr later meets with her audience in *This Love Thing* performed in the Old Museum Arts Centre on 12 February 1991 as the cooperative work of two new theatre companies, Tinderbox and Pigsback ("*This Love*"). The characters of the play are remarkable ones since Carr uses both biblical characters such as Eve, Jesus and Mary Magdalene and Renaissance artists like Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo as well as Mona Lisa from da Vinci's painting (Sihra, "The House" 205). This piece of writing is centred on the issue of love which is defined as "a willingness to face death" (Murray 236) in the play, and the playwright, according to O'Gorman, employs "Brechtian methods such as alienation effects, self-conscious devices and episodic structures" ("Writing" 501) along with working with "Beckettian restriction" ("Writing" 502) in her depictions of Mona Lisa in a picture frame and Mary's stable position.

Ullaloo, the last play of this period, was premiered on the Peacock stage of the Abbey Theatre – "a smaller space used for experimental work and new writing" (Lonergan 80) – on 25 March 1991 although Carr wrote it before the abovementioned three plays (Sweeney 187). In this work, the writer presents a troubled couple, Tilly and Tomred, who are trapped in their marriage. Carr sets her "absurdist comedy" (McNulty 106) in a bedroom where the couple is situated in a weird situation: "Tilly, the woman, is, for the most part, immobilized in bed while Tomred, at the other side of the room, is intent on cajoling his toe-nails to grow longer" (Sihra, "The House" 202). Tilly and Tomred's relationship is actually devoid of proper communication and mutual understanding, their life being based on repetition and unchanging routines. Furthermore, their quarrels, "in which meaningless phrases echo and what little activity [. . .] appears futile and self-defeating," never end (O'Gorman, "Writing" 494). By means of this absurd couple, Carr criticises the institution of marriage in Ireland. Through this dead-in-life couple, she somehow mourns for broken relationships as well, as the title of the play meaning "death song" in Gaelic indicates (Sweeney 189).

After a while, as McNulty claims, "Carr shook off [Beckett's] ghost" (106) from her works. Carr herself remarks: "'I wrote myself into a corner with the whole absurdist

outlook [. . .]. I didn't believe it anymore. In Beckett there's something passionless, something cold about him, something cold about his writing, almost like everything begins and ends with inertia and the tragedy of that'" (qtd. in Clarity). From then on, she wrote plays with a tragic tone in a more realistic manner by eliminating absurdist conduct, rewriting classical works, bearing on important playwrights and their works in addition to colouring her works with the distinctive use of Irish dialect and myths.

The second phase of her career starts with the Midlands trilogy, *The Mai, Portia Coughlan* and *By the Bog of Cats…*, all of which are set in the Irish Midlands. In these plays, Carr as a dramatist "alert to the currencies of the world around her [. . .] is inspired in her imaginings of [her birthplace's] shadows, its burdens, its passions and its possibilities" (Leeney, "Marina" 517), and, accordingly, she digs into "a kind of Irish heart of darkness" (Leeney, "Marina" 510). Moreover, she draws attention to her use of Irish dialect in which she proves to be good at "rediscovering of the poetic and theatrical resources of Irish speech in English" (Welch 250). More significantly, these plays, in which Carr accentuates violent mothers, are an attempt to challenge the emblematic concept of motherhood in Ireland.

In *The Mai,* Carr uses the memory play structure which has parallels with Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* (1944). The play also reminds one of Brian Friel's plays, *Dancing at Lughnasa,* because it is based on a child character's going back to his memories of the female members of his family. Furthermore, Carr uses the myth of Owl Lake in the play and draws a parallel between this local legend and the love story of the Mai, the protagonist, and Robert, her cellist husband. The Mai's identity as a lover is stressed throughout the text in contrast to her identity as a mother. The protagonist's obsession with her husband induces her to self-destruction in the end which can be interpreted as a denial of maternal identity.

Portia Coughlan is inspired by the Portia of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (1596?) (Carr, "Afterword" 311). Yet the context of the play is quite different from Shakespeare's work. Carr deals with incestuous family relations, violent motherhood in reference to the myth of the Belmont River – the story about an outcast woman who is rescued by the river god Bel – and "reflects almost Yeatsian fascination with the transcendent, liminality, spirituality, myth, and the occult" (Trotter, "Translating" 168).

Carr's Portia is haunted by the memory of her dead twin brother which makes great trouble for herself and her family. More strikingly, she is inclined to violence related to Portia's rage which is caused by the maternal burden and which causes her to put an end to her life.

In *By the Bog of Cats…*, the playwright rewrites *Medea* in her own way and builds tension in the reader/audience through the story of another mother's, Hester Swane's, destructive tendencies. Hester finds herself in trouble after her lover – also her daughter's father – leaves her and decides to marry another woman. Waiting for her mother who left her when she was seven years old and promised her to return to the bog of Midlands, Hester does not want to depart from her land and separate from daughter. Thus, she finds the "remedy" in murdering her daughter and committing suicide.

The Midlands trilogy pushed Carr into prominence, and the success of these plays, in which she put stress on the psychic aspect of bleak mother stories, enabled her to stand out among her contemporaries. She achieved a permanent place by disturbing the settled ideas about motherhood in Ireland and "reclaiming an aspect of Irish existence – women's [motherhood] – which has been alternately idealized and ignored in the Irish mainstream tradition" (Trotter, "Translating" 164).

For a while following the trilogy, Carr does not abandon the setting of the Midlands in her works. In *On Raftery's Hill* (2000), the playwright who believes that there is "dark matter in us and out there" (Finn, "Theater" 45) digs into the devastating "darkness" of a family story from the Midlands. After the 1990s, when "women came from behind the scenes and spoke out about abuses they had suffered at the hands of the law, society and within home" (O'Connor 28), Carr, in this play, works on the theme of sexual violence in a typical Irish kitchen where the father figure, Red Raftery, dominates his daughters, Dinah and Sorrel, having sex with them, be it with or without consent. Although nobody dies in the play, the shame and burden of domestic violence is much worse than death. Moreover, Carr subverts the ideals of family constructed by the Irish state as a safe and holy institution not only with the perverted and abusive patriarchal figure, but also with the hypocritical attitude of the female characters as Raftery's daughters acquiesce the sexual abnormality in their family.

In *Ariel* (2002) which "is loosely based on Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis"* (Leeney and McMullan xxi), the playwright extends her scope of criticisim to the political arena depicting an ambitious politician, Fermoy Fitzgerald, from the Midlands. The play reflects politicians' greed in the person of Fermoy who does not hesitate to sacrifice anything for the sake of success. Recalling the primitive religious conviction that God demands blood for sacrifice, *Ariel* reflects that Fermoy's perverted belief forces him to kill his own daughter on her birthday in order to advance in his career.

This is how Carr suggests that "the three pillars of the old Ireland – Church, State and Family – are in an advanced state of decay" (O'Toole, "Review" 89). In all of these five plays that take place in the Midlands, the writer creates memorable suffering female characters who "have much in common with the great heroines of world literature, from Medea to Emma Bovary to Hedda Gabler to Anna Karenina" (Lonergan 172). More remarkably, she is able to dismantle the stereotypical representation of female characters on the Irish stage by drawing attention to the violence in their lives.

After this period, Carr's dramatic works become more eclectic in terms of subject matter, and as her works dispense with the Midlands setting, the playwright leaves aside "[h]er use of an idiomatic, heavily accented form of English, as it is spoken in the Midlands of Ireland" (Leeney, "Marina" 509). In 2003, Carr produced a play for children entitled *Meat and Salt*. This play originated in a fairy-tale entitled "Love Like Salt" which is also the source of Shakespeare's *King Lear* (Linley 176). For children, Carr wrote about Cordelia's endurance with a happy ending:

> The youngest daughter is exiled after failing to demonstrate with sufficient excess her love for her power-obsessed father, but manages to survive separation from her 'Big Daddy', and from her long-lost and ever distant mother, and, after many vibrantly presented adventures, creates a pragmatic life and love on her terms. (Leeney and McMullan xxi)

Later on, Carr's *Woman and Scarecrow* (2006) appears on the stage which depicts the dying hours of a symbolic female character named Woman. As a mother of eight children, she seems to stand for the Irish mothers who suffer from the limitations against women in Ireland. In her confrontation with Scarecrow, which can be called "her alter ego" (Roche, *Contemporary* 256), Woman questions her life which has passed in vain for the sake of her children and an unfaithful husband. After two years, in

Cordelia's Dream, the playwright again rewrites *King Lear*, but this time her work is intended for adults. She draws the famous father and daughter together under the names of An Old Man and A Woman and settles old scores in her rewriting. Then, on 12 February 2009, another children's play by Carr, *The Giant Blue Hand*, appeared on the stage and presented a kidnapping story:

> Mr and Mrs Time and their young baby Dilly are kidnapped by a ferocious blue hand and imprisoned at the bottom of the sea. With the help of their memorably grotesque Aunt Farticus Fume and the beautiful Queen Dalia, the intrepid Timmy and Johnny Time set out to rescue their family from this terrifying monster. ("*The Giant")*

Given that it is an example of a children's play, the use of double casting in this work ("*The Giant*") makes the production remarkable. Five days later, *Marble* took stage in the Abbey Theatre. This time, Carr produced an interesting love story in which the conflict comes out of a dream. In his dream Art, Anne's husband, has sex with Ben's wife, Catherine, in a marble room. Interestingly, Catherine has the same dream, and Art's narration of this dream causes big troubles for both of the couples. The corresponding dreams cannot be avoided which leads Art and Catherine to question their own marriages. In the end, both of them decide to leave their partners and children behind and go after their dreams.

Next, in 2011, Carr produced three more works: *16 Possible Glimpses* (30 September 2011)*, Phaedra Backwards* (18 October 2011) and *We Were Here* (24 November 2011). *16 Possible Glimpses* is Carr's vision of the important Russian writer and dramatist Anton Chekhov's (1860-1904) life. The play in two acts digs into Chekhov's personal relationships with the three women around him – his sister, wife and lover – as well as his friend, Tolstoy, another Russian author. Carr, in this play, brings a new perspective to the complex dynamics in the Russian writer's life and depicts his death. As a rewriting of Phaedra myth, *Phaedra Backwards* is about "a woman's attempt to escape her tragic family legacy of lust and violence" in which the story begins with its end and moves forward to its beginning ("*Phaedra Backwards*"). For her latest play, Carr joins the project entitled the *1 in 5* Project which is organised to represent the poverty in Northern Ireland in a series of short plays and *We Were Here* appears on stage along with the works of other Irish playwrights who took part in this event ("*1 in 5*"). Carr continues writing new plays as she works with the Abbey Theatre, the Royal

Shakespeare Company and Irish children's theatre company, the Ark (Finn, "Theater" 45). It has recently been announced that Carr has rewritten Euripides' tragedy *Hecuba* (424 BC), and Carr's new play, also entitled *Hecuba,* will be performed in the 2015 winter season of the Royal Shakespeare Company ("*Hecuba*").

Considering the development of Carr's career and excluding her more eclectic works, it can be pointed out that her experimental works leave their places to tragic plays in which the playwright is not bound to any particular type of tragedy; instead, as Wallace claims, Carr's "use of tragedy [. . .] [becomes] complex, simultaneously drawing upon retrospective elements as well as highly contemporary ones" (*Suspect* 254). Her works have also been nourished by a wide range of important playwrights all around the world such as Shakespeare, Tennessee Williams (Lonergan 144), August Strindberg and Eugene O'Neill (Wallace, "A crossroads" 265). With her Midlands trilogy, Carr does not bring any technical innovation to the stage, but she uses some postmodern elements in these three plays. Intertextuality, in terms of the use of myths and Euripides' *Medea*, can be observed as one of the postmodern elements employed by Carr in the trilogy. Carr adapts the myths of the Owl Lake and the Belmont River and Medea's story to her plays while associating the major figures in all these texts with the mothers in the Midlands trilogy. The playwright also subverts the chronological order of time in both *The Mai* and *Portia Coughlan,* and this non-linear use of time can be regarded as another postmodern technique. To further argue, the use of rural Irish settings, depiction of poor characters, projection of powerful passions, artful adoption of myths, repetitious use of memory, continuous haunting of the past and the blend of black humour into the tragic tone of her plays constitute the vigorous energy of Carr's drama. Within the stream of Irish drama, she is compared to important playwrights of the first wave of the Irish theatre in that she revisits the hidden parts of Ireland and the unexplored aspects of Irish culture. For example, the Midlands setting in her works is said to be "what Yeats and Lady Gregory hoped that theatre would be, a space for opening up an inter-traffic between the deep memories of Irish tradition, and the actuality of the present" (Welch 239). In another instance, it is claimed that Carr has "the richest images of Irish language, spirit, and life since the work of John Millington Synge" (Trotter, *Modern* 188). Additionally, by virtue of her use of authentic Irish places, she is compared to Synge. Furthermore, as Welch puts it, Carr "creates a medium as flexible as Synge's,

one capable of intellectual force, emotional rage, and the sheer exhilaration of heart-scorching anger" (239). She is also called "'the female Friel'" (McNulty 107) owing to her use of tragic and comic elements together in Irish family stories. However, unlike canonised Irish playwrights, her presentation of the Irish experience is a dark one in that she reveals the ugly truth buried in the lives of Irish women.

As can be observed in the survey of her works, Carr examines female experience from diverse perspectives in which she gets away from the self-sacrificing image of Cathleen ni Houlihan. However, while she criticises the limitations imposed upon Irish women and subverts the constructed myth of Mother Ireland, she does not favour the painful characters she delineates as they tend to become destructive as seen in the case of the Midlands trilogy and Raftery's daughters in *On Raftery's Hill*. That is to say, Carr is able to portray complex women characters all of whom are "anti-heroes" (Harris, "Rising" 232) in "Carr's inverted heroic age" (232), which is shaped by Carr's own understanding of the tragic world, and they appear on the stage as multifaceted characters. In this respect, she is distinguished from her contemporaries. McDonagh and McPherson's works do not particularly deal with female experiences as much as Carr's. Similarly, Reid's stories of women on the stage include a political agenda as a different point from Carr's plays. However, on the surface, Carr and McDonagh's plays seem to have common points in terms of the playwrights' use of violence and the rural Irish life. Yet Carr's inclusion of violence does not define her plays as examples of in-yer-face drama, unlike McDonagh who uses some elements of this type of drama in his plays, because of the tragic, mythic and supernatural elements in her works (Wallace, *Suspect* 237-38). It can be further argued that McDonagh weaves violence into his plays as part of the satirical and humorous element. Moreover, in *Modern Irish Drama*, Trotter recounts an important difference between two contemporary playwrights:

> Marina Carr seeks the deep heart's core of her rural protagonists and looks for ways in which this core has been shaped and misshaped by family, memory, culture, and history. Martin McDonagh's plays, likewise, are interested in Irish country life; but instead of seeking his characters' hearts, he observes comically the strategies of religion, culture, manners, violence and denial they employ to avoid any true spiritual introspection. (189)

In other words, Carr's handling of the complex emotions of her characters as well as her investigation of the factors leading them to psychological trouble identifies her way of

writing in contrast to McDonagh's drama in which the playwright criticises certain institutions in his own way of mocking.

In the light of all the ideas discussed above, this thesis proposes to point out and analyse the traces and explicit manifestations of violence in the mother characters of Marina Carr's Midlands trilogy – *The Mai, Portia Coughlan* and *By the Bog of Cats…* – in which the playwright subverts the settled notions of motherhood in Ireland. Although violence is a universal issue, and violent mothers are present all around the world, Carr's subversion of the embedded concept of maternity shaped by the Irish State's policy and religious ideology through the use of violence is of significance in order to understand the dramatist's approach to this identity. In fact, as an Irish playwright who maintains that women are not supposed to be natural mothers, as Kurdi quotes, Carr disapproves of the romanticised depictions of mothers: "'I was tired of the sentimental portrayal of mothers . . . We have this blessed Virgin myth embedded in us, and there is huge arrogance about carrying life and all the importance of it. They like to talk about childbirth, which is beautiful, but there is another side of it where it is mystery'" (qtd. in Sihra, "The House" 203). Uncovering this "mystery" in her plays, Carr honestly declares in an interview that

> the idea that you sacrifice everything for your children – it's a load of rubbish. It leads to very destructive living and thinking, and it has a much worse effect on than if you go out and live your own life. You're meant to adore your children at all times, and you're not meant to have a bad thought about them. That's fascism, you know, and it's elevating the child at the expense of the mother. It's like your life is not valid except in fulfilling this child's needs. What about all your needs, your desires, your wants, your problems? (*Rage* 150)

In line with her questioning of self-denying motherhood, Carr stresses the individual problems, needs and desires of the mother characters in her aforementioned three plays. In her subversion of the established notions of Irish motherhood, Carr places women characters at home – not giving them a role in the public life – and presents depressing and traumatic stories of mothers in which she destroys the ideal notions of home, motherhood and family once defined in the 1937 Constitution of Ireland. In each play, maternal characters – The Mai, Portia and Hester – disregard their identities as mothers with their particular interest in their own passions, problems and obsessions: "Each [mother] is driven by an obsessional hunger which can, it seems, neither be controlled nor stated. Each struggles with a man in her life who is either absent or uncommitted.

Each is bound by the legacy of the past" (Wallace, *Suspect* 264). The Mai's unfaithful husband, Portia's dead twin brother and Hester's absent mother as well as her cheating lover become the focal points of their lives rather than their children. Thus, their incessant preoccupations with the other figures in their lives rather than their children and the burden of maternal ideals imposed on them prompt destructive and violent acts as Carr's "frustrated protagonists rage violently against their continuing repression" (Richards 13) because of Irish ideals of maternity. Seeing them as conducive to the use of violence of different types– verbal violence, homicide, and suicide – and degree of intensity, Carr not only refuses the ideals attributed to mothers, but also disrupts and challenges the conventional and institutionalised perceptions of Irish motherhood within her depictions of multidimensional maternal figures in the Midlands trilogy. The present thesis, which aims to analyse the mothers in Carr's *The Mai, Portia Coughlan* and *By the Bog of Cats…*, argues that these women stand against the conventional images of motherhood in Ireland with their resistance to the stereotypical role of the mother as well as their aggression and violence, which may be deemed Carr's contribution to the Irish stage. By emphasising the different expositions of violence in three plays, the reasons that lead these mothers to self-destruction will be particularly highlighted within the context of psychological autopsy which is "a procedure for investigating a person's death by reconstructing what the person thought, felt, and did preceding his or her death" ("Psychological Autopsy"). In the close analysis of these plays, this thesis will be framed within the theory of violence and, to discern the violent conduct in Carr's plays, each mother character will be scrutinised within the scope of psychological autopsy.

CHAPTER I
THE MAI: A MATRILINEAL FAMILY STORY AROUND A DESTRUCTIVE LOVER-MOTHER

When love-longing is but drouth

For the things come after death?

--Yeats, *Deirdre*

After Naisi I will not have a lifetime in the world.

--Synge, *Deirdre of the Sorrows*

The Mai, originally performed at the Peacock Stage of the Abbey Theatre on 5 October 1994, is Marina Carr's first point of departure from her experimental way of writing. With this play she moves from experimentalism to more familiar dramatic forms by framing the tragic story of a mother character in a memory play. This work, as the beginning of a new phase in her career, brought success to the playwright as it received the *Irish Times Award* for Best New Play (O'Gorman, "Writing" 489) and Best Play Award of Irish Life Dublin Theatre Festival (Roche, "Woman" 18) in 1994.

The play is about a destructive mother, the Mai whose story is narrated by her daughter Millie who stays on the stage throughout the play. The plot of this tragic work seems comparable with Carr's another work, a short story entitled "Grow a Mermaid" (1994), because the daughter figure, in both of the works, recounts the story of her mother who built a house near a lake in the absence of her long-waited husband (Funahashi 143). Both of these works may have been inspired by other playwrights' writings. Carr, for instance, declares that she studied Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) – a significant memory play in which the male protagonist confronts the painful familial memoirs of the past – which may have led Carr to use a narrator figure in her play (Carr, *Rage* 150). While the use of monologues within the structure of memory play enables the reader/audience to comprehend the depths of the characters in this work, the play can also be regarded as a tragedy in the modern sense because the Mai's individual problems and her suicide have destructive influences on her family, and her suffering is intensely felt in Carr's depictions.

Before examining the play in detail, it may be expedient to give a summary of *The Mai* which is written, in Carr's own words in an interview, as "part autobiography, part creation" (*Rage* 147). This two-act memory play is about a family tragedy, and it does not follow a linear plot structure as all the characters are haunted by the past and Millie, at the age of thirty, gathers various reminiscences of her family history while recounting her mother's tragic life. The action in *The Mai* starts in the summer of 1979, the time of the sudden return of Robert, the protagonist's cellist husband, who left her alone with four children five years ago. After a long period of separation and waiting, the Mai welcomes Robert into her life again though it is not approved and is criticised severely by the matrilineal members of the Mai's big family including their own daughter, Millie. Through flashbacks in which Millie recollects Robert's departure, the pain that her mother suffered as well as her hope for Robert's coming back is observed. In his absence, the Mai, a teacher, works in different jobs during summer times to build a house on Owl Lake in the Midlands for her husband, and this house is the setting of the play. She patiently waits for his return by calling him silently, whispering his name in front of the big window at her home as if casting a spell on him at nights. And when he comes back, despite all the hard times she had, the Mai is glad with the reunion, and the couple, as lovers rather than parents, seem to enjoy their lives more than they used to. Meanwhile, the other members of the Mai's family, her grandmother, Grandma Fraochlán, her aunts, Julie and Agnes, and her sisters, Beck and Connie, are introduced to the reader/audience, and their stories appear in both acts of the play. Moreover, Ellen, the Mai's dead mother, is depicted in both acts by the women characters around the Mai. The first act ends with the implicit presentation of the protagonist's self-destruction in Millie's narration in that she talks about how she and Robert prepared the Mai's burial after her suicide. She also relates the local myth of Owl Lake to the love story of her mother which illuminates the Mai's site of death and her obsession with Robert.

The second act of the play returns to the summer of 1980. The Mai is still alive, and her marriage is in the process of deterioration. Robert loses his interest in his relationship with the Mai and even betrays her. Although the Mai attempts to keep her ties with her beloved, she is disappointed by his indifference each time. Thus, she reflects her anger and rage against Robert by using verbal and phsyical violence. Moreover, this act

depicts the dysfunctional parenthood of the Mai and Robert who are neglectful of their children as they are too much involved in their own personal lives and problems. The end of the play depicts the Mai's last moments before her suicide. She tells her daughter that she and Robert belong to each other – although Millie advises her to leave him – and dies.

This chapter of the present thesis is dedicated to the analysis of the Mai's identity as a mother in *The Mai.* In contrast to romanticised notions of motherhood, seen particularly in Ireland, the protagonist of Carr's play is portrayed as an individual who does not conform to the conventional roles of maternity, but comes to the fore with her persistent love for her husband. She is a demanding and obsessive character who is desperately in love with her unfaithful husband, and she is keen on her personal autonomy. Therefore, in this study, the Mai will be compared and contrasted with the four generations of women in her family, the representations of different shades of Irish womanhood, and her destructive nature will be the focus of an in-depth analysis of her psychological autopsy. Through this comparative approach, it will finally be argued that the Mai is the most prominent and distinct woman character in this matrilineal family play despite certain similarities among them, and her violence will be attributed to her being distinct.

Grandma Fraochlán is the oldest member of the Mai's big family. Born in 1879 and a-hundred-year old in the play, she comes from the ancient mythic Ireland, and she can be regarded as the living past on the stage. Her presence with an oar, an opium-pie and fabled stories adds a different dimension to her stance in *The Mai*, and she appears to be a marginal figure in contrast to the stereotypical depictions of old-age mother figures. Her first appearance with a "huge currach oar" (1.14), reminiscent of coastal Irish people, and her local Midlands dialect are the first signs of her Irish identity. While her first name, Grandma, signifies "an archetypal female status" (Roche, "Close" 13), her second name, Fraochlán, refers to her birthplace. "[S]he was born and bred on Inis Fraochlán, north of 'Bofin" (1.18) and 'Fraochlán' is "translated as 'the island of heather'" (Trench 115). As the child of an unmarried mother, she is reared by her mother with fantastic stories about the absent father figure:

> I cem inta tha worlt withouh a father – born ta an absolute nuh. Was thah my fault? An' she wouldn't leh me call 'er Mother, no, Tha Duchess, thah's whah I had ta call her, or Duchess for short. An' Tha Duchess toult me me father was tha Sultan a

> Spain an' thah he'd hid Tha Duchess an' meself an Fraochlán because we were too beauhiful for tha worlt. Buh in tha summer he was goin' ta come in a yach' an' take us away ta his palace in Spain. An' we'd be dresst in silks an' pearls an' have Blackamoors dancin' attindence an us an' everywan an Fraochlán'd be cryin' wud jealousy – an' I believt her an' wathced an tha cliffs ever'day for tha Sultan a Spain. An' ah th'end a every summer tha Sultan would noh've arrived an' ah th'end a every summer Tha Duchess'd say, ih musta bin next summer he meant. (2.59-60)

The fairytale-like story of her family that Grandma was taught in her childhood is probably the reason for her interest in storytelling, which is also a part of the Irish culture. Yet Grandma's belief in stories does not change the reality that her father never returns, and it does not prevent the othering process in society as Grandma suffers from being an illegitimate child in the Irish Midlands. Her mother's fantastic stories about Grandma's father also cannot change the fact that she was born without a father. They can only console her. She says: "I was tha on'y bastard an Fraochlán in livin' memory an' tha stigma must've bin terrible for her [Grandma's mother]. I don't know, buh I'm noh over tha dismantlin' a thah drame yeh. Even still, every summer, I expect somethin' momentous ta happen" (2.60). Therefore, as child of a "wom[a]n who [was] reproductive outside the bounds of marriage [Grandma] had no visible place" (Lévesque 108) in the Catholic Irish society, and she remained "tha on'y bastard an Fraochlán in livin' memory." Moreover, her name, Grandma Fraochlán, as Rhona Trench argues, indicates her illegitimate situation in that it "reflects the social and cultural burden placed upon Grandma Fraochlán's identity because her mother was unmarried and therefore did not have her father's title" (115). Like their ancestor, the other generations of Grandma's family are not given surnames in the play, presumably because patriarchal figures are somehow lost and absent in this work. Additionally, the ancient matriarch's traumatic past determines the way she rears her own daughters and granddaughters some of whom, such as the Mai and Millie, seem to repeat different aspects of her life, and hence Grandma as a mother has some terrible effects on these two women's lives.

Despite her colourful depiction and fantastic imagination, Grandma Fraochlán, mother of three – Ellen, Julie and Agnes – appears on the stage as a lover, with her seemingly boundless love for her dead husband. The old woman, who is still a passionate lover, for example, refuses to leave the oar belonging to her nine-fingered fisherman husband and

even sleeps with it at nights. This oar, like a phallic image, stands for her bond with the late lover who is still alive in her memory and vivid stories. After drinking wine secretly from others, she constantly recalls the fisherman's vision:

> Remember tha Cleggan fair, me nine-fingered fisherman, we wint across from Fraochlán in tha currach, me thirty-eighth birta, a glorious day – (*Listens, laughs softly*) I knew ya'd remember, ya'd goh me a boult a red cloth an' I'd made a dress an' a sash for me hair. Remember, Tomás, remember, an' ya toult me I was tha Queen a th'ocean an' that natin' mahherd in tha wide worlt on'y me. (2.22)

Her amorous passion for the nine-fingered fisherman does not lose its effect though she is an old woman now. Recalling her sweet memories with the fisherman at Christmas time, she does not hesitate to say: "I would gladly a hurlt all seven a ye down tha slopes a hell for wan nigh' more wud tha nine-fingered fisherman an' may I roh eternally for such unmotherly feelin'" (2.70). She refers to sex as an "unmotherly feelin'" which reflects the idea that "the Irish Catholic context meant an intensification of the already heavy emphasis on virginity and motherhood, and a denial of autonomous female desire" (Cullingford 6). Although motherhood is often associated with an asexual identity, Grandma voices her own sexual desires in her questioning that "[y]ou give me wan good reason why women can't own harems full a men whin ih is quihe obvious thah men owns harems full a women!" (2.22). Considering her statement, it is clear that, reclaiming sexual freedom for women, Grandma challenges the social and religious codes that put women in a secondary position and restrict their freedom in comparison to men. In this regard, Carr does not suppress the importance of sexuality even in an old woman's life, and Mary Trotter is right to argue that in *The Mai*, "[m]en are important to the women [even for the grandmother] for physical and emotional love and for the purposes of begetting children, not to uphold a moral code or to fulfill an economic need" ("Translating" 169). Thus, Grandma openly gives voice to her own personal desires and goes after her love which indicates that she is still a demanding and passionate woman.

However, the presence of love in Grandma Fraochlán's life influences her maternal identity in a negative way. One of her daughters, Julie, reminiscing her childhood days, states that her mother "was fiery, flighty. She had little or no time for her children except to tear strips off us when we got in her way. All her energy went into my father and he thought she was an angel" (2.39). The negligent mother, after losing her

husband who drowned at sea, totally abandoned her children. As Julie claims, she refused to live without him and turned into "a mad woman.[. . .] She spent one half of the day in the back room pullin' on an opium pipe, a relic from her unknown father, and the other half rantin' and ravin' at us or starin' out the window at the sea. [. . .] She was so unhappy, Mai, and she made our lives hell" (2.40). That is to say, Grandma preferred to escape from motherly responsibilities by drinking and smoking alone with her memories, and she totally neglected her children. In an attempt to emphasise her identity as a lover, she claims that a lover does not take the responsibility of children, forgetting that her children are in fact the products of this love relationship: "Mebbe parents as is lovers is noh parents ah all, noh enough love left over" (1.39). Later on, she also confesses that "I know he was a useless father, Julie, I know, an' I was a useless mother. It's tha way we were med!" (2.69). Owing to these expressions, it becomes inescapable to state that Grandma Fraochlán does not comply with the conventional mother images. She is a lover more than a mother and, accordingly, she pursues her own emotional needs rather than dedicating herself to the well-being of her children. Acknowledging what she conceives as her true self and enunciating her type, she even classifies people into two kinds: "There's two types a people in this worlt from whah I can gather, thim as puts their childer first an' thim as puts their lover first an' for whah it's worth, tha nine-fingered fisherman an' meself belongs ta tha lahher a these" (2.69-70). As can be understood, this passionate old woman obviously denies maternity and its ideals, and her sense of individuality as a lover makes her the antithesis of the self-sacrificing, Cathleen-like mother images on the Irish stage.

There is actually one moment in Grandma Fraochlán's life in which she as a mother willingly concerns herself with her daughter Ellen's life, that is Ellen's marriage, but it ends in a traumatic way. As a result of Grandma's influence, Ellen, the Mai's mother, turns into a figure feeling it necessary to shoulder motherly responsibilities, though at the cost of sacrifices in her career. Although Ellen was a successful woman who had attended the school of Medicine at Dublin University, she got pregnant in 1938 (1.19). In the Ireland of those years, it was legally impossible for a woman to prevent pregnancy as the use of contraceptives was banned on the belief that birth control methods "encouraged sexual activity outside marriage" (McAvoy 195), and Irish people would not be allowed to use them until the 1980s (White 70-71). Single motherhood

was not acceptable in the Catholic Irish society, either, in view of the fact that "[s]exual activity outside of marriage was dangerous to the social order" (Holmes and Nelson 4). In other words, Ellen had no option except for marriage which was enforced to her by her mother, Grandma Fraochlán. When she is challenged by Connie, Ellen's other daughter, about this marriage, Grandma defends herself: "Oh Lord, nineteen years a age, she had ta marry him, whah else could she do, ih was nineteen-thirty-eight" (1.19). Indeed, Grandma who was brought up as an illegitimate child had her own reasons for this marriage. She was afraid that Ellen's child would be born out of wedlock which would be scandalous (2.60). Still more, her explanation of the condition in those times recalls the fact that

> Eamon de Valera's vision of Cathleen ni Houlihan still cast a dark shadow over the lives of Irish women. The acknowledgement of women in his 1937 constitution as the guardians of public morals and sound family life, and his utopian vision of comely maidens dancing at the crossroads preparatory to their destiny as devoted mothers living in frugal comfort in cozy rural homesteads brought little benefit to the majority of Irish women. In reality, women were nearly invisible in the formal and public structures of Irish life. (Shannon 258)

That is to say, Irish society could not offer Ellen any opportunity as a woman who had achievements in the outside world and cornered her with the ideals of maternal identity at home as soon as she got pregnant. Although it was not Ellen's choice, Grandma forced her to marry, and hence Ellen was turned into a mother at home in accordance with the requirements of the 1937 Irish Constitution. What is more, motherhood not only brought an end to her possible career, but also literally killed her. Despite her young age, twenty-seven-year-old Ellen died while giving birth to one of her children. For Grandma, Ellen's body could not carry the burden of several pregnancies: "She was worn ouh from all thim miscarriages and pregnancies" (1.35). This death illustrates a tragic fact about maternity in that the rate of Irish women's death while giving birth was very high during the 1940s and 1950s (Heanue 35). Living a life without personal autonomy, Ellen the mother was victimised by the oppressing power of Irish Catholicism and the conditions at a time of strict restrictions. Moreover, it is claimed by Julie that Grandma Fraochlán caused Ellen's death in another way, too. After the marriage, the unnamed husband left Ellen at Grandma's house and came every summer to impregnate her. In his absence, Grandma caused Ellen to hate him as Julie explains it to the Mai:

> And she belittled your father all the time to Ellen, till Ellen grew to hate him and looked down on him. He couldn't write or spell very well and Grandma Fraochlán would mock his letters until finally Ellen stopped writing to him. And at the same time she filled the girl's head with all sorts of impossible hope, always talkin' about the time she was in college, and how brilliant she was, and maybe in a few years she'd go back and study. And it only filled Ellen with more longing and made her feel that what she had lost was all the greater. And do you know the worst, the worst of it all, Ellen adored her and looked up to her and believed everything she said, and that's what killed her, not childbirth, no, her spirit was broken. (1.40)

Although Ellen "is absent and this allows the rest of the family to offer competing versions of who she was" (Sierz 39), it is apparent that Ellen's marriage disappointed her after her achievements at school, and her maternal position did not bring happiness into her life. More tragically, motherhood led her to death which represents the burden of maternity in Irish society at times when the State and the Church both controlled the reproductive agency of women.

Now Grandma Fraochlán, however, feels guilty of what she did to Ellen which is understood from her following statement:"I'll noh enter heaven withouh a spell below for whah I done ta thah girl [Ellen]" (2.61). This sense of guilt, according to Freud, evokes "a need for punishment" (*Civilization* 77), and as the anxiety of her possible retribution in the other world seizes the old woman, she asks for the Mai's idea about this issue saying, "d'ya think I'm paradise material or am I wan a Lucifer's wicked auld childer?" (2.20). Her guilty conscience, further, reveals itself in one of her dreams in which her wish to be punished comes out in the image of hell: "I bin havin' woeful drames lately. I keep dramin' I'm in hell an' I' tha on'y wan there apart from Satan himself – An' through a glass ceilin' I see everywan I ever cared abouh, up beyant in heaven, an' d'ya know tha worst part a tha drame is Satan and' meself gets an like a house an fire" (2.20). According to the Freudian interpretation of dreams, unidentified emotions disclose themselves in dreams (Crick xii), and Grandma, suffering from remorse, finds herself in hell alone with Satan which can be regarded as the price that she will have to pay for her sins. Her place is a house on fire, in accordance with the conventional images of hell, and she is separated from her beloved ones in heaven. This dream can be considered as an anxiety-dream in that Grandma's worry about the punishment in hell, the "most terrible of all unpleasurable feelings holds [her] in its grip" (Freud, *Interpretation* 107) while sleeping. Interestingly, on the other hand, the

rest of the dream moves her to a different point in relation to her vision. She dreams that she and Satan are “there laughin’ an’ skitterin’ like two schoolgirls. Isn’t thah a frigh’?” (1.20). That is to say, Grandma Fraochlán is happy with her evil companion in hell, and this depiction, although taking place in hell, offers a dazzling wish that Grandma may find relief and happiness in the place of the condemned which also subverts the religious discourse about the inferno. In this respect, her wish to be punished for her wrong doings and her longing for remedy are fulfiled in the quirky dream.

In addition to her traumatic influence on Ellen’s life, Grandma Fraochlán’s relationship with Julie and Agnes is also problematic. As daughters of a mother who wishes in a, so to speak, unmaternal manner that “God had taken wan a th’others an’ left me Ellen” (1.19), Julie and Agnes have suffered from Grandma’s neglectful attitude. The mother’s unhappiness, especially after losing her lover, overshadowed their memories concerning the past as it was not easy to deal with mournful Grandma who chose to escape the reality by drinking and smoking opium. Therefore, it is natural for them to be haunted by the painful vision of old days. Julie declares as follows: “I’m seventy-five years of age, Mai, and I’m still not over my childhood. It’s not fair they should teach us desperation so young” (1.40-41).

Julie and Agnes, in *The Mai,* draw attention with their opposition to their mother who turned their childhood into a nightmare with her irreplaceable love for her husband. Brought up in the 1930s, additionally, Julie and Agnes’ identities have been shaped by the restrictive ideology of De Valera’s regime as well as Grandma Fraochlán’s unmotherly behaviour. As Trotter claims, these women “find themselves trapped between their opium-addicted mother and a political state that is founded on moral absolutes. Neither position gives them many choices in their own lives” (“Translating” 171). In contrast to the subverted image of their mother, the portrait of Julie and Agnes represents the conservative Catholic norms, and, through these two figures, the playwright probably illustrates the oppressive stance of Irish society in the recent past. The attitudes of the Irish, particularly towards domestic issues in regard to women’s personal decisions such as divorce and abortion, reflect the concerns of the Irish society in which they were brought up. Millie introduces their comic characterisation in a humorous way:

> Two of The Mai's aunts, bastions of the Connemara click, decided not to take the prospect of a divorcée in the family lying down. So they arrived one lovely autumn day armed with novenas, scapulars and leaflets on the horrors of premarital sex which they distributed amongst us children along with crisp twenty-pound notes. Births, marriages and deaths were their forte and by Christ, if they had anything to do with it, Beck would stay married even if it was a tree. (1.32-33)

As can be observed from their portrayal, Julie and Agnes are very sensitive about the problematic issues of sexuality and marriage. In accordance with the repressive practices of the Catholic Church, they adopt a judgmental approach even to their nieces, the Mai and Beck. Firstly, they are glad to see Robert at home again because it proves that the marriage, "a deliberate part of God's created order" (Kalbian 22) in Catholic belief, is not in jeopardy now (1.33). After this relief, they are interested in Beck's situation as she is about to divorce her husband in Australia. Julie speaks out the strict view about divorce in Ireland saying, "[n]one of ours ever got a divorce! [. . .] In my day you got married and whether it worked out or it didn't was by the way" (1.36, 37). This is an attitude "represent[ing] the period in Ireland when the state insisted that its citizens recognize deeply conservative Catholic mores and the sanctity of the family" (Trotter, "Translating" 170). Yet their concern with the issue of divorce – although it was still illegal in Ireland at the time the play was written – has an interesting façade as the aunts do not think about their emotional suffering niece, but touch upon another matter:

> JULIE I hope to God she's [Beck] not pregnant.
>
> AGNES Glory be, I never thought of that.
>
> JULIE (*Proud she's thought of it)* Oh you have to think of everything.
>
> AGNES She'd never have it.
>
> JULIE God forbid! A divorcée with a child, born after the divorce.
>
> AGNES She'd never go for an (*Whisper*) abortion, would she?
>
> JULIE We'll find out if she's pregnant first and, if she is, with the luck of God she'll miscarry. (1.34)

Their worry about Beck's probable pregnancy and abortion exposes their insincere religious devotion through which the dramatist satirises the seemingly hypocritical Catholic values in a light-hearted manner. In this respect, the aunts can be regarded as

the “parodies of traditional Abbey types” (Murray 237) with their concerns about marriage, divorce and abortion.

The third generation of this matrilineal family story, Ellen’s daughters, namely the Mai, Connie and Beck, is reared by Grandma Fraochlán whose “idealisation of sexual carnality and passion over maternal love” (Wallace, *Suspect* 266) shapes their personalities. Ellen, the biological mother, is substituted by the old woman, Grandma, but Grandma as an inattentive mother has discriminatory attitudes towards the three orphans. She only favours the Mai. Therefore, Connie honestly criticises Grandma who has turned a blind eye on them saying, “I suppose Beck and myself are scarecrows” (1.19). Besides lack of maternal affection, these sisters also grew up with conflicting ideas about the role of women in Irish society in that they are “trapped between their desires for autonomy and fulfillment and the mores and expectations of the previous generation” (Trotter, “Translating” 171). In contrast to Irish cultural values held by their aunts, the Mai, Beck and Connie do not feel obliged to abide by social norms. The Mai, having a respectful job at school, is determined to pursue her love; Connie sustains an unsatisfying traditional marriage life; and Beck, after travelling a lot of places, wants to feel she belongs somewhere. Such different dimensions of their lives may suggest the in-between state of the sisters whose perspectives on life are shaped by the unsettled perceptions about women’s position in Irish society. In Ireland, during the 1950s and 1960s, gender roles constructed and limited by the repressive institutions were questioned in line with the developing ideas of women’s rights. Hence, opposing the State and the Church, some women’s groups and cooperations “urged the government to address the needs of women working within the home and in wider society” (Beaumont 102).

Torn between this atmosphere of Ireland and Grandma Fraochlán’s stories, Ellen’s daughters choose different ways of life in which they are alone to cope with problems. Beck, suffering from an intense feeling of being lost, has travelled around the world and enjoyed sexual freedom. For a while, she had a stable relationship with a man, named Wesley, in Australia. They married, but Beck was uncomfortable with the lies that she told her husband. When she confessed him that she is not a thirty-one-year-old teacher, but a waitress, Wesley decided to get a divorce. Beck explains to the Mai why she

needed to lie about herself: "[Y]ou don't know what it's like out there when you're nothing and you have nothing, because you've always shone, always, you've always been somebody's favourite or somebody's star pupil or somebody's wife, or somebody's mother or somebody's teacher" (1.30). Unlike the Mai with a strong stance in life, Beck has nothing and somehow feels lost in her world of nothingness. Moreover, like the aunts, she refers to her traumatic childhood when Grandma ignored them, with the exception of the Mai (1.31). Still alone at the age of thirty-seven, Beck considers herself miserable and envies her sisters' lives.

On the other hand, Connie yearns for the loneliness that Beck complains about. She wants to be on her own again. Additionally, she is bored of her traditional marriage with Derek and regrets that she did not experience sexuality freely prior to her marriage when she had the chance: "And I never slept with any of them. If I could turn the clock back" (2.52). She even fantasises about a day for herself without any restrictions:

> I'd like to try it out for myself, just once, go off to a hotel with someone I picked off the street or met in a pub or train, maybe a blackman or an Arab – It's just I've never had a room to myself. I'd love a single bed of my own and then to head off to a hotel every now and then. Wouldn't that be just amazing? (*She sits back and laughs*) (2.52-53)

In her daydream, it is observed that Connie desires to be away from any kind of limitations and imagines an individual space for herself which is different from her familiar site of living. Her wish to be in a hotel room reminds one of the Foucaultian idea of "heterotopias" in that the place of her personal utopia is both a real place and unreal at the same time as it is of an illusion (Foucault 330-36). Therefore, Connie yearning for free sexual affairs and Beck having countless relationships remind their grandmother who entrenches the importance of sex in one's life: "Ya're born, y'ave sex, an' thin ya die. An' if ya're wan a thim lucky few whom tha gods has blesst, tha will send ta ya a lover wud whom ya will partake a thah most rare an' sublime love there is ta partake a an this wild an' lonely planeh" (1.38). Consistent with her idea, her granddaughters have always fantasised about such kind of a lover. The Mai dreams about a dark-haired prince with an albatross, Beck, someone with a white horse, and Connie, a lover with a golden chariot (2.54). Their ideals of a lover also prove that they used to listen to Grandma Fraochlán's stories and believed in them. Subsequently, the Mai holds her responsible for their disappointments:

> She filled us with hope – too much hope maybe – in things to come. And her stories made us long for something extraordinary to happen in our lives. I wanted my life to be huge and heroic and pure as in the days of yore. I wanted to march through the world up and up, my prince at my side, and together we'd leave our mark on it. (2.55)

Ostensibly, the Mai and her sisters have been drifted in life with Grandma's romantic stories as well as her idealisation of love and sexuality, and they are disenchanted when they face the harsh realities of life. That is to say, the third generation of women in Carr's work is stuck in the middle of Irish society's expectations and their own overreaching dreams.

Millie, the Mai's daughter, is the fourth generation in the play, and it is she who, as mentioned previously, narrates her mother's life in this matrilineal family story. As a narrator and a story-teller, Millie is haunted by the family's traumatic past; that is why, her "adult self returns obsessively to her memories of her childhood and the period leading up to her mother's breakdown and suicide" (Pine, *Politics* 155). Millie, staying on the stage from the beginning to the end, is at the age of both sixteen and thirty in line with the changing scenes from the past. Her present articulation and deductions about the old days are in a monologue form. In the Mai's tragic love story, Millie is also the only child seen in the play although the Mai and Robert have other children, namely Stephen, Jack and Orla. Moreover, among the female generations of this family, Millie is chosen as the narrator because Carr herself explains that "[s]he's the first one of them that's beginning to put the pieces together. Not in any kind of complete way, but she's beginning to ask questions that the other women in the family accepted or took for granted. I'm not saying she's right, but she's beginning to ask" (*Rage* 149). Thus, Millie does not get much involved in the action except for some scenes, but generally recounts and comments on past events, especially on those related to the Mai's identity as a lover and her pain. So she attempts to figure out her mother's personality and the reason of her self-murder.

Anthony Roche describes Millie in *The Mai* as "the daughter who bears the brunt of the tensions between Robert and the Mai" ("Woman" 38). More than this, however, she is a neglected child whose parents are engulfed by the problems of their relationship. In Millie's talk to herself, she states that she was only eleven when Robert suddenly left the Mai and children: "No explanations, no goodbyes, he just got into his car with his

cello and drove away" (1.13). History repeats itself in this matrilineal family play in that Millie, this time, becomes the daughter of a woman who suffers from the absence of her lover as in Grandma Fraochlán's case. Unlike the old woman, the Mai does not turn into a mad figure, but patiently waits for Robert's return. Nevertheless, her children never become the focal point of the Mai's life as in the example of her foremother. In his absence, the Mai decided to build a house for Robert, as stated earlier on, and to earn more money for this purpose, the mother was working at an Arab hairdressing salon. In order to be able to work, she did not hesitate to send her children to her friend, Cassie Molloy who had ten children. Millie depicts how they spent time in the absence of their mother in that house: "We sat down to dinner in shifts and slept eight to a room while The Mai swept up the curls of Arab royalty" (2.46). In flowing images of those times, Millie remembers how jealousy controlled her when the Mai told of "the little princess" that she was with at work:

> The Mai's only job was to entertain the little princess who ran riot in the salon as long as she was permitted by her docile, shrouded mother who left magnificent tips. The Mai spoke longingly of this child, of how they played ring-a-ring-a-rosy, of the songs she taught her, of a shopping spree they went on together. A lick of jealousy would curl through me whenever The Mai mentioned her. (2.46)

As can be observed from Millie's above depiction, the princess seems to have substituted the Mai's daughter/s during that period. Although the Mai as a mother did not spend time with Millie, she treated the girl at work with motherly affection. When Millie learnt that, she was naturally jealous of this relationship, but it seems there was nothing she could do to change the state of affairs. She felt helpless or inferior to them as can be seen in her statement, "I wanted to compete but I was out of my league and I knew it. But not The Mai, no, The Mai and the princess were two of a kind, moving towards one another across deserts and fairytales" (2.46). In other words, she put the Mai on a pedestal and therefore could not even associate herself with her mother.

Although Millie does not appear much in the action of the play, it can still be observed that she is rather on the side of her mother, in spite of the Mai's indifference. This is especially evident in her problematic relationship with Robert. For example, it is not the Mai, but Millie who first questions Robert about his absence immediately after he returns home (1.13). Despite her young age, it is again Millie who advises the Mai to discard him and find another way for herself (2.71-72) by "tak[ing] on the role of

counsellor to her mother" (Dhuibhne 73). In another scene, Millie speaks of her now distant relationship with Robert: "[W]hen we meet now, which isn't often and always by chance, we shout and roar till we're exhausted or in tears or both, and then crawl away to lick our wounds already gathering venom for the next bout" (1.27). Without doubt, they stay away from each other, and this father-daughter relationship is troublesome after all that happened. Therefore, Millie appears to disregard her father as follows:

> He'll fling the Fourth Commandment at me, *HONOUR THY FATHER!* And I'll hiss back, a father has to be honourable before he can be honoured, or some facetious rubbish like that. And we'll pace ourselves like professionals, all the way to the last round, to the language of the gutter, where he'll call me a fuckin' cunt and I'll call him and ignorant bollix! (1.27)

For Millie, Robert is not an honourable father as she holds him responsible for breaking up their family as well as the Mai's destruction. In consequence, the present relationship between Millie and Robert is only itching for both sides, and hence they feel free to express their rage against each other.

Millie is also aware of the fact that her parents' wrong choices have defined her life. She therefore wants to be away from the site of her childhood, which is Owl Lake, and is able to move to the USA. However, the destiny of the family does not leave her there, either. In the US, she is abandoned by the father of her son, Joseph and, more ironically, she somehow maintains family traditions. In the same manner as Grandma Fraochlán and her mother, she chooses to tell a story about Joseph's father by hiding the truth from her five-year-old son:

> I tell him all the good things. I say your Daddy is an El Salvadorian drummer who swept me off my feet when I was lost in New York. I tell him his eyes are brown and his hair is black and that he loved to drink Jack Daniels by the neck. I tell him that high on hash or marijuana or god-knows-what we danced on the roof of a tenement building in Brooklyn to one of Robert's cello recordings.
>
> I do not tell him that he is married with two sons to a jaded uptown society girl or that I tricked him into conceiving you because I thought it possible to have something for myself that didn't stink of Owl Lake. I do not tell him that on the day you were born this jaded society queen sauntered into the hospital, chucked you under the chin, told me I was your Daddy's last walk on the wild side, gave me a cheque for five thousand dollars and said, you're on your own now, kiddo. (2.56)

Unlike her grandmother Ellen, Millie is an unmarried single mother away from Ireland now. However, she does not confront the truth about her life by escaping into the world

of stories, and she consoles both herself and her son with stories about the absent father figure. Her story-telling can be regarded as the outcome of "the emotional and romantic burden that is so much a part of her matrilineal history" (Trench 111), and her tales are rather "psychological constructs [which] are the attachments she has to her family history" (Trench 111). Moreover, she detaches Joseph from her past and Owl Lake both of which still haunt her. She accepts that "[n]one of The Mai and Robert's children are very strong. We teeter along the fringe of the world with halting gait, reeking of Owl Lake at every turn" (2.70). She has nightmares about the watery place of her mother's house which symbolises her struggle with the Mai. Millie narrates her gloomy dream in which she tries to get rid of the images coming from the past: "I dream of water all the time. I'm floundering off the shore, or bursting towards the surface for air, or wrestling with a black swan trying to drag me under" (2.70-71). In line with the Freudian interpretation of various images in dreams, water always refers to a maternal relation. Freud states that "every human being, spent the first phase of its existence in water – namely as an embryo in the amniotic fluid in its mother's uterus, and came out of that water when it was born" (*Introductory* 160). Symbolising the amniotic fluid in the womb, watery forms are related to the womb and birth, in other words, to the mother. In her dreams, Millie struggles to be out of the lake, which is a symbol of the womb, which means that she tries to free herself from the influence of the Mai. Although she gets away from the water in the dream, Millie, in another dream, seeks to compete a black swan which is again identified with her mother in that "swans do keen their mates" (2.51). Furthermore, before her suicide in Owl Lake, stage directions in the last scene indicate that "*The Mai turns and drifts from the room. Sounds of geese and swans taking flight, sounds of water*" (2.72). Considering the fact that this is the scene where Millie takes action and recommends her mother to leave Robert before the Mai's death, it can be realised that the Mai's daughter cannot recover from this traumatic moment in her life which overwhelms her in dreams. This haunting site symbolises the burden of the past by which Millie is defeated: "I have not emerged triumphant from those lakes of the night. Sometimes I think I wear Owl Lake like a caul around my chest to protect me from all that is good and hopeful and worth pursuing" (2.71). Even at times when Millie feels better, she again finds herself in the land of her childhood where the Mai's presence dominates her memory:

> Images rush past me from that childhood landscape. There's The Mai talking to the builders about the dimensions of Robert's study and there's Robert playing football with Stephen and Jack, and Orla on her swing. Now Grandma Fraochlán is lighting her pipe as Beck wanders in and pours a drink. There's The Mai again, adding up the bills, a pencil in her mouth, Robert making his cello sing, The Mai at the window, Grandma Fraochlán's oar, Julie and Agnes, colluderin' in the corner, The Mai at the window again, The Mai at the window again, and it goes on and on till I succumb and linger among them there in that dead silent world that tore our hearts out for a song. (2.71)

In this narration, the house on Owl Lake built by the Mai haunts Millie as it is "the site of self-destructive feminine, and [. . .] a memorial to the suicide of The Mai" (Trench 105). Therefore, the memory of her mother controls Millie's current life, but her recollections of the past can be considered an attempt at psychological atonement because "[t]he 'not telling' of the story serves as a perpetuation of its tyranny" (Felman and Laub 79). In order to dispose of the darkness of the past, Millie speaks out the story of her destructive lover-mother who destroys not only her own life, but also her children owing to her neglect. The end of the play does not give a clear idea about whether Millie finds relief or not; however, by virtue of the last scene where Millie is in the past, it can be suggested that she may not be able to bear the burden of the old days even after unfolding the traumatic events of those times. Therefore, her "seek[ing] to answer the horror and to fill the space left by The Mai [. . .] dooms Millie to be a living ghost" (Pine, "Living" 223) in this memory play.

In retrospect, the female generations of the Mai's family are trapped within certain problems for which they cannot find solutions. Grandma Fraochlán alienates herself from the rest of the world by escaping into her memory and grieving for her dead lover. Julie and Agnes cannot recover from the wreck of their agonising past, and, devoid of maternal affection and guidance, their lives are governed by the strict social and religious norms of Irish society. Beck and Connie are dissatisfied with their lives, but they cannot live out their aspirations, and, undeniably, Millie is captured by the ghosts of her family. Their attitudes towards the difficulties of life do not provide consistent results, and they are haunted by recurring painful memories.

However, the Mai stands out among these female figures with her decisive and distinctive personality in her pursuit of love and individual autonomy. In fact, the protagonist of *The Mai* has a central position in the play since the characters around her

“all come to her, and they all go from her. [The play] is essentially her story” (Carr, *Rage* 150). In the dynamics of her family, the Mai embodies all the female roles: She is Grandma Fraochlán’s granddaughter, Ellen’s daughter, Agnes and Julie’s niece, Connie and Beck’s sister, Millie’s mother and Robert’s wife. She adopts a strong posture in life; she is an independent woman who can gain money and build a house of her own; she gets “an ensemble support system of female energy” (Roche, “Woman” 37) and feels the power of matrilineal vigor; and, more prominently, she only chases her personal aspirations. Her self-confidence and determination define her character in as much as she refuses to be a conventional Irish woman and mother. Her maternal identity is impacted by her lover personality, and her obsession with Robert turns her into a violent woman.

Before analysing the Mai’s distinct character among these different generations of Irish women, her experiences of motherhood must be highlighted. In her marital relationship with Robert, the protagonist finds herself in the role of a mother as sex out of love relations not only induces women to obtain this identity, but also “condemn[s] them to a life that the women themselves eventually find to be valueless, a life in which repetition is the only possibility” (Marsh 123). The Mai, accordingly, cannot escape from this repetitive life with her four children after seventeen years of marriage. However, Robert’s absence for five years in this flow of time disrupts and destroys the familial relationships because she devotes herself to her “recalcitrant husband” (Murray 236) with whom she is desperately in love. Although the Mai, unlike her grandmother, does not totally abandon her maternal responsibilities, her children are never at the heart of her life. For this reason, her presence/absence in the children’s lives can be particularly emphasised. As a case in point, her aunt Julie acknowledges that the Mai teaches manners to her offspring, and Agnes describes them as “a fine healthy clatter” (1.33). Depicting their manners at meal, the aunts recognise that these children do not reject their mother’s orders: “Still, they set to the washin’ up and not a gig or a protest out a one of them” (1.33). They are also different from those in the Midlands as the Mai, earning her own money, sends her children to good-quality schools where they receive an education which is easily noticed and appreciated by the aunts: “Must be the schools she’s sendin’ them to. They didn’t learn to speak like that around here” (1.33). That is to

say, the Mai is aware of her maternal responsibilities, as a result of which her presence as a mother is felt in her children's lives.

Behind this depiction of the Mai, however, there is not an image of perfect motherhood. During the years when Robert disappears from her life, the Mai suffers not only from the pain of his abandonment, but also from the parental duties that she has to fulfil alone. Although she does not openly project her difficulties onto her children at those times, she reminds Robert of her trouble with four children in his absence asking "[w]hat it costs to feed, clothe, educate four children for five years. Do you know what that cost?" (2.49). As she is left alone in the middle of economic and emotional problems, the Mai does not hesitate to call Robert to account when he ignores his duties at home even after his return. In a bitter and harsh manner, the Mai speaks up and pushes him to remember his place in the family: "Then keep your fuckin' mouth shut up about your paltry little contribution. How can you do this to your children! They're haunted! Do you know that! Your children are haunted. And you don't give a fuckin' damn!" (2.49-50). Her assaults reflect the trouble that she has to deal with on her own. As is unfolded in the dialogue below, the burden of motherhood exhausts the Mai, especially at times when Robert gets away from home:

> THE MAI Do you know what I did this weekend, Robert, or do you care?
>
> ROBERT Could you cut out the headmistress tone? You're not addressing the Assembly now.
>
> THE MAI I collected the children from their schools, I did twelve loads of laundry, I prepared eight meals, I dropped the children back to their schools, and I read Plato and Aristotle on education, because education is my business, and do you know the differences between their philosophies? No, I didn't think you would. (2.48-49)

In this outburst of the Mai, it is possible to observe how traditional gender roles damage Irish women. She is imprisoned in a life compelling her to dedicate herself to housework and children; and additionally, Robert's absence puts more stress and strain on her. In other words, the bias that women are responsible for domestic duties at home and the fact that men are placed in the outside world in conventional Irish families (McDonald 145) cripple the Mai, as she herself exclaims. She says that her successful period ended with her marriage and motherhood: "When you met me I was cellist in the

college orchestra! I had a B.A. under my belt and I was half way through my Masters! You lower me, all the time you lower me" (2.49). In a way, Robert, as the only male figure in the play and therefore the embodiment of patriarchal society, restricted the Mai to the domestic domain. While her husband pursues his own pleasure away from his family, the Mai looks after her children because the notion of motherhood is constrained to "her access to love, morality and maternal instincts, but [this life] denie[s] [for] her a position as woman and equal to the society" (Stubbings 24). The Mai bursts with anger manifesting her complaint of maternal ideals as motherhood is not "an experience of fulfillment" (DiQuinzio 176) for her. As a result, the Mai's maternal presence does not provide her children with motherly emotional tenderness and, as Millie claims, "[n]one of The Mai and Robert's children are very strong" (2.70).

The problem with the Mai as a mother is that she is "too much lover[. . .] to be [an] effective mother[. . .]" (Mahony 192). In other words, her love for Robert does not leave any emotional space for her children. As the main caregiver, she is physically in the life of her children, but she is emotionally and psychologically remote from them. In this sense, she is an absent mother figure as the powerful love for her husband is the centre of her whole existence. It is her feelings for Robert, rather than maternity, that define her identity. Although the play starts in medias res with Robert's return, the Mai's endless love and passion for him is depicted throughout the work. In the very first scene of *The Mai,* Robert's dreamlike coming is greeted by the Mai with pleasure as her wish is fulfiled with the lover's return. The reunion of the couple revives their passionate love in that sexual excitement captures them: "*Now he plays the cello bow across her breasts. The Mai laughs*" (2.11). At these moments of physicality, they are not parents but only lovers. The Mai playing her body like a cello in the second act (2.49) recalls this previous sexual image which poses her as a feminine lover. Therefore, she does not deny herself as a woman, and this opposes the sexual restrain imposed on mothers in the Catholic Irish society. In this way, by stressing the sexuality of a woman on the Irish stage, Carr repels the familiar or customary illustrations of motherhood.

Meanwhile, in the house of the Mai on Owl Lake built for her lover, Robert's return is questioned by the female members of the family. They do not approve of the reunion being afraid that Robert will disappoint his wife again. Grandma Fraochlán, for

instance, challenges his return saying, "I think ya on'y cem back because ya couldn't find anathin' behher elsewhere an' ya'll be gone as soon as ya think ya've found somethin' behher – [. . .] this house built an' whin everythin's laid an, you appear an tha doorstep wud a bunch a flowers" (1.23). Robert tries to convince the old woman that he has changed, but she is aware that most people do not learn from their mistakes, but repeat wrong actions:

> People don't change, Robert, tha don't change ah all! [. . .] Why couldn't ya a just lave her alone? Ya come back here an' fill tha girl's head wud all sourts a foolish hope. Ya'ar own father left ya'ar mother, didn't he? [. . .] Buh noh you, no, an' noh ya'ar father, an' sure as I'm sittin' here, ya'll noh be stoppin' long, because we can't help repeatin', Robert, we repeah an' we repeah, th'orchestration may be different but tha tune is allas tha same. (1.23)

Like his father, Robert leaves his wife and children behind, and his return does not avoid repetition because he starts to get away from his family again in the second act. In addition to Grandma's foreshadowing of the end, Robert's real reason for coming back foretells the Mai's demise in the play. When she asks him about his return, he mentions it as follows:

> I dreamt that 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 lost sight of the carriage and of you – And I wake, pack my bags, take the next plane home. (1.25)

This dream is prophetic because Robert's vision thoroughly illustrates the Mai's death at the end of the play, and he will be the cause of the Mai's destruction as indicated through the cello case used in the dream as her coffin. All these images also stand for death in line with a Freudian interpretation. Dark water symbolises the return to the womb, and the Mai's disappearance as well as Robert's search of her refers to death as, Freud writes, "[d]eparture in dreams means dying" (*Introductory* 161). Considering the interpretation of this dream, the Mai is right to tell Robert that "you've come back to bury me" (1.25), and Millie describes their burial of her mother telling that she and Robert bought a blue nightgown and bed jacket as the Mai had wished to be buried in blue (1.28).

Moreover, Robert has come back to her for another reason, that is his failure to compose new pieces of music as he needs the Mai. He openly states that she is necessary for his

work which reveals his pragmatism. Yet he then apologises for what he says to the Mai and soothes his wife with the magic of words: “All those years I was away, not a day went by I didn’t think of you, not a day someone or something didn’t remind me of you. When I’d sit down to play, I’d play for you, imagining you were there in the room with me. [. . .] Don’t you know you are and were and always will be the only one?” (1.26, 27). His plan for a romantic trip to Paris also causes the Mai the lover to forget about his selfishness, and the lovers are glad to be together by ignoring the fact that “Poor Millie’s bored” (1.27). That is to say, they only think of themselves, forget the needs or wishes of their children and fail to be effective parents.

While the first act of *The Mai* portrays happy moments of the lovers, the mood of the second act totally changes. One year after his arrival, Robert does the same thing again and leaves the Mai, this time, on her birthday. The playwright uses the same scene of abandonment at the opening of both acts, but the protagonist looking at Owl Lake in front of the window is now in a different state of mind about her husband. When her female relatives come to celebrate her birthday, the Mai starts to cry and tells them that Robert “gave me this (*birthday card*) and this (*ten-pound note*) and he’s gone to Spiddal with her [. . .] where he used to take me” (2.44). As can be understood, Robert has been cheating on his wife who is anxious about their relationship. Although he has been deceiving the Mai for a while, she acknowledges his disloyalty now:

> I was suspicious, of course, I am always suspicious of him, though I try not be be – And he was winning me and dining me, showering me with presents, telling me how much he loved me and then he’d be out till all hours, overly attentive to me when he was here. I must be blind – And then I followed him about two weeks ago and sure enough. (2.44)

Her naive soul is hurt by Robert again, but not wanting to lose him this time, she meets the local woman with whom her husband has an affair. She does not know what to do; all she knows is the fact that “[h]e’s going to leave me again. I can’t bear it a second time. Oh God, please, I can’t bear it a second time” (2.45). Believing that “[l]ove is everything, she is powerless to withstand it” (Dhuibhne 73), and she suffers from her excessive devotion to Robert. Despite his nature, the Mai insists on the existence of a bond between them and refuses to live without him. Besides, Irish society did not give them the choice to break up at the time because Roman Catholic norms proposed divorce as immoral and also the Irish State’s laws were against divorce (O’Gorman,

"Writing" 495). So, although their marriage is a failure, "The Mai clings so obsessively to the idea of saving her marriage, and 'stitching' her family back together" (O'Gorman, "Writing" 495). She even tends to become violent which is observed in her relationships where infidelity damages her marriage (Raine 33). According to Raine, women mostly do not want to be involved in aggressive actions (34). Yet the case in *The Mai* is different from the general attitude in that the Mai, as a demanding lover, turns into a violent figure, and her violence can be classified into three types: verbal, physical and self-violence, in an order of increasing intensity.

The first phase of the Mai's violence consists of verbal attack against her unfaithful husband. At this stage she displays her anger by cursing and swearing. For example, after her birthday, when Robert returns, the Mai addresses him in a furious manner: "Fuckin' bastard" (2.46). Shocking him with these words, the Mai firstly assumes a sarcastic attitude to reveal her rage against him. She questions what Robert brings to her: strawberries and *Cosmopolitan.* Reading the magazine, the Mai declares that they are not bought for her: "The zipples fuck and how to achieve it – How to take off seven pounds in seven days – And here's a recipe for peach flan with double cream. I suppose that's to put back on the seven pounds you lost. [. . .] Robert, have you ever seen me reading *Cosmopolitan*? Well, have you?" (2.47). The Mai, who reads Plato and Aristotle's educational philosophies, obviously is not accustomed to reading this women's magazine. Kathryn McMahon's study of this magazine's issues between 1976-1988 reveals the fact that

> [i]n *Cosmopolitan*, sex was discussed as a function of the public sphere, in the context of the workplace, and in explicit terms of the marketplace. While a sexuality no longer defined exclusively in terms of the home, as domestic and procreative, may be considered as a step toward more freedom for women, talking about sex as a function of market exchange may not be liberating. (382)

Promoting the idea of sexuality outside marital relationships, *Cosmopolitan* does not seem to appeal to the Mai, but to Robert's mistress who does not feel bothered when the Mai visits this unnamed local woman at the workplace (2.44-45). Eating the strawberries, "widely recognized as a romantic fruit" (Parrott 102), the Mai reminds him of not only his absence and betrayal on her birthday, but also the fact that they are lovers: "Here let me feed you. Isn't that what lovers do?" (2.48). She also deliberately uses a filthy language to annoy Robert: "Tell me, Robert – Tell me, is it that faraway

pussies are greener or is it your mother crowin' on your cock?" (2.49). When Robert warns his wife about her rude conduct, she reminds him that it is her house and asserts her independence. Her owning the house strengthens her position in this dispute as Mary Trotter claims:

> Traditionally, the husband prepares a house for his bride, who enters into his home and becomes a member of the patriarchal family line. Carr turns the table in *The Mai*, however, translating the tradition of the bride crossing her husband's threshold into a situation in which Robert enters the house built by Mai. ("Translating" 169)

Therefore, Robert has to live according to her rules. The Mai emphasises her strong position although she is always defeated by her extreme love for him. She tries to relieve herself by cursing Robert which helps her to vent her aggression and avoid self-destruction for a while.

In another scene, despite his betrayal, the Mai attempts to make up with Robert by attending the Lion's Ball with him. She is very excited to show up in this public event as Robert is with her after five years of separation. Considering that women "compete in terms of physical attractiveness – the quality desired by men, who use it as a guide to fertility" (Raine 35), the Mai pays attention to her dress, but her stunning image is not noticed by Robert (2.57). He also humiliates the Mai by leaving her alone in front of everyone to dance with his mistress in the ball. This event becomes the last straw which breaks the camel's back. Although worn out, the Mai argues with Robert:

> THE MAI [. . .] And he's sittin' there with his arm around her! It was me you were taking out tonight. Me! And I literally begged him. I said, Robert, please don't leave me here on my own, begging for the car keys, and everyone was looking, and do you know what –
>
> ROBERT Fuck the neighbours! Just look at you, my good wife. You're so fuckin' good, Mai, you even look good when we have a row in public.
>
> THE MAI I just wanted the car keys so I could come home, you fucker!
>
> ROBERT My beautiful wife with her beautiful body and beautiful face and the goodness shining out of her. What am I supposed to do with all this beauty? [. . .] You'll calm down as you always do and look me over with that hurt and patient expression that seems to be always on your face these days, at least when I am around, and I'll feel like the bastard I am. (2.63)

In contrast to the strong, loving and self-confident image of the Mai, Robert is not an ideal lover. As indicated in his above speech, Robert's seemingly perfect wife makes him feel inferior because she is intelligent, successful, beautiful, patient and forgiving; she never rejects or disappoints him. Moreover, as Matt O'Brien suggests, the Mai knows Robert's weakness as manifested when she refers to his failure in his career as a musician and his inability to fulfil the role of father in the family (210). Therefore, her dignified figure may frighten Robert to make him want to hurt the Mai striking at her Achilles heel, that is her endless love for him: "The Mai will not listen, because, you see, The Mai thinks in absolutes. And I am The Mai's absolute husband and when I refuse to behave as The Mai's absolute husband, The Mai shuts down because the reality of everyday living is too complicated for The Mai. [. . .] Love, the reality of love" (2.62). Although the Mai is an independent woman, she obsessively needs Robert, and her possessive attitude leads her to violence. She openly gives voice to her murderous intentions: "[I]f I'd a knife I'd have put it through her" (2.63). Her threat as a kind of verbal violence is obviously against the grain of motherhood, and it depicts her impotence to control Robert any more. In all these examples, she tries to express her rage upon Robert's betrayal although she still loves him. As she does not want to lose him, her anxiety comes out in the form of verbal aggressiveness. Her love and aggression join together at her desperate moments and are externalised in the form of swear words and threats. Distinguishing the Mai from the traditional mother figures in Irish theatre, Carr portrays her character as a furious lover enraged by an adulterous husband.

The tension continues to increase in the play with the couple's mutual insults at the night of the ball. The statement that Robert makes to the Mai, that is "what upsets me, Mai, is that tonight I discovered I don't give a damn about you anymore!" (2.65) increases her anger culminating in physical violence. The stage direction describes that "*The Mai wallops him across the face*" (2.65). She attacks Robert because "her husband does not give her all his love, time and interest, will not notice how much of her own hostility, hidden vindictiveness and aggression are expressed through her attitude" (Horney 108). Slapping him, the Mai also proves that she cannot control her aggression now. She even reminds her husband of her superior position saying, "I'll have you know I came first in every exam I ever sat!" (2.65). However, sensing that he will

abandon her again, she later breaks down and turns to the day when Robert left her alone first time: “And you never collected me from the hospital when Stephen was born” (2.66). This moment evokes a memory of the trauma caused by her lover who repetitively deserts her. As the Mai, reminiscent of Freud’s words, “places love at the center of everything and expects all satisfaction to come from love and being loved” (*Civilization* 24) by Robert, the constant loss of love-object induces severe agony and pain that she cannot endure. Although she has a choice to leave him or ask him to leave, she insists that “he loves me in his own high damaged way. Maybe it’s just a phase he’s going through and in a few years he’ll come back to me” (2.72). Even her hope suggests a repetitive process that they have already experienced. Her obsessive love for Robert rules her to such an extent that the Mai becomes violent enough to take her own life, which distinguishes her from the rest of the women characters in the play.

In fact, the Mai’s self-violence is previously foreshadowed by Millie in her telling of the local myth about Owl Lake. Although the story of *The Mai* seems to be “fairly commonplace, even banal material” (Dhuibhne 67), Carr enriches her play with her artistic fusion of this legend into the narration. Familiar with it since her childhood, Millie recounts the story of Owl Lake and makes sense of the Mai’s desperate love and misery as the myth, the fantastic creation of the human mind, “reveals a continuously present world in terms of infantile realities” (Ferguson 109):

> Owl Lake comes from the Irish, *loch cailleach oiche*, Lake of the Night Hag or Pool of the Dark Witch. The legend goes that Coillte, daughter of the mountain god, Bloom, fell in love with Bláth, Lord of all the flowers. So away she bounded like a young deer, across her father’s mountain, down through Croc’s Valley of Stone, over the dark witch’s boglands till she came to Bláth’s domain. There he lay, under an oak tree, playing his pipes, a crown of forget-me-nots in his ebony hair. And so they lived freely through the spring and summer, sleeping on beds of leaves and grass, drinking soups of nettle and rosehip, dressing in acorn and poppy. One evening approaching autumn Bláth told Coillte that soon he must go and live with the dark witch of the bog, that he would return in spring, and the next morning he was gone. Coillte followed him and found him ensconsed 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. One night, seizing a long awaited opportunity, the dark witch pushed Coillte into her lake of tears. When spring came round again Bláth was released from the dark witch’s spell and he went in search of Coillte, only to be told that she had dissolved in a lake of tears. (1.41-42)

This myth of seasonal changes reflects the Mai and Robert's relationship: The Mai building her house on Owl Lake is compared to Coillte by Millie. As in this tragic love story, Robert periodically leaves the Mai and returns after a while. He comes back in the summer of 1979 and leaves his lover in the summer of 1980. He wants to be free, cheats on the Mai and does not fulfil her expectations. As for the Mai's explanation of the problem, "it's the excitement, the newness, it's powerful and it's wonderful, not old and weak like an eighteen year marriage" (2.72). That is to say, time is actually the Mai's enemy. It takes Robert from her at certain periods, which means that the dark witch in her story is time, not the woman that Robert has a relationship. Likewise, Carr defines time as a witch in the introduction of *Plays One*: "And the Witch? Maybe she was Time. Time we didn't understand or fully inhabit, and yet we respected and feared her. And fell away humbly under her spells and charms and curses" (x). Therefore, the Mai is defeated by time which constantly takes away her lover, and, as she no longer wants to be subjected to incessant repetition, she drowns herself in Owl Lake, a watery place believed to be a bridge to enter the other world in Celtic mythology (Rutherford 108). The playing of Wagner's "Liebestod" from *Tristan and Isolde* (1857-1859) – the part translated as "Love Death" in *The Mai* – indicates this death since the last lines of Wagner's work illustrate the drowning image and praise desire as in the case of the Mai:

> whirlwind be drown'd,
>
> and, sinking,
>
> be drinking –
>
> in a kiss,
>
> highest bliss! (III. iv. 36).[3]

The Mai's psychological autopsy, or the investigation of the motives for her suicide, reveals that the reason for her self-murder is hidden in her obsessive love for Robert. As Feeney mentions, "[f]or individuals high in relationship anxiety, this manipulation led to heightened accessibility of death-related thoughts, especially when long-term or final separations were imagined" (474). Before her death, she confides in Millie:

> 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, no one – People think I've no pride, no dignity, to say in a situation like this, but I can't think of one reason for going on without him. (2.72)

The Mai, who does not regard her children as a reason to continue, refuses to live without Robert. As indicated in her words, she identifies herself with her lover, and love as the most violent passion (Bal 96) leads her to suicide. Although Sierz claims that the reason for her suicide is not clearly given in the play (39), the Mai's assertive identification of herself with Robert explains her self-annihilation. The person who identifies him/herself with the lover will also kill him/her by taking his/her own life (Oktik 208). Choron also clarifies this point in accordance with the Freudian understanding of suicide:

> [T]he psychic energy needed for self-destruction originated in the wish to kill someone else and that intended victim was someone whom the suicide had loved and identified himself in the past; because this person could not or ought not to be killed, he could be destroyed only if the suicide in whom the other 'lived' killed himself. In other words, aggression is actually directed against the 'internalized' other [. . .]. (69)

That is to say, Robert as the Mai's other self – as "love is an attempt to find the other half of the self" (Strongman 143) – is the one that she wishes to destroy. Self-murder is both her solution to get rid of her pain and her way of demolishing her lover.

Indeed, the Mai's violence is formerly hinted at in her dream in which she watches Robert's death. She mentions her dream to Robert before the wedding as follows: "I dreamt it was the end of the world and before my eyes an old woman puts a knife through your heart and you die on the grey pavement, and for some reason I find this hilarious though I also know your loss will be terrible" (1.26). Although it must be perplexing for the Mai to witness in her dream her lover's death just before the marriage, its interpretation can be related to her violence and the end of the play. In line with the Freudian conception of dreams, the death of beloved people in dreams is actually a wish-fulfilment, though this idea seems to be disturbing (*Interpretation* 122). Freud explains that it is a "suppressed and unsuspected wish in the shape of a *care* and *concern* for the life of the dear person" (*Interpretation* 205). In her dream, accordingly, the Mai recognises Robert's important place in her life, but she is satisfied by watching his death as she may be unknowingly wishing him die. The rest of the dream, on the other hand, can be related to the end of the play:

> Then the scene changes and I'm a child again walking up a golden river and everything is bright and startling. At the bend in the river I see you coming towards me whistling through two leaves of grass – you're a child too – and as you come

> nearer I smile and wave, so happy to see you, and you pass me saying, Not yet, not yet, not for thousands and thousands of years. And I turn to look after you and you're gone and the river is gone and away 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. (1.26)

The change in the dream following his death suggests that it is not the end of only Robert's life, but also hers in that the Mai and Robert's metamorphosing into children brings to mind a second birth or rebirth in another world. That is to say, like her identification with Robert before her suicide, this dream, too, hints that the Mai's understanding of possessive love requires that the death of one of them kills the other one. Recalling the images that Millie describes in the Owl Lake myth – the images of grass and water – the dream also depicts the Mai's chasing of Robert who refuses to meet her. His saying that they cannot unite yet and his sudden disappearance foretell the end of the play as the Mai has to wait for him and decides to commit suicide. More interestingly, although she is aware of the fact that this relationship will lead her nowhere, she insists on following him in the dream as in her waking life. Moreover, the image of a black cavern must be highlighted as an important part of this dream since hollow places are regarded as symbols of female genital organs in dream analysis (Freud, *Introductory* 156). Considering that the Mai drowns herself in a lake, a watery place reminiscent of the fluid in the womb, the cave imagery in her dream may be associated with the maternal space as "death [is] a return to the womb" (Freud, *New Introductory Lectures* 24). In line with Freud's comment, the Mai's journey to nowhere also symbolises her death. In other words, her dream foreshadows the resolution of the play.

To further argue, following the Mai's verbal and physical violence, her self-inflicted violence can be regarded as the peak of her destructive tendencies. She firstly suppresses her death instinct by extroverting her aggression in the forms of assaults and attacks, but, after a while, she cannot handle her murderous intentions. By sensing that her relationship with Robert is doomed, the Mai shapes her own destiny and gets rid of the repetition that surrounds her whenever her lover forsakes her. Therefore, she refuses not only to wait for Robert again, but also "to submit to suffering" (Choron 32) by committing suicide. In this sense, the Mai reminds one of the legendary Deirdre who does not wish to live after losing her lover.

More importantly, however, what makes the Mai unique is that her suicide is a personal decision, as Trench argues: “Carr allows her female [character] a sense of authority and agency, which ultimately leads to [her] choice of suicide” (96). The Mai prefers her destructive love to her maternal identity and pursues her own obsession and desire in such a way that the playwright “complicate[s] and disrupt[s] traditional perceptions of womanhood and motherhood in Ireland” (Haughton 73). Still more, the protagonist does not believe in the self-sacrificing notion of motherhood. Instead, she sacrifices herself for the sake of love as it is her sole way of self-fulfilment in life. To state the same thing differently, the ideals of Irish motherhood are questioned in the play as the characterisation of the Mai illustrates that motherly feelings do not substitute the Mai’s love for Robert and that women have concerns other than maintaining prescribed maternal roles.

Besides, the Mai’s self-murder puts forth her individuality and personal autonomy in that she does not accept to be a passive victim and reacts to her family destiny. While Grandma Fraochlán silently suffers from the death of her lover living in her memories, the Mai rejects this kind of life. Ellen dies of maternal burden, but the Mai’s end is her own creation of an alternative death. Julie and Agnes are devoted Catholics whereas the Mai goes against “God’s order” by killing herself. Millie is stuck in the memories of her family while the Mai disrupts the repetitive cycle of her life. In other words, whereas the women of the Mai’s big family do not find a way out of their troubles and get imprisoned in the traumatic past, the Mai, albeit a violent one, solves her problem. As a result, the definite article in her name – *the* Mai – suggests her difference in the play. Trotter refers to the significance of the protagonist’s name stating that it is “the Irish tradition of adding ‘the’ before the last name of the (male) head of a clan” (“Translating” 168); Rhona Trench believes that her name “indicates strength and authority” (115); and, according to Mahony, it “serves as an honorific conveys” (191). Her violent nature, which differentiates her from the rest of the characters, also creates a contrast to the meaning of her name in that Mai, or May, the month of spring stands for rebirth, renewal of nature, fertility and love. Although she dedicates her life to love and she is a fertile figure with four children, she becomes the embodiment of violence and death in Carr’s work.

By virtue of the analysis of *The Mai,* it can be concluded that Marina Carr tells a matriarchal family story around a destructive lover-mother in the frame of a memory play. Among the four generations of her family, the Mai appears to be the most distinct character. Her break with a repetitive way of life, her keenness on love and her contest of maternal identity by means of violence distinguish her from the other female characters in the play. The demanding protagonist defines herself as a lover rather than a mother with her pursuit of love and her emotional absence in the life of her children. Her characterisation demonstrates that she does not conceive motherhood as the greatest success to be achieved in life in contrast to the general understanding of this identity's place in Irish women's lives. Her psychological autopsy evidences that, defining herself as a demanding lover, the Mai does not tolerate her husband's indifference, cannot think of life without him and hence turns into a violent woman who does not hesitate to take her own life.

CHAPTER II

PORTIA COUGHLAN: VIOLENT ANTAGONISM CHARACTERISING IRISH MOTHERS

> If I commit suicide, it will not to be destroy myself but to put myself back together again. Suicide will be for me only one means of violently reconquering myself, of brutally invading my being, of anticipating the unpredictable approaches of God.
>
> --Artaud, "On Suicide"

Premiered in the Peacock Theatre on 27 March 1996, *Portia Coughlan* is the second play of Marina Carr's Midlands trilogy. This three-act play about a destructive mother was chosen as "the best play written by a woman in English" and rewarded with the Susan Smith Blackburn Award (Harris, *From Stage* 254). For this play, Marina Carr was commissioned by the National Maternity Hospital in Dublin as part of the events for the centennial commemoration of the hospital (Sihra, "The House" 210). In an interview with Stephenson and Langridge, Carr explains her writing process in the hospital (*Rage* 147) saying: "The fact of writing it at the Maternity Hospital, I'm sure it did affect me. I didn't want to do the expected thing" (*Rage* 153). Most probably contrary to expectations, Carr does not celebrate maternity in her play; instead, she portrays a violent mother who is under the influence of strong destructive impulses and whose children are not at the centre of her life. Although motherhood is almost a holy concept for her countrymen, the playwright violates and deconstructs the conventions of Ireland by giving voice to unspoken dimensions of maternity.

In this outstanding play, Marina Carr draws upon different sources. She firstly relates this play to a story that she heard from a childhood friend (*Rage* 147). Her imagination is captured by her homeland in Ireland, that is the Midlands which she describes as "the crossroads between the worlds" ("Afterword" 311). Therefore, Carr uses the Irish Midlands as the setting of *Portia Coughlan* and creates the protagonist, Portia Coughlan, in relation to her view of this land in that Portia remains in between life and

death. Moreover, Carr associates her play with Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* in that the character named Portia from Belmont in Shakespeare's work is the source that she is inspired by in her work (*Rage* 147; "Afterword" 311). Like Shakespeare's character, Carr's Portia seems to have different suitors in her complex love relations; however, the ideas of justice and mercy advocated by Shakespeare's Portia are not used in Carr's play. The resemblance between them is not further developed, and, different from Shakespeare's Portia, Carr produces an arguably attractive image in her Portia's presentation of a murderous mother.

Along with her thematic concern and sources, the dramatist draws attention with her use of technical elements in *Portia Coughlan*. Firstly, Carr breaks up the linear plot structure, reminiscent of what she did in *The Mai*, and this non-linear chronology is a postmodern element. The playwright refuses to end her play with the protagonist's death and disrupts the conventional, linear order of time. In her subversion of conventional structure of tragedy, Carr reveals the tragic end in the middle of the play, in the second act when Portia Coughlan commits suicide. In her interview with Mike Murphy, the dramatist claims that she tries to avoid a melodramatic tone by moving forward to Portia's death in the second act, and hence she changes the focal point of Portia's story (*Reading* 53). Furthermore, Portia's return onto the stage in the third act discloses the reasons of her suicide, and this makes it possible to resort to psychological autopsy as the factors driving her to death become apparent. In addition to this technical adjustment, the use of the Midlands dialect as an element of local colour characterising the play is evocative of the plays by the Abbey writers such as Lady Gregory, Yeats and Synge. Although an obstacle for the reader/audience of *Portia Coughlan*, the language is actually an attack on English (McGuiness ix).[4] That is to say, Carr not only alters the chronological order, but also violates the standard use of English in the play which is observed in almost all Irish plays. Moreover, the playwright creates a supernatural atmosphere since the ghost of Portia's dead twin brother, Gabriel, constantly appears on the stage. This leads to an otherwordly mood, and Carr shatters the realistic flow of the story with her use of an uncanny character.

Although Carr in *Portia Coughlan* does not bring any innovation in terms of techniques, it is still a significant play with its subject matter because the play openly reflects the

dark side of motherhood. Portia Coughlan appears to be a destructive woman who refuses to carry her “duties” as a mother and as a wife. She does not believe that she is capable of loving her children, but she devotes her life to her obsessive affair with her dead twin. Rather than motherhood, her love and hate relationship with her brother is at the core of Portia’s life as their special bond, albeit a torture after Gabriel’s death, constitutes her own identity. Thus, haunted by Gabriel’s ghost, she is torn between this world and the afterworld. Her inner struggle between life and death, which will be referred to in this chapter as the conflict between life and death instincts, increases her violent tendencies, and this strife in her nature will be emphasised here as it comes to the fore in Carr’s representation of motherhood. The reasons that cause Portia to withdraw from maternity and its effects will be detailed through a cause-and-effect relationship while examining her destructive personality as part of her psychological autopsy.

Before proceeding with the play’s analysis, it is crucial to give a summary of *Portia Coughlan.* The play opens on the day of Portia Coughlan’s thirtieth birthday, and this special event is used as a functional element in that the characters gathering around the protagonist are introduced to the audience/reader through the occasion, which also reveals the dynamics of Portia’s familial and other relationships. Firstly, Portia’s limp husband, Raphael comes home to celebrate his wife’s birthday with a gift of a diamond bracelet. In this scene, Portia, drinking heavily in the morning, is presented as uninterested in her children and her husband. The celebrations, albeit Portia’s indifference, continue with the coming of Portia’s former prostitute aunt, Maggie May, and her comically drawn husband Senchil. On the bank of the Belmont River, Portia later meets her lover, Damus Halion, who offers her flowers and insists on having sex. However, Portia seems to be lost in her own world and refuses him. She, then, meets her close friend Stacia – a substitute mother for Portia’s children – in the bar called the High Chaparral. There, the barman Fintan flirts with Portia who does not reject him and even promises him to meet him in the evening. After she returns home and is captured by the singing ghost of Gabriel, Portia’s parents visit her. Yet their coming disturbs Portia, and she quarrels with them. She firstly agitates her mother, Marianne, by reminding her of the death of her twin brother. Then, Sly, Portia’s father, advises her to forget Gabriel’s memory and warns his daughter about her improper manners. In the

evening of her birthday, Portia again goes to the river as she usually does, but this time Fintan is there, too, because she has promised to meet him on the riverside. However, as she totally forgets this meeting, they quarrel about her irritating mood. Meanwhile, Raphael is disappointed by his wife's absence at home, and when she comes back, Portia's verbal attacks and her rejection of domestic life hurt him further.

The second act moves forward to the day when Portia is found drowned in the Belmont River. After Raphael pulls his wife's naked corpse out of the river, people come together for the funeral. This gathering, like the birthday, becomes a functional occasion as the peculiar relationship between the twins is explained by Fintan and Damus, and the bleak secrets of Portia's family are revealed at the funeral. Blaize, Portia's old grandmother, talks about the incestuous marriage of her son and Marianne while Sly recalls the memories of his dead son, Gabriel who, he believes, is devilish. Therefore, nobody seems to mourn for Portia's death; instead, the corrupted relationships in the Irish Midlands infect the funeral.

The last act of *Portia Coughlan* goes back to the day after Portia's birthday. Though he is upset by Portia's harsh behaviour, Raphael tries to connect with his wife. Nevertheless, she again worries the desperate husband as Portia gives voice to her murderous thoughts, and he is afraid of the possibility that she may harm their children. Portia, denying her maternal identity and domestic responsibilities at home, finds relief outside home, on the river bank with Maggie. She honestly talks with her aunt and expresses her inner struggle from which she suffers. As she is haunted by Gabriel's ghost, she cannot feel that she belongs to this world. Her disturbed state of mind, then, manifests itself in Portia's violent dispute with Marianne, and she even attacks her mother. Sly intervenes in the action and discloses the perverted relationship between Portia and Gabriel. At the end of the play, Portia's last attempt to stay in this world is portrayed in the dinner that she prepares for her husband. Portia, with a forlorn spirit, sincerely talks about her bond with her late brother; however, this time, Raphael leaves her alone. Thus, she loses her last hope, and the stage direction, implying her ultimate end, indicates that Gabriel sings triumphantly.

As in *The Mai, Portia Coughlan* gives a family portrait with different generations, but it includes more male figures than *The Mai* such as Portia's father and husband. Besides,

differently from the first play of trilogy, in *Portia Coughlan*, Marina Carr delves into the ominous secrets of Portia's big family which have long lasting effects. Blaize Scully, Portia's grandmother from her father's side, stands for the first generation. The old matriarch is firstly said to come from an inbreeding family in Marianne's claim that Blaize's father is actually her brother (1.5.31). Later, Blaize had suffered, first, from patriarchal violence and, then, from oppression during her husband's lifetime, as evidenced when Maggie May reminds her of their dark marital relationship and states: "Happy, were yees, happy? Then how come he beat the lard out of ya every time he looked at yaa – How come weeks and weeks would go by and no one would've seen Blaize Scully out and about because her face was in a pulp again? How come he kicked ya down the road once in front of everyone?" (2.2.47). The husband also used to cheat on Blaize, a fact that she chooses to hide from her family which has a great impact on the second generation depicted in the play. Blaize's pride, her tragic mistake in a sense, prevents her from revealing her husband's betrayal, and this leads to Sly and Marianne's incestuous marriage: "Marianne and Sly is brother and sister. Same father, different mothers, born within a month of one another" (3.4.59). Incest, according to the *OED*, is defined as the "crime of sexual intercourse or cohabitation between persons related within the degrees within which marriage is prohibited; sexual commerce of near kindred" ("incest"). This type of relationship is legally banned in marital relations in certain societies because incestuous relations may have negative consequences for the next generations such as physical or psychological problems (Bittles 49; McDonald 97). Furthermore, in most cases, it is regarded as sexual abuse.

Incestuous relations, especially sibling incest, have invaded myths, stories and even religious narrations of different cultures such as Abel and her twin sister's marriage in a biblical story, Zeus and Hera's relationship in Greek mythology and the Egyptian myth of Nut and Geb (Coles 60). In Celtic mythology, too, the presence of incest cannot be denied as Markale exemplifies: "Mordied, who rebelled against King Arthur, is the incestuous son of Arthur and his sister; Cú Chulainn is the son of Conchobar and his sister Dechtire; Cormac Conloinges, disputed successor to Conchobar, is the son of Conchobar and his mother Ness; Lleu Llaw Gyffers is the son of Guyddyon and his sister Arianrod" (56). Yet incest is still a taboo subject in modern societies. It is accepted as an immoral and sinful affair damaging the dignity of the institution of

family. Especially within the context of Catholic Ireland, incest is out of question as the conservative society refuses, or denies, abusive sexuality. McDonald, likewise, claims that incest in Ireland is a "deviant" act as it negates the governmental control over sexuality and family relations (152). On the other hand, Monica Prendiville, the president of Irish Countrywomen's Association, enunciates that "Ireland is hiding its incest and sexual abuse problem and is meanwhile committing further generations to more of the same" (281).

Therefore, Blaize in Carr's play, invading the stage with her outrageous statements now, was able to neither avoid Sly and Marianne's marriage nor unveil the secret in the past. Harrower pinpoints Blaize's secrecy and regards her representation "as a critique of the culture of silence that shapes social relations in modern Ireland" (127). That is to say, the grandmother's silence stands for Irish society which renounces incestuous affairs. On the other hand, it can be observed in Blaize's relationship with Marianne that she does not remain silent. She torments her daughter-in-law who is, at the same time, her step-daughter. The oppressed woman recollects the memory of old days when Blaize turned her life into hell, saying, "she made me do when first I was a bride, remember that, ya auld witch, sendin' me up to me room when all the work was done, and Portia and Gabriel with me. Six o'clock on summer evenin's, sent to the room, the sun shinin' as if it was midday, because ya couldn't bear to share your kitchen with a Joyce" (1.5.32). Blaize, developing a grudge against Marianne as a result of the husband's adultery, does not reflect the real reason for her harsh behaviour; instead, she assumes a discriminatory pose in relation to Marianne's ancestral identity. Referring to tinkers, an othered minority group in Ireland, Blaize accuses Marianne of coming from this gypsy lineage: "I warned ya and I told ya, Sly, to keep away from the Joyces of Blacklion. Tinkers, the lot of them. [. . .] We don't know where ya came from, the histories of yeer blood. [. . .] God protect us from that black-eyed gypsy tribe with their black blood and their black souls!" (1.5.31). In her attitude towards Marianne, Blaize's hypocrisy can be detected when she does not give importance to the ongoing stigma in her son's marriage and instead tries to take her revenge for her husband's adultery by humiliating Marianne. At this point, Carr embeds incest into the marital bond. In a radical way, the playwright does not deal with such kind of a relationship between Marianne and Sly as an abusive entanglement, and the characters do not even know that they have

maintained intrafamilial sexual activity. Carr, accordingly, subverts ideal notions of the family established by the Irish State in her portrayal of the Scully family. Welch further argues that

> [t]he Irish state had consistently extolled the family as the bedrock of value and the central sponsoring agent of citizenship, morality, and conduct. The ideal of the family was a cohesive force at the very heart of the Irish social contract, and for that reason it sometimes acted as a covering device beneath which tyrannies, abuses, and perversions could take place without the restraint the danger of exposure would otherwise exercise. A society that overvalues the family will, inevitably, have certain families that are cauldrons of hell. Portia Coughlan's is such a one. (240)

On this account, it can be maintained that Carr satirises the entrenched familial values as well as the "holy" concept of this institution that are shaped by the authorative State and the Church within the intricate relationships in the play.

However, the problem of incest is not limited to Portia's parents. It appears to be repetitive in that the offspring of this marriage – the third generation – too are committed to incestuous desire. Unlike their parents, the twins, Portia and Gabriel, are deliberately and obsessively attached to each other which suggests the idea that incest is like "a hereditary disease" (Wallace, "Authentic" 62) among the members of the Scully family. From their childhood to the tragic end in *Portia Coughlan*, the siblings involve in this kind of affair. Portia believes that they "[c]ame out of the womb holdin' hands" (1.5.27), and their love, in her view, has started in their mother's womb. She confesses Raphael that "me and Gabriel made love all the time down be the Belmont River among the swale, from the age of five – [. . .] But I think we were doin' it before we were born" (3.6.68). Interestingly, she is able to visualise their prenatal days and depicts their sexual bond in the womb: "[A]ll the world is Portia and Gabriel packed forever in a tight hot womb, where there's no breathin', no thinkin', no seein', only darkness and heart drums and touch" (3.6.68). This complex relationship between the twins is recognised also by Sly and Marianne, but, like Blaize, they cannot interfere in the affair. For instance, Sly says: "I watched yeer perverted activities, I seen yees, dancin' in yeer pelts, disgustin', and the whole world asleep barrin' ye and the river" (3.5.65). That is to say, their parents do not hinder Portia and Gabriel from having a passionate bond which again refers to the apathetic stance of the Irish people on incest. Although such sexual intercourse, for the family members, develops feelings of embarrassment, disgrace and

annoyance (Thompson 532), the parents of the siblings only choose to deny its presence by ignoring the facts.

More importantly, Portia’s incestuous desire for Gabriel is of significance to understand her violent nature because this relationship is one of the reasons that triggers her destructive behaviour and actions. Obsessed with her passionate love for her dead twin, Portia gets more depressed on her birthday as it recalls Gabriel’s death. This increases her aggression, and she tends to become more violent. In particular, Portia turns her hostility on her “witchy” (1.5.26) mother because Marianne warns her daughter about her preoccupation with Gabriel. On the day after Portia’s birthday, when she sees Portia in a weird mood, Marianne advises her to leave the dead twin behind and, in opposition to Portia’s romanticised view of their birth, the mother declares: “he was obsessed with you! Came out of the womb clutchin’ your leg and he’s still clutchin’ it from wherever he is. Portia, you’re goin’ to have to cop onto yourself” (3.5.62). However, her mother’s attitude only annoys Portia as the stage direction which depicts her uncontrollable violent action suggests: *“Portia leaps, a wildcat leap from the table onto her mother, knocks her down, on top of her*” (3.5.63). Put differently, her fixation on Gabriel reveals “the inescapable violence of the desire itself” (Stansbury 22), and hence Portia physically attacks her own mother in a way that Leeney calls “rape” (“Ireland’s” 159). While attacking her mother, Portia questions her place in their past relationship with Gabriel: “Why couldn’t ya have just left us in peace. We weren’t doin’ nothin’! [. . .] Always spyin’ on us! [. . .] Interferin’ with our games! Out callin’ us in your disgustin’ voice! Why couldn’t ya have just left alone! Why!” (3.5.63). Moreover, she cannot stand Marianne’s love for the dead brother and thus hurts the mother with brutal words. She says: “He [Gabriel] hated you! Know what we used to call ya! The stuck pig!” (3.5.64). Her verbal attacks continue as she curses Marianne, calling her a “fuckin’ liar” (3.5.64) and a “fuckin bitch” (3.5.64). Portia also reflects her possessive love for Gabriel: “You come in here talkin’ about Gabriel as if you owned him! He was mine first! And I lost him first! And I was the only one that mattered to him!” (3.5.64). It becomes clear that her possessive attitude makes her jealous of Marianne’s maternal love for her child and Portia’s obsessive desire leads her to violence. Therefore, Clare Wallace is right to claim that the theme of incest in terms of twin relationship is linked with violence in the play (“Tragic” 443). To further argue, Portia’s incestuous affair and

her violence dismantles expected maternal behaviour and identity because her love for Gabriel, rather than her children, constitutes the centre and meaning of her life. In the turmoil of extreme feelings such as passion and anger, Portia does not take care of her children and leaves this responsibility to her friend Stacia and her husband while she is lost in her own problems.

In *Portia Coughlan*, the incestuous sibling relationship is not used only as a taboo-breaking element, but also as part of identity formation in twinship. According to Fraley and Tancredy, twins consider each other as "attachment figures" (308), and Otto Rank (1884-1939), an important Austrian psychoanalyst, in *Beyond Psychology* (1966), declares that twins being "dependent only upon each other" (91) develop their perception of identity in their close connection. That is to say, twins tend to detach themselves from other figures in identity development as they become self-sufficent in their powerful bond. Indeed, taking into account Portia's words, this process for twins starts in the womb during the fetal status. She describes their sense of togetherness in the womb as follows: "[W]e'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" (3.6.68). Her depiction reveals the idea that Portia and Gabriel as twins share a common identity and complete each other by recognising their own presence in the image of the other. Even after the birth, this bond between twins does not disappear, with the result that Portia and Gabriel become each other's "mirror-image" (Lash 5) in which they acknowledge their beings. Sometimes, their identification leads them to confusion. Portia, as a case in point, explains the complex bond here under consideration to Maggie May:

> Don't know if anyone knows what it's like to be a twin. Everythin's swapped and mixed up and you're aither two people or you're no one. He used call me Gabriel and I used call him Portia. Time we got so confused we couldn't tell who was who and we'd have to wait for someone else to identify us. (3.3.56)

As can be understood, their identification is so powerful that "Gabriel as 'other' infuses with Portia's identity as interchangeable and part of each other" (Trench 135). For this reason, she defends her brother, declaring that "he was doin' them things to himself for he thought I was him!" (3.5.64). In other words, their sense of mutual identification causes confusion which leads to an identity crisis in their lives. Despite such troubles, however, twins function as the other half in such a peculiar way that they feel complete

only in their togetherness. Due to the fact that "the twin is an everpresent mirror, a copy of itself" (O'Neal 38), Portia and Gabriel cannot define their own identities without one another. In this process, they appear to alienate themselves from their community in that their powerful emotional bond becomes the centre of their lives. Their closed way of living indicates that they share one life, one identity and one self. Yet their close attachment exceeds the limits of fraternal love, and they involve in an intrafamilial love affair. In romantic relationships, couples are regarded as twins in terms of soul-mating (Lash 26) on the belief that they find their "lost half" or other half in the lover. In Carr's play, too, Portia and Gabriel achieve this kind of union. However, they are literally twins and the fact that the twin motif in the play suggests "the personification of the Double-soul" (Rank, *Beyond* 84) sharing an identical personality assuredly makes their love self-love. To put the same thing differently, the fact that they are double images mirroring each other turns their devotion into narcissistic love. Freud, clarifying this point in "On Narcissism," states that "[t]hey are plainly seeking *themselves* as a love-object, and are exhibiting a type of object-choice which must be termed 'narcissistic'"(88). From this vantage point, Portia and Gabriel's incestuous relationship is based on self-love. They choose themselves as lovers because twins, or "counter-image[s]," Lash suggests, present "the ideal and complete essence within [each other], the soul within the soul" (26). This is probably the reason why the playwright does not want to depict the twins' affair in *Portia Coughlan* as incestuous. She treats it like a common love relationship (Carr, *Rage* 152) though the presence of incestuous commitment as a taboo subject which becomes the "anguish of love of self and love of other" (Barr 453) cannot be denied in the play.

In their self-centred love affair, the twins in Carr's play not only form their personalities, but also develop a special way of communication. At Portia's funeral, Damus and Fintan describe the Scully twins' particular connection:

> DAMUS Aye – one thing I always found strange about them Scully twins.
>
> FINTAN What was that?
>
> DAMUS You'd ask them a question and they'd both answer the same answer – at the same time, exact inflexion, exact pause, exact everythin'.
>
> FINTAN Forgotten that.

DAMUS You'd put them in different rooms, still the same answer. (2.1.41)

As explained in the above dialogue, Portia and Gabriel have a mysterious tie enabling them to communicate which can be attributed to Piontelli's characterisation of twins as "interactive partners, relating to each other in all sorts of complex and sophisticated ways" (20). Therefore, Damus and Fintan introduce the intricate interaction in the twins' communication. Marianne, too, illustrates the quirky bond between the siblings, but she names this complex network "unnatural ways and stupid carry-on" (3.5.63). Twin studies, however, refer to such kind of communication as telephatic contact which cannot be achieved in any other relationship. O'Neal elaborates on this type of communication: "Twins are noted for communicating with each other nonverbally and somehow connecting with each other through psychic abilities: twins might therefore be said to have yet another form of language at their disposal" (45). Bacon, likewise, claims that twins develop their own way of communication in an "autonomous language" (42) which is difficult for others to understand. In the play, Gabriel's singing signifies their individual system of connection. Although he was thought to be a weird child, Gabriel's stunning singing drew attention in his lifetime. Sly, for example, confesses that "God forgive me, but times I'd look at him through the mirror and the thought would go through me mind that this is no human child but some little outcast from hell. And then he'd sing the long drive home and I knew I was listenin' to somethin' beautiful and rare" (2.2.46). When Portia got away from him after accompanying Damus and Stacia, Gabriel stopped singing which indicates that his special connection with his twin was destroyed, and he later committed suicide by drowning himself in the Belmont River. After his death, Gabriel's ghost contacts Portia by means of his haunting singing. Portia, alerted and called by the dead twin, asks the singing ghost: "Can't you leave me alone or present yourself before me? Is heaven not so lovely after all? Are its streets not paved in alabaster and gold? Do the angels not sit drinkin' coffee and prunin' their wings along the eternal boulevards of paradise? Do ya miss me at all?" (3.2.51). Thus, it can be stated that their particular communication turns into a supernatural one following Gabriel's death. Moreover, death does not abolish the sense of belonging in their relationship because Gabriel without Portia seems to feel incomplete even in the other world, and hence his singing becomes a means of calling his sister for a reunion in the afterlife.

Although this twinship is a unique relationship in Portia's life, its complex dynamics cause destruction and violence in her. Although physically two separate entities, the twins are identical or each other's mirror image. Gabriel, accordingly, becomes Portia's "essence/origin" (Wallace, "Authentic" 62), and he can be called her "split self" (Trench 119) or "half self" (Cerquoni 178). On the other hand, as Lash argues, twins "are not 'polar opposites,' [and hence] they will not resolve into a final and harmonic unity" (6). In other words, their common characteristics generate implusion and discord and that is why twins start to repel each other. Frank McGuinness delineates this stage in their lives stating that "they, by the perverse logic of love and hatred, grow foreign through their very familiarity" (ix). Likewise, the French philosopher René Girard (1923-) highlights the reason for the antagonism between twins: "Everything is always equal between twins; there is conflict because there is competition and rivalry. The conflict is caused not by difference but by its absence" (92). As a result, the relationship between Portia and Gabriel – who behave and think in a particularly similiar way – turns into a kind of rivalry driving them to both love and hate each other. Although they are captivated by an obsessive love affair, as Walster states, "[p]assion sometimes develops under certain conditions that would seem more likely to provoke aggression and hatred than love" (87). Therefore, Portia does not hesitate to assert that they do not always like each other, especially at times when their egoistic attitudes come to the fore (3.3.56). Then, Portia firstly seems to have claimed indepedence from her twin by having an affair with Damus. This betrayal is not only her attempt to free herself from Gabriel, but also her first search for personal autonomy in the play, which causes destruction in Gabriel. Later, they decide to end their lives together as a compensation for Portia's betrayal of their affair; however, Portia's "egoism of the instinct of self-preservation" (Freud, "On Narcissism" 74), the impulse that preserves her own being, outweighes their bond. She says: "I knew he was goin' to do it, planned to do it together, and at the last minute I got afraid" (3.3.56). She does not prevent Gabriel from drowning in the river. Nor does she talk about her role in his death. She believes that one of them must die and does not stop him at the moment of suicide, and this silence at the moment of Gabriel's death makes her a kind of murderer. Pointing to their detrimental relation, she confesses Marianne that "[o]ne of us was goin', were killin' each other, and ye just left us to fight it to the death. Well, we fought it to the death and

I won” (3.5.65). In this regard, as they cannot manage to live together, their relationship grows into a struggle for life.

On the other hand, Portia’s defeat of Gabriel does not make her victorious; instead, her life after his death becomes tormenting. His loss personally imprisons Portia into a state of mourning because she is now deprived of her love-object. This type of mourning is detailed in Freud’s statement that it is “the reaction to the loss of someone who is loved, contains the same painful frame of mind, the same loss of interest in the outside world [. . .] the same loss of capacity to adopt any new object of love” (“Mourning” 244). On the grounds of the Freudian understanding of mourning, it is observed that Portia withdraws from the ongoing life around her, and she cannot replace Gabriel’s love with another one. Her loss of this special attachment causes such a disorder in her life that she does not look after her children and gets away from home trying to find relief near the Belmont River which is associated with Gabriel in the play. Yet this site she frequently visits stirs in Portia a sense of guilt since there at the river she cannot help recalling the day that she did not follow her twin in their plan to commit suicide together, the day when she abandoned him fifteen years ago. Moreover, owing to this sense of guilt, she is besieged by Gabriel. To illustrate, she says: “Forget Gabriel! He’s everywhere […]. Everywhere. There’s not a corner of any of your forty fields that don’t remind me of Gabriel. His name is in the mouths of the starlin’s that swoops over Belmont hill, the cows bellow for him from the barn on frosty winter nights” (1.5.30). Her guilty conscience is also epitomised by Gabriel’s psychic signing which is heard merely by Portia. Gabriel’s ghostly presence is strong enough to make Portia undergo sudden mood changes. For instance, while Portia is at the bar dancing with Maggie May and Senchil, her mood fluctuates unexpectedly as follows: “*Portia comes over to the table to drink, her mood changed again. She stands there looking off into space, holding drink, cigarette, looks upstage to river. Gabriel is there*” (3.4.58). Gabriel’s supernatural interference in Portia’s life suggests that “Gabriel is the central figure in Portia’s consciousness, and provides the reason for her restlessness in this world” (Harrower 187). He drives her to emotional distress and finally to self-destruction. That is to say, Portia’s guilty feelings do not allow her to disconnect herself from Gabriel’s haunting presence. In Portia’s life, hence, “the pursuit [of] the double [Gabriel], which has become an independent entity and which always and everywhere balks the self

[Portia] [has] a catastrophic effect" (Rank, *The Double* 11). Gabriel's voice fades away only after Portia's postponed suicide as she unites with him by taking her own life. From this standpoint, it can be claimed that twinship becomes one of the motives that leads Portia to violence, self-murder in this case, and her problem with this relationship makes Portia avoid her maternal identity.

Drinking is another factor that causes problems in terms of Portia's motherhood for it provokes violence. The very first scene introduces her to the audience/reader as a drunk woman who consumes alcohol quite early in the morning. When Raphael comes home to celebrate Portia's birthday, he finds his wife intoxicated:

> RAPHAEL Ah for fuck's sake.
>
> *Portia turns to look at him, looks away and takes another drink.*
>
> Ten o'clock in the mornin' and you're at it already. (1.1.11)

In contrast to the drunk Irish male stereotype, Carr radically creates a drunk mother image in which Portia's situation indicates that there is something wrong with her life. Throughout the play, Portia often distances herself from home and escapes to the High Chaparral. The bar where she spends time drinking becomes her own way of flight from domestic responsibilities. Nevertheless, although she wants to avoid pain by drinking, alcohol does not offer her a remedy as it triggers violent conduct (Englander 119; Raine 204). By suppressing the control mechanism of the person and numbing him/her, intoxication easily uncovers oppressed emotions. Put differently, alcohol reduces the balance among the parts of the unconscious mind – id, ego and superego – as Walter et al. suggest: "[A]lcohol may lead to a weakening ('erosion') of ego – and superego-stability and thus to a deterioration of self-esteem, relationships, or identity" (288). In other words, the forces of the id expose themselves, and therefore Portia in the play attacks the people around her in different ways. In the evening of her birthday, for example, she meets Fintan on the river bank, and he offers her whiskey. Although she promises him for an affair, Fintan's flirting suddenly drives her crazy, and she verbally attacks him (1.6.35-36). Portia later comes home with a disturbed mind. She feels guilty; she is in a depressive mood and under the influence of alcohol which destroys her relationships. Thus, she firstly despises her husband saying, "I despise you, Raphael Coughlan, with your limp and your cheap suits and your slow ways. I completely and

utterly despise you for what you are in yourself, but more for you will never be" (1.7.38). Then, she threatens Raphael and declares that "times you're lucky I don't rip ya to pieces or plunge a breadknife through your lily heart! [. . .] Now leave me alone. And light no more candles for me for fear I blind ya with them" (1.7.38). Thereupon, regarding her situation, it can be claimed that alcohol consumption expedites the exposition of her aggression, and, accordingly, she destroys everything and everyone around her in various ways. She is encouraged by the effect alcohol has on instinctive forces.

Besides, alcohol consumption does not fit into the ideals of maternal identity. Her escape into the bottle disassociates Portia from the ideal mother portrait in that she spends more hours drinking rather than taking care of her children. While she gets drunk at home in the morning, Stacia takes Portia's children to school (1.1.12). She is drinking at the bar when Stacia tries to draw Portia's attention to the problems of the smaller of her children (1.4.22). She refuses to listen to Raphael's complaints about her negligent motherhood while drinking and smoking (1.7.37). At another instance, Portia seems to be already intoxicated at two p.m. in the bar; Stacia reminds her of the children's school time and forces Portia to take the children from school together (3.4.60). These examples from the play underline that Portia does not give importance to her relationship with the children. Lost in her personal problems, she chooses to drink while the presence of her children is a great burden. Thus, her sense of individuality within the concept of motherhood draws her as a selfish mother who attempts to overcome her problems by drinking.

As can be observed, Portia is possessed by the peculiar relationship with her twin and withdraws from the life in her own way of alienation. Although home is regarded as the centre of the nation and a mother is the essence of this domestic space in patriarchal ideology (Holmes and Nelson 1), Portia distances herself from home and is frequently seen in the bar and in the Belmont River. She does not feel bound by the ideals of womanhood and motherhood in Ireland. Here it should also be noted that the absence of her children on the stage can be related to Portia's rejection of maternal identity. Married at the age of seventeen, she is the mother of three sons: twelve-year-old Jason, ten-year-old Peter and little Quintin who is desperately in need of his mother's care. In

Ireland, in the second half of the twentieth century, women were not permitted to prevent pregnancy. The strict laws and practices on their reproductive agency forced Irish women to constitute the notion of selfhood in relation to maternal identity, and hence the female biology in a sense foreordained their destiny. However, Carr liberates her character from this way of life by not showing Portia's identity as shaped by the limits of motherhood.

At first, however, Portia seems to share a common fate with other Irish women under the patriarchal rule in that she gets married at an early age and leaves her dreams behind: "I was going to college, had me place and all, but Daddy says no, marry Raphael" (1.2.16). Therefore, she finds herself in a repetitious life in which her identity is limited within the socially prescribed roles of wifehood and motherhood. Yet Portia rejects these positions in her own way although Peach states that "[t]he fact that many women in Ireland lived in isolated communities, in small villages or on scattered farms, meant that the power of the State and the Catholic Church tended to go unchallenged" (3). For instance, when Raphael asks her about their children's breakfast, she answers that "they did, what d'ya take me for at all?" (1.1.12). Her reply actually depicts that she does not want to conform to what is expected from her as a wife and a mother because submission for Portia means only restriction, disillusionment and, more importantly, a reason for frustration. Moreover, in addition to opposing the marital bond, she does not love her husband: "I fuckin' hate ya! Moochin' up to me with your slick theories on what's wrong of me! Ya haven't a fuckin' clue, ya ignorant auld fuckin' cripple, ya! I can't bear the sight of ya hobblin' around me" (1.7.38). Furthermore, she explicitly declares that their sexual relationship is a torture for her: "And you touch me at night, sometimes I've just got to sleep, often the first sleep of weeks, and I'm slidin' into a dream that'll take me away from this livin' hell and you touch me and lurch me back to Belmont Valley" (1.7.38). Her statements suggest that their children are not the product of real love. In contrast to the moral values of marriage and motherhood, Portia also betrays her husband. Her affair with Damus has continued since her teenage years, and she does not hesitate to make an appointment with the barman Fintan to have sex with him (1.4.25). She does not conform with the role of an ideal wife as she is not loyal to her husband, and, what is more, she violates one of the rules that determines the "good" mother image by committing adultery. Nevertheless, her sexual activity out of marriage

becomes her own way of assertion of freedom because she believes that her body does not belong to anybody (1.3.19), and she even warns her father not to involve in her private affairs (1.5.30).

Portia's traumatic relationship with Gabriel, too, deconstructs the maintenance of traditional female roles in that her identity entwined with her dead brother dissolves her ties with Raphael and her children. Portia, mesmerised by Gabriel, avoids her connection with her family. For example, Raphael who is aware of this special bond loses his temper and tells her that "I've waited thirteen year for you to talk about me the way you've just talked about him [Gabriel]. I'm weary of it all" (3.6.68). More importantly, Portia's problematic twinship leads her to deny her maternal identity. She appears to be neither a perfect mother, nor, Medb Ruane claims, " a 'natural mother'" (85). In the play's challenge of motherhood, Portia's nonconformist attitudes destroy the ideals of Irish maternity. Her narcissistic association with Gabriel and their incestuous passion initially deconstruct the conventional understanding of motherhood. Portia does not define herself with the socially prescribed identity as a mother, but in her association with Gabriel. This fact can be deduced from her rejection to look after her children. Her neglect of the children's needs as well as domestic duties indicates Portia's opposition to motherhood. At one instance, Marianne reveals Portia's carelessness at home:

MARIANNE	One of your bad-tempered moods again. (*Begins tidying up*) The state of the place! Look at it!
PORTIA	Leave it!
MARIANNE	(*Continuing to tidy*) You'd swear you were never taught how to hoover a room or dust a mantel; bloody grace, that's what ya are.
	She tidies with impotent rage; Portia undoes what she does.
	Will you stop it! And where's your children? Playin' round the Belmont River, I suppose. You be lucky they don't fall in and drown themselves one of these days. (1.5.26)

In this scene, it is observed that Marianne judges her daughter in terms of traditional gender roles. She holds Portia responsible for the disorder at home and depicts her as a bad mother who is not interested in her children. Forgetting about the death of her own son, Marianne even blames Portia for a possible tragedy because of her neglectful

attitude. However, ironically enough, Marianne, accusing Portia of negligence, appears to be a careless mother herself because it is she whose son died by drowning himself in the river. Yet one should be careful while assessing Marianne's motherhood and not pass a judgement on her maternal identity as Marianne's relationship with her children has complex dynamics. Moreover, the play probably discloses the idea of personal choice in relation to death. Carr may be stressing the issue of individual decision in life as Gabriel's death is his own choice, and it is not related to Marianne's motherhood. Therefore, Portia does not interfere in her children's lives and says that "[m]y sons'll be fine for if I do nothin' else I leave them alone and no mark is better than a black one" (1.5.27). At another instance, her rejection of maternal identity is more severe. When Portia does not come home for hours, Raphael tries to remind her of her duties at home by emphasising the condition of their children:

> RAPHAEL Been home since seven, kids atin' rubbish and watchin' videos, no homework done, no lunch, no dinner in them, where were ya?
>
> PORTIA Ah, Raphael, leave me alone.
>
> RAPHAEL Quintin bawlin' his eyes out all evenin' for ya.
>
> PORTIA He'll grow out of me eventually. (*Dries her legs with a cushion*)
>
> RAPHAEL Ah, for Jaysus' sake, Portia, he's only four.
>
> PORTIA I know what age he is and I want as little as possible to do with him, alright?
>
> *Pours the end of the wine for herself, sits and smokes.*
>
> RAPHAEL Your own sons.
>
> PORTIA I never wanted sons nor daughters and I never pretended otherwise to ya; told ya from the start. But ya thought ya could woo me into motherhood. Well, it hasn't worked out, has it? (1.7.37)

In the dialogue above, Portia manifests her refusal of motherhood because it is not her wish to be mother. It is Raphael's plan to make her adjust to their marriage. Thus, she rejects to maintain the enforced mother role, and for this reason, she does not even look after her little son, Quintin. Raphael's attitude is reminiscent of the essential approach to women in Ireland which expects women to turn into effective mothers owing to their biology, but Portia protests this view by means of her refraining from motherhood. Her antagonism to maternity can also be related to postpartum depression. After giving

birth, Portia cannot associate herself with the children since her identity crisis with Gabriel has already dominated her. Therefore, under Gabriel's influence, she can neither reform herself nor accept the maternal identity. Portia is also aware of her problematic identity. She reveals her self-knowledge in relation to her motherhood, confessing to Raphael that "[y]ou've your three sons now, so ya better mind them because I can't love them, Raphael. I'm just not able" (1.7.37). This statement is of utmost importance to understand Portia's denial of motherhood considering the fact that she asserts that maternity does not create a natural love bond between herself and her children. In other words, Portia refutes the alleged presence of maternal instincts which can be supported by Harrower's comment that "[Portia's] characterisation [. . .] rails against the assumption that maternal skills are 'innate' and 'natural', which decouples the assumed connection between womanhood and the ability to nurture and provide love" (149). Her ability to give birth does not provide Portia with everlasting devotion to her children, and her inability to love the offspring suggests that maternal love, the basic requirement of motherhood, is not intrinsic. Her keeping her distance from home can be also pertained to Portia's lack of maternal instinct in that this feeling is considered to be "an important means of confining the mother to the home" (Stubbings 24). In a country where womanhood is interchangeably defined within the concept of motherhood and situated in the domestic space, Portia in Carr's play subverts the assigned female identity with her defiance of motherly affection. In *Portia Coughlan*, accordingly, there is not a self-sacrificing and self-denying mother figure at home; instead, the play draws the portrait of a woman who is assertive about her own way of living. In this sense, not being restrained within the ideals of Irish motherhood, Portia makes a suggestion of personal autonomy.

The destruction of the norms of motherhood can be extended to another of Portia's disclosures about her children. When Raphael tries to find a way to make Portia take care of their children, he again reminds her of Quintin's needs. However, Portia's retort does not appease the husband; on the contrary, it puts fear into his heart:

RAPHAEL Quintin wants ya to dress him for school.

PORTIA Will ya just stop! Leave me alone! Told ya I can't! Alright, I'm afraid of them, Raphael! What I may do to them! Don't ya understand! Jaysus! Ya think I don't wish I could be a natural

> mother, mindin' me children, playin' with them, doin' all the things a mother is supposed to do! When I look at me sons, Raphael, I see knives and accidents and terrible mutilations. Their toy is weapons for me to hurt them with, givin' them a bath is a place where I could drown them. And I have to run from them and lock myself away for fear I cause these terrible things to happen. Quintin is safest when I'm nowhere near him, so teach him to stop whingin' for me for fear I dash his head against a wall or fling him through a window. (3.1.49)

In her violent exposition, Portia declares that she cannot behave in an expected manner. Raphael's constant demand of motherly care and responsibility inflames Portia who regards this role as a burden. This imposition of maternity does not stir motherly affection in her, but it leads to the thoughts of pure violence. Instead of maternal instinct, destructive impulses dominate Portia's psyche, and she talks about the unspoken feelings: "The inner life of the mother, or at least this mother, suddenly loomed as a scary, unpredictable place of secrets, deceptions, and unspeakable instincts" (Douglas and Michaels 165). As she acknowledges that she has violent tendencies, she avoids a close connection with her children. By disregarding her children's needs, Portia tries to avoid physical harm; however, she has already harmed her children because neglect is counted among the types of familial violence as a kind of abuse. Englander contends that "[c]hild abuse is usually separated into four subtypes: physical abuse; sexual abuse; neglect; and verbal, psychological, or emotional abuse" (22). Portia's intentional avoidance of intimacy can be considered negligence because she does not provide four-year-old Quintin with affection which is among his most basic needs. This also seems to cause anxiety and distress in the little child who reflects his troubled state through childish reactions. Stacia reports that "Quintin was bawlin' his eyes out, had to drag him from the car into the classroom" (1.4.22). However, Portia's recognition of her true nature makes her decisive to remain disconnected from her children. The below dialogue between Raphael and Portia evidences her determination:

> RAPHAEL [. . .] Ya wouldn't do anythin' to them [children], would ya?
>
> PORTIA Told ya I wouldn't and I haven't, not a mark on them and I never will – I just want them not to want anythin' from me, that's all. (3.1.50)

Although Portia is instinctively inclined to murder her own children, she is able to suppress this feeling by avoiding a close contact with them. In the face of Portia's

depiction as a mother, it is conceivable to conclude that Carr de-idealises the sacred and glorified understanding of motherhood in Ireland because the concept of maternity is deconstructed by means of the rejection, neglect and threat of violence within the image of Portia from the Irish Midlands.

In hindsight, Portia's violent behaviour is initially related to different causes by some of the characters in the play. To illustrate the problem, Blaize refers to the tinker blood inherited by Marianne: "There's a devil in that Joyce blood, was in Gabriel, and it's in Portia too" (1.5.31). At Portia's funeral, the grandmother again defines Portia's problem by ascribing it to their parents' marriage: "To Portia in the murky clay of Belmont graveyard where she was headin' from the day she was born, because when you breed animals with humans you can only bring forth poor haunted monsters who've no sense of God or man" (2.2.45). In a similar manner, Maggie May relates it to the incestuous marriage of the twins' parents, and she justifies Gabriel's death saying: "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" (3.4.59-60). As Portia also dies in the same way, the issue of inbreeding can be a cause of Portia's interest in death according to her aunt. In respect to the claims of unnatural inheritance owing to incest, Bittles makes the point that "if the same mutant gene is inherited from both parents, the individual will express the disorder, prenatally, at birth, or later in life, depending on the nature and site of mutation, thus contributing to the phenomenon of inbreeding depression" (38-39). The twins' attempt to escape on a boat to "anywhere that's not here" (2.1.42) on a school tour, or their planned suicide may be related to their possible depression owing to inbreeding. As an alternative explanation for Portia's violence, her twinship may come to mind as twin studies concentrate on aggressive and destructive behaviour which is identified and explained in the light of genetic investigations (Raine 39-43). However, Carr's play does not give the audience/reader precise information about their genetic background; it solely depicts Portia's inner struggle between life and death which can be analysed in terms of her violence.

The presence of violence in Portia's rejection of maternity and in her life can be explained in relation to the main conflict in the play that is the struggle between life and

death instincts. According to Freud, people are led by two strong impulses: life/sexual instinct and death instinct. While life instinct, or Eros, enables people to preserve their being in the world, death instinct drives them to return to the inactive deadly state. Freud expounds that “[t]he emergence of life would thus be the cause of the continuance of life and also at the same time of the striving towards death; and life itself would be a conflict and compromise between these two trends” (*The Ego* 41). Such a struggle is observed in Carr’s play, in Portia’s last two days. Although Portia seeks a way to stay in this world, she is overwhelmed by a strong impulse which forces her to the inanimate state by means of self-destruction.

Portia’s attempt to go on living can be initially traced in her sexual relationships. At this stage, the forces of the id under the control of the pleasure principle serve life instinct in a way that they keep the being alive. Therefore, Portia is keen to have a sexual life until death instinct totally captures her. On her birthday, when she is at the bar with Stacia, she does not oppose Fintan’s offers:

FINTAN	Ladies, yeers are lookin’ extremely beautiful this sultry summer’s day.
STACIA	It’s Portia’s birthday.
PORTIA	Now’s your excuse to give me a kiss. (*Proffers cheek*)
FINTAN	Go ‘way outa that with your cheek. Cheeks is for Grannys and auld spinster aunts. I only ever kiss women on the lips nor the legs.
STACIA	D’ya hear him? The cheek of ya!
PORTIA	(*Offers leg*) Be the leg so, me lips is Raphael’s, God help him. (*The leg is kissed*) G’way now and leave me leg alone before ya swally it. (1.4.22)

Stacia, a more traditional woman than Portia, warns the barman to stay away from her friend, but Portia proposes Fintan to meet in the evening: “Can have dinner at home, only want to fuck ya, find out you’re any good, see if there’s anythin’ behind that cowboy swagger and too honeyed tongue” (1.4.25). Portia, challenging Fintan, does not look for a romantic affair. She just wants to satisfy her needs. Meanwhile, her extramarital affair with Damus has been continuing for long years as Damus puts it: “Portia, I’ve been comin’ here on and off this sixteen year” (3.2.52). These sexual affairs enliven Portia’s life instinct. Nevertheless, the most important attempt to

maintain her existence lies in her marriage. Although people believe that Portia married Raphael for money or because of her parents' pressure, it was actually her own choice. She explains this fact to her mother:

> Do ya know the only reason I married Raphael? Not because you and Daddy says I should, not because he was rich, I care nothin' for money, naw. The only reason I married Raphael was because of his name, a angel's name, same as Gabriel's, and I thought be osmosis or just pure wishin' that one'd take on the qualities of the other. (1.5.27)

As can be understood, Portia hopes that she will once again find her half self, this time in marriage, which would hopefully prompt the sense of completeness in her identity. However, her relationship with Raphael disappoints her because he cannot take the place of Gabriel. Unlike her expectations, Raphael cannot substitute Portia's angelic lover: "Only thing Raphael know be how to make money and then how to save it. Same as Daddy" (3.3.54). His interest in materialism is evident even in his gift for Portia's birthday, as depicted in the stage direction: "*a vulgar diamond bracelet*" (1.1.12). His taste does not satisfy Portia, and hence her faith in his name – Raphael, the name of an archangel – leads their relationship to nowhere. Although his name stands for the angel with the ability to cure (Wallace, "Tragic" 441), Raphael cannot heal Portia's wounds. Therefore, their marriage becomes dysfunctional and Portia illustrates their dead relationship as follows:

> These days I look at Raphael sittin' opposite me in the armchair. He's always tired, his bad leg up on a stool, addin' up the books from the factory, lost in himself, and I think the pair of us might as well be dead for all the joy we knock out of one another. The kids is asleep, the house creakin' like a coffin, all them wooden doors and floors. Sometimes I can't breathe anymore. (1.4.24)

That is to say, Portia cannot recover from depression in this marriage. Actually marriage rather contributes to her depressive state. Nevertheless, she tries to enliven her relationship with Raphael for a last time because she does not want to terminate her being. After completing her other domestic duties at home, she prepares a meal and talks honestly with her husband. As her confessions about her dead brother frustrates Raphael, he does not want to listen to his wife. However, Portia expresses the real reason why she married him saying, "I says to meself, if Raphael Coughlan notices me I will have a chance to enter the world and stay in it, which has always been the battle for me" (3.6.69). It is clear in her statement that she has regarded their marriage as her

chance to stay in this world; in other words, this marriage for Portia is supposed to keep her alive. In this respect, the marital bond functions, or is supposed to function, as a factor that stimulates her life instinct. It is probably the same reason that leads her to give birth considering Klein's claim that "the mother is the representative of the life instinct" (201). That is to say, Portia metamorphosing into a mother with the ability to procreate would be the embodiment of life herself; however, as Marsh states, "creating new life has always seemed too great to Portia" (130), and she fails to embrace motherhood. Her representation in the play opposes the requirements of motherhood on the account that she tends to destroy her children and firmly rejects maternal identity by cause of her violent impulses.

Portia's last two days also exhibit the process of her retreat from the influence of Eros. On her birthday, she rejects to have sex with Damus, and the next day, she tells him that "I'm past all pleasures of the body" (3.2.51). She wants to be on her own as she only looks for a moment of peace; she therefore advises him to give up. In another scene, Portia violently sends Fintan away while he is willing to have sex with her. The aggressive protagonist exclaims, "Ya fuckin' turnip head, ya! Just get off me father's land, Fintan Goolan, because you're a fuckin clodhopper, just like your people before you and like those you'll spawn after you in a wet ditch on a wet night in a drunken stupor!" (1.6.35-36). At such moments, Portia's aggression becomes prominent because she straddles between the forces of life and death instincts. Brown explains that "aggressiveness represents a fusion of the life instinct with the death instinct, a fusion which saves the organism from the innate self-destructive tendency of the death instinct by extroverting it, a desire to kill replacing the desire to die" (101). It can therefore be argued that Portia formerly projected destructive tendencies towards others in different ways, and this ostensibly emanates from her wish to preserve her own existence. For this reason, she even physically attacks her own mother and attempts to elude her uncontrollable violence by exposing it. Moreover, her explicit articulation of hatred towards her husband (1.7.38) signifies the fact that death instinct surrounds her because in "the elusive death instinct in the instinct of destruction [. . .] hate points the way" (Freud, *The Ego* 42). Thus, Portia avoids self-destruction with her projection of outward aggression, but the violent forces inside her eventually direct her to self-murder.

In fact, Portia herself acknowledges the power of her death instinct and explains its presence with such words as "[t]here's a wolf tooth growin' in me heart and it's turnin' me from everyone and everythin' I am. I wishin' if the wind or somethin' would carry me from this place without me havin' to do anythin' meself" (3.3.55-56). In her description, she delineates the destructive impulse as "a wolf tooth" which disengages her from life. At another moment, after her violent attack on Marianne, Portia reveals her chaotic state of mind and displays her inner struggle between life and death: "I can't bear it – Christ, I love this world, the colours of it and I want to be in it, instead of this dyin' thing flowin' through me, this forever dyin' thing as just wants me to course the waves like an auld glob of jetsam" (3.5.65). Despite her realisation of "this dyin' thing" in herself, Portia cannot ward off its powerful seizure. Her birthday, too, triggers

> a heightened moment of existential reflection and awareness for [the] protagonist which leads directly to [her] death. The birthday is something that is celebrated in childhood, but resisted with passing years, signifying as it does, continuing decay, mortality and proximity to the deathday. (Sihra, "Birthdays" 170)

After her birthday, Portia questions her life and becomes more aware of her aggressive and violent mood. Then, she senses the coming death and attributes her own destructive tendency to her dead twin. As she betrayed Gabriel in their pact to die together, Portia now believes that he is coming for revenge: "I can hear him comin' towards me, can hear him callin' me – " (3.5.65). Thus, Gabriel, as part of Portia's self, stands for her death instinct since she becomes entirely under his influence at the end of the play although Gabriel, the messenger of God in biblical mythology, as Cousin states, "foretold Christ's nativity" and heralded good news to God's prophets (43). Portia finally accepts that she cannot continue her life without him: "And though everyone and everythin' tells me I have to forget him, I cannot, Raphael, I cannot" (3.6.69). Consequently, Portia's destructive impulses target her own self, and she commits suicide by drowning herself in the Belmont River. To use Freud's words in relation to Portia's case, Portia's "aggression is introjected, internalized, actually sent back to where it came from; in other words, it is directed against the individual's own ego" (*Civilization* 77). Or, her suicide is, to use the words with which Durkheim explained suicide, "an instinctive need beyond the control of reflection and reasoning" (11). That is to say, Portia acts in accordance with the impulses coming from within and terminates her life. Her suicide can be contemplated as "the last selfish, taboo-breaking and

perversely self-preserving act" (Pine, "Living" 219) rather than a defeat. She chooses to unite with her half self, her twin to find a meaning to her being rejecting the socially and culturally defined role of motherhood and kills herself leaving her children behind. Thus, Llewellyn-Jones claims that Portia "seeks death as a way of obliterating her social identity" (78).

The place where she ends her life seems to be chosen on purpose because the local legend of the Belmont River narrated in the play refers to the story of a woman with whom Portia associates herself. Fintan recounts the myth that is "about some auld river God be the name of Bel and a mad of 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" (1.6.35). On the other hand, Portia rejects his tale and explains the story as follows: "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 his cries and came down the Belmont Valley and taken her from here and the river was born" (1.6.35). Akin to the woman depicted in the story, Portia, too, is a different figure in her community, and she finally decides to unite with her brother by drowning herself in the river. Portia's death in the river can be interpreted as an act of cleansing as she thus gets rid of her sense of guilt and purifies her forlorn soul in the water. The repetitive cases of death in the same place also indicate that both of the twins metaphorically return to the womb, the place where their love and identification started (Kaya). Water as a symbol of the amniotic fluid in the womb provides the reunion for twins by means of death. It is, in Sihra's words, "an erotic and thanatotic channel for protagonist" ("Introduction" 13). Furthermore, deriving from Carr's depiction of the Belmont River that "the river is her. It's her and Gabriel" (*Rage* 154), it can be claimed that Portia's suicide is a narcissistic act as she sacrifices herself to merge with her other half. Portia's self-destruction becomes her own way of uniting with her missing identity, and this brings to mind the idea that motherhood does not provide Portia with fulfilment in life.

To recapitulate, *Portia Coughlan* gives the portrait of an Irish woman whose destructive impetus separates her from the established norms of maternity in her country. Portia's identification with her twin brother and their incestuous desire contribute to her violent mood, and she distances herself from her home and family. Portia, aware of her true

nature, denies motherhood, does not give importance to her children's needs, and her death instinct induces her to murder them. This violent mother once again violates the unwritten laws of motherhood in that she has extramarital affairs, and her incestuous bond with the late brother shatters the moral conventions in her familial relationships. Her drinking habit also differentiates Portia from "good" mothers and triggers her aggressive tendencies. Thus, within the framework of the cause-and-effect relationship, the theme of incest, the obsessive relationship with the twin, extramarital affairs and drinking can be counted as the factors that distinguish Portia from the ideal notion of motherhood in Ireland. More importantly, her identity formation in relation to her twin and her violence emerging from her death instinct do not accord with the ideals of Irish motherhood. Accordingly, it can be deduced that the conflict between her life and death instincts and her obsessive ties with her twin are the elements of deconstruction of the conventional mother characters on the Irish stage and the reasons for Portia's suicide.

CHAPTER III

BY THE BOG OF CATS… : ABSENCE OF A MOTHER, TRAUMA AND VIOLENCE

> [T]he bogs of Ireland are full of secrets and Christ alone knows what goes on in the bogs of Ireland.
>
> --McCabe, *Death and Nightingales*

> To murder with a better will. For they must die,
> In any case; and since they must, then I who gave
> Them birth will kill them. Arm yourself, my heart: the thing
> That you must do is fearful, yet inevitable.
>
> --Euripides, *Medea*

By the Bog of Cats… is Marina Carr's first play staged in the mainstream theatre of Ireland that is the Abbey Theatre. Premiered on 7 October 1998 during the Dublin Theatre Festival, the last play of the Midlands trilogy was of success. Olwen Fouéré who played the protagonist Hester Swane was rewarded with the best actress award in the festival, and the play later won the award of the best play in Irish Times/ESB Theatre Awards in 1999 (Sihra, "Cautionary" 257). The production of the play exceeded the borders of Ireland. It was performed in the United States, Netherlands and England (Sihra, "Greek" 117) enabling Carr, as a female Irish playwright, to reach increasingly more audience.

Technically speaking, in *By the Bog of Cats…* the dramatist becomes more minimalistic in terms of use of time. In contrast to the previous plays of the trilogy, this piece of writing presents only the last day of the protagonist who is doomed to die from the very beginning of the play. The play has unity of place as the action takes place in the bog of the Irish Midlands. As for the unity of action, despite containing minimal subplots, the play mainly follows one action, that is Hester's struggle to stay in the bog as she still waits for her mother's return. She does not leave the place although she is forced to do so by her ex-lover and her daughter's father Carthage Kilbride, who is about to marry another woman, and by Xavier Cassidy, Carthage's father-in-law who does not want

Hester to harm his daughter Caroline's marriage. In short, Carr constructs her play in accordance with the Aristotelian notions of tragedy by maintaining the unity of time, place and action.

This three-act play opens at dawn when Ghost Fancier comes to Hester Swane to take her life while she is about to bury a black swan called Black Wing that Hester found dead early in the morning. Ghost Fancier realises that he comes at the wrong time by mistaking the dawn for the dusk. So he disappears by apologising for his mistake while Hester rejects to die because she has a daughter to look after. Then, Monica, Hester's neighbour, appears on the stage and asks whether or not she will leave the bog that day. She advises Hester to leave the bog, but Hester is determined to stay in the bog. While Hester is burying the dead swan, Catwoman, a blind mice-eating prophetic figure, explains Hester's tie with the animal by claiming that Big Josie, Hester's mother, put a curse on Hester, as a result of which she will live as long as the swan lives. Catwoman warns Hester to leave the bog for her own sake because she foresees a disaster for Hester if she resists departure. Meanwhile, Hester's seven-year-old daughter Josie spends time with her comically-characterised grandmother, Mrs. Kilbride, who forces the little girl to play cards with her. The old woman actually does not regard Josie as her granddaughter and asserts that Josie is not a Kilbride but a Swane. When Carthage, Josie's father, comes, he warns her mother not to bother the girl. As it is the day of Carthage and Caroline's wedding, Josie is willing to attend the ceremony in her Communion dress and tells her father to persuade her mother for her presence in the wedding. However, Hester, enraged by Carthage's betrayal, quarrels with him; she makes it clear that she will not leave her place no matter how Carthage is determined to wipe her out of his life. She also quarrels with Caroline and her father, Xavier Cassidy, who remind her of the contract that Hester previously signed to move to the town after the wedding.

In the second act, the ghost of Hester's dead brother Joseph meets Catwoman, and she directs him to Hester. At the same time the wedding takes place, but Caroline does not feel happy as a bride. She only hopes that the day will end without any problems. Mrs. Kilbride with her white dress as if she was the bride and Father Willow, the religious man in his comic relationship with Catwoman, bring humour into the action. Yet

Hester's coming with another bride costume disrupts the wedding as she openly declares war on Carthage and Xavier.

The last act of *By the Bog of Cats…* starts with Hester's burning of Carthage's house with the cattle in it. At that moment, the ghost of Joseph visits Hester, and it is understood that his murderer was Hester who killed him out of jealousy as she realised that her mother spent time with her brother after leaving her alone in the bog at the age of seven. She has been waiting for her mother's return since that time rejecting to leave the land because Big Josie, while leaving, promised Hester to return to the bog. Later, Monica comes, and she is shocked by Hester's burning of the house, but then they drink together. When Josie shows up to ask for Hester's permission to go to the honeymoon with her father and Caroline, Hester firstly frightens the child by making up a curse that Josie will die if she leaves Hester. However, she immediately regrets her words, and the mother and child dance together. Then, Xavier who is irritated by Hester's appearance at the wedding threatens her by attempting to rape Hester and drawing his gun. Nevertheless, Hester is not afraid of him; instead, she horrifies Xavier with her outrageous response. When Carthage intervenes in the action, Hester, for the last time, tries to persuade him to allow her to stay, but he wants to take their daughter from Hester. Caroline enters the scene with her promise to prevent Carthage from separating Josie from Hester. After she leaves, Hester takes a knife from her caravan and controls its sharpness. At that moment, Josie appears on the stage for the last time, and she is afraid of her mother's mood. When Hester tells her that she will go to a place from where she will never return, Josie gives up going to honeymoon with her father and insists on going with Hester. Although Hester attempts to push Josie away from herself, she recognises the little girl's despair and hence kils Josie cutting her throat. Terrified by her own action, Hester makes a terrible sound. Catwoman, seeing what Hester has done, calls for help and then, Carthage and Monica witness the violence she perpetrated. However, Hester claims that Josie is hers and that she has prevented a life in which her daughter would hear bad stories about her mother. Ghost Fancier comes to Hester at that moment, and they dance together. Monica announces that Hester stabs her in the heart with the knife.

By the Bog of Cats…, as Marina Carr professes (*Reading* 51), reiterates Euripides' *Medea* with certain differences. First, the playwright moves from the Greek world to the Irish culture by portraying Hester as part of the traveller/tinker community in Ireland, which is one of the reasons for her suffering in the bogland. While Medea lives in exile because she prefers to leave her father's land to live with Jason and her sons in Corinth, Hester is forced into exile. She is offered a new life in town as Carthage marries Caroline. As in the relationship between Medea and Jason, Hester is betrayed by her lover who chooses to marry for material profit in that by means of marriage Carthage will take over the control of Xavier's lands. After Hester's murdering of her own brother, which recalls Medea's fratricide, Carthage inclines away from her. He claims that she has turned into a violent figure who drinks and roams in the bog, despite the fact that Carthage himself, as Hester states, had helped her to throw Joseph's body into Bergit's Lake (3.70). Although Hester is obsessed with her love for Carthage, like Medea's for Jason, she does not regard Caroline as her enemy because she is only used by Xavier as a tool in his material gains. This attitude distinguishes Carr's protagonist from Euripides' Medea as the latter seeks merely revenge and therefore poisons her own children to harm Jason. In Carr's play, poisoning is attributed to a male character, father Xavier, who is said to cause his son James' death when he poisoned his son's dog which James played with. Hester firmly tells Xavier:

> You're not a farmer for nothin', somethin' about that young lad [James] bothered ya, he wasn't tough enough for ya probably, so ya strychnined his dog, knowin' full well the child'd be goin' lookin' for him. And ya know what strychnine does, a tayspoonful is all it takes, and ya'd the dog showered in it. Burnt his hands clean away. (3.66)

Lastly, violence, which is off-stage in *Medea*, takes place in front of the audience in Carr's play with Hester's murder of Josie as a result of the traumatic relationship she had with her own mother, which does not have any place in Euripides' play.

Although Euripides' *Medea* lacks the mother-daughter relationship, Carr's *By the Bog of Cats…* is occupied with this connection with special emphasis on the absence of Hester's mother. Hester's belief in Big Josie's promise to return to the bog is the essence of her hope that encourages her to wait for her mother resolutely since the age of seven. Yet the abandonment of the attachment figure traumatises Carr's protagonist in that this event has radical effects on Hester's life. The traumatic absence of Big Josie

leads Hester to an obsession with the role of the mother which creates a tension in her perception of motherhood. Waiting for and seeking the mother, Hester has substitute mothers – Monica, Mrs. Kilbride and Catwoman – who do not actually fill the void left by Big Josie, and her own daughter Josie – named after Hester's mother – becomes the focus of Hester's life as the sense of loss she suffers from because of her missing mother forces her to develop a possessive nature. The idea of exile and separation from Josie enforced on Hester by Xavier and Carthage triggers violent conduct in Hester which causes tragic results. So this chapter aims to analyse the complex mother-daughter relationship and its effects on the protagonist's conduct characterised by violence in *By the Bog of Cats…*. Within this context, in addition to an exploration of Hester's identities as a daughter and as a mother, the important role motherhood plays in Hester's suicide will be explained as part of her psychological autopsy.

Hester Swane is a vulnerable figure. Her vulnerability firstly arises from the conflict related with her familial identity. Her mother Josie Swane – Big Josie – is a traveller while her father Jack Swane is a settled person. Hester's community regards her as belonging to the travellers since she lived with her mother until the age of seven whereas her father from Bergit's Island has never been in her life. Hester is othered in the bog because of her social position, because their nomadic life style segregates Irish travellers from the settled people of the country. The ancestral roots of this minority are not precisely specified. Nevertheless, it is claimed that they might have descended from the Irish who were removed from their lands by the requirements of the Penal Laws which were enacted by the English rule against the Catholics in Britain and Ireland after the Restoration period, including a number of laws that forced the Catholics to give up their certain civil rights (Martinovich, *Poetics* 223). They are also believed to be among the survivors of the Great Famine of 1845 who became landless in those years (Sihra, "Greek" 124). The tinkers, a marginalised group of people in Ireland who are named after their traditional work of tinsmithing (Burke 42), are among Irish travellers because of their itinerary life style. Irish tinkers are claimed to have descended from Roman Gypsies (Crawford and Gmelch 323). Their supposed genes or gypsy roots, their habit of living in tents, their frequent travelling, their use of a distinct language known as Gammin, Shelta or Cant (Gmelch and Gmelch 235) and their custom of intrafamilial marriages (Crawford and Gmelch 325) distinguish them from the rest of the Irish

community. These travellers generally have short-term works such as seasonal farming, horse dealing, marketing of metals and smithing (Greenfields et al. 106). Moreover, when compared to settled people, their constant moving from one place to another and their not being accustomed to living permanently at a certain place are associated with disorder, and they are categorised with pejorative stereotypical notions which leads to the development of a racist attitude against these travellers. Haodha depicts that "Travellers in Ireland were accused of a wide range of vices including depravity, sexual immorality, dishonesty, primitivism, filth and violence. In short, they were constructed as the archetypal embodiments of deviance and antisocial behaviour" (63).

The daughter of a traveller woman, Hester is, accordingly, feared and unwelcome in her community. She is exposed to racist discrimination because of her tinker blood. Mrs. Kilbride who does not accept Hester's presence in their community shows her racist attitude saying to Hester, "I've had the measure of you this long time, the lazy shiftless blood in ya, that savage tinker eye ya turn on people to frighten them" (2.49). Although Hester has an established life in the bog for long years, her settling in the bog is not originally for the purpose of becoming one of the settled people. It is Carthage that forced her to have an established way of life in the bog as can be clearly understood from Hester's words to him: "Ya promised me things! Ya built that house for me. Ya wanted me to see how normal people lived. And I went along with ya again' me better judgement. All I ever wanted was to be by the Bog of Cats. A modest want when compared with the wants of others. Just let me stay here in the caravan" (3.69). Hester adapts herself to the life of the community surrounding her by means of her relationship with Carthage, and she even deems herself one of those around her. Referring to her father, she tells Xavier that "Jack Swane of Bergit's Island, I never knew him – but I had a father. I'm as settled as any of yees – "(1.6.32-33). In another case, however, Hester defines herself as a tinker and tells Carthage that "as for me tinker blood, I'm proud of it. I gives me an edge over all of yees around here, allows me see yees for the inbred, underbred, bog-brained shower yees are" (1.6.27). As can be understood from her statements, Hester's familial background adds up to an inbetween state in terms of her cultural identity. In this sense, Trench argues that "Hester [has] a liminal position between the two cultures, [. . .] [and] she does not fully belong to either, yet she is part

of both (due to her mixed parentage)" (24). Hester's straddling between two social groups, consequently, troubles her and makes her feel unsafe in the Irish Midlands.

Besides the problematic situation in terms of her communal stance, Hester as a daughter is vulnerable because of the disappearance of parental figures from her life. She did not grow up in the warmth of a family as her father was absent from the beginning and she was later abandoned by her mother at a very young age. While she has never yearned for a father image, she still hopes for the return of her mother who, Hester claims, promised to come back. Without her, Hester feels incomplete and therefore persistently waits for Big Josie in the bog. The only thing that remains to Hester after the abandonment is her shattered memories and that is why she tries to remember what kind of person her mother was. For instance, she remembers her mother's singing on the important occassions of the bog:

> I used go with her on some of them singin' sprees before she ran off. And she'd make up the song as we walked to wherever we were goin'. Sometimes she'd sing somethin' completely different than the song she'd been makin' on the road. Them were her 'Blast from God' songs as opposed to her 'Workaday' songs, or so she called them. (3.60)

However, Hester in her childhood was disturbed by people's attitudes against her mother's identity as a traveller as she reveals it to Monica:

> [T]hey 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 a half a crown and walked us off the premises, for fear we'd steal somethin', I suppose. I don't think it bothered her, it did me – and still rankles after all these years. But not Josie Swane, she'd be off to the shop to buy cigars and beer and sweets for me. (3.60-61)

In Hester's above depiction, it is obvious that the traveller mother was not considered to be part of the community as a result of the stereotypical perception of her social status. Unlike Hester, Big Josie did not pay attention to discriminatory manners. Furthermore, she seems to have had the habit of smoking and drinking which does not fit into the Irish ideals of motherhood. At another instance, Hester recalls her mother's unusual habit of waiting and at the same time smoking. Hester describes her mother to Catwoman:

> 'G'wan to bed, you,' she'd say, 'I'll just be here pausin'.' And I'd watch her from the window. (*Indicates window of caranavan.)* Times she'd smoke a cigar which she had her own particular way of doin'. She'd hould it stretched away from her

> and, instead of takin' the cigar to her mouth, she'd bring her mouth to the cigar. And her all the time pausin'. What was she waitin' for, Catwoman? (1.2.13)

Big Josie's pausing and waiting – which recalls the characters in Samuel Beckett's (1906-1989) *Waiting for Godot* (1949) – is still vivid in Hester's memory, together with her smoking. On the other hand, Hester does not narrate any specific moment between them. In other words, she does not talk about Big Josie's maternal identity, while the other characters in the play comment on it. For example, Xavier who implies that he had a sexual relationship with Hester's mother asserts that Big Josie was not a good mother and that she lacked the sense of maternal responsibility. Although Hester rejects his words, Xavier recounts the old days as follows:

> Ya [Hester] say ya remember lots of things, then maybe ya remember that that food and money I used lave was left so ya wouldn't starve. Times I'd walk by that caravan and there'd be ne'er a sign of this mother of yours. She'd go off for days with anywan who'd buy her a drink. She'd be off in the bars of Pullagh and Mucklagh gettin' into fights. Wance she bit the nose off a woman who dared to look at her man, bit the nose clean off her face. And you, you'd be chained to the door of the caravan with maybe a dirty nappy on ya if ya were lucky. [. . .] Often times I brung ya home and gave ya over to me mother to put some clothes on ya and feed ya. More times than I can remember it'd be from our house your mother would collect ya, the brazen walk of her, and not a thank you or a flicker of guilt in her eye and her reekin' of drink. Times she wouldn't even bother to collect ya and meself or me mother would have to bring ya down to her and she'd hardly notice that we'd come and gone or that you'd returned. (1.6.32)

Xavier's memories offer the portrait of an absent bad mother, a drunk and violent woman. This depiction has obviously nothing to do with the idealistic notions of motherhood in Ireland as Big Josie neglected Hester's needs, pursued her own desires and had an immoral life. Likewise, Catwoman hints at Big Josie's indifferent attitude towards Hester and recommends the protagonist to give up waiting for the mother saying, "I wouldn't long for Josie Swane if I was you" (1.3.13). To further argue, Martinovich comments that "Big Josie, as a woman uninterested in the role of mother, not only embodies the monstrous image of mother but also defies Irish society's patriarchal values. The relationship between mother and daughter was fraught with mistreatment [. . .] and abuse" (*Poetics* 235). In line with this statement, it can be contended that Hester's mother is an antithesis of Irish motherhood symbolised in the images of Mother Ireland or Cathleen ni Houlihan. Thus, Sihra articulates that

> [t]he mother-figure in Irish theatre has traditionally been viewed as a personification of the nation. Carr presents the myth of Big Josie Swane as an

> alternative to the romanticised literary Mother Ireland figure. [. . .] The nation as female is now depicted as an overweight, erotic, foul-mouthed transgressive energy. ("Cautionary" 260)

Big Josie's refusal of maternity is not limited to her nonconfirmist life style, as is especially revealed when she abandons her little daughter on her own in the bog. Although the reason for her departure is unknown, this event becomes a source of trauma for Hester who cannot overcome the effect of that day though more than thirty years passed since then. When she sees her seven-year-old daughter in her Communion dress, Hester goes back to the time when she lost the main figure of attachment in her life:

> I'm talkin' about when I was your age. Ya weren't born then. Josie – Ya know the last time I seen me mother I was wearin' me Communion dress too, down by the caravan, a beautiful summer's night and the bog like a furnace. I wouldn't go to bed though she kept tellin' me to. I don't know why I wouldn't, I always done what she tould me. I think now – maybe I knew. And she says, 'I'm goin' walkin' the bog, you're to stay here, Hetty.' And I says, 'No,' I'd go along with her, and made to folly her. And she says, 'No, Hetty, you wait here, I'll be back in a while.' And again I made to folly her and again she stopped me. And I watched her walk away from me across the Bog of Cats. And across the Bog of Cats I'll watch her return. (1.6.34)

Recalling the last scene of *The Mai* where Millie and the Mai talk for the last time before the protagonist's suicide, Big Josie's leaving her little child traumatises Hester since she loses the central parental figure in her life. As of its birth, a child usually attaches itself to the mother who meets its needs. The child, usually until the age of three, depends on the mother as the main caregiver (Bowlby, *Attachment* 205). Although it becomes more independent in the later years, the possibility of the loss of the mother causes anxiety, anger, sorrow and pain in the child. That is to say, the mother-child attachment determines the development of the child's behaviour. John Bowlby (1907-1990), an English psychoanalyst, claims that the sense of attachment to the maternal figure in infancy is so powerful that it even shapes one's future conduct in romantic and parental relationships (*Attachment* 179). Likewise, Mendell states in regard to the mother-daughter relations that "[t]he mother-daughter tie is the most archaic, difficult, and in some ways the most important and lasting relationship in a woman's psychic life. Its influence permeates all dealings with subsequent objects" (227). In Carr's play, accordingly, Hester's bond with her mother governs her living. As an abandoned girl, she was sent to the Industrial School established in the nineteenth

century in Ireland for orphans and children in poverty where the presence of the Church was highly felt (Pembroke 55). Yet this educational institution started to be associated with corruption after "the most recent revelations of physical, emotional and sexual abuse in industrial schools" (Molino 34). It is probably her experiences during school years that make Hester decisive about waiting for her absent mother. Once she expresses that "I made a promise, Monica, a promise to meself a long while back. All them years I was in the Industrial School I swore to meself that wan day I'm comin' back to the Bog of Cats to wait for her there and I'm never lavin' again" (3.61). Thus, her insistent settling in the bog is directly linked with her mother. Kenny and Binchy explain that "[i]n definitions of community, 'place' is usually mentioned: people are linked by virtue of geographical location. However, for Travellers the community location is the family network, not place" (121). In this regard, the bog symbolises Hester's bond with her mother because Big Josie left her there. Although Hester's waiting for the day of reunion is most probably a vain dream, she keeps her hope alive as the bog with its

> preservative qualities [. . .] – known as a place to store butter and eggs, as well as to effectively embalm a corpse so that its features remain identifiable for thousands of years – also assuage[s] Hester on the emotional level. She has memorialised her mother by creating an alternative reality of what if rather than what is. (Gladwin 393)

Moreover, the bog can also be regarded as a symbol of the Irish mindset because the soil structure of the bog makes the land barren and infertile by consuming and destroying all life (Keenan 171). This feature of the boggy land can be metaphorically related to the mental and emotional decay of Hester (Bozer). On the other hand, the bog, because of its acidic quality, is known to preserve all biological life (Brown and Brown 106). In the play, this quality of the bog can be related to Hester's keeping her mother's memory alive which makes her wait for her mother's return. However, Hester's futile waiting in the bog reflects her delicate psychology, and it consumes her life. Although more than three decades has passed after the abandonment, Hester, like the bog, preserves her belief in the mother's coming back as if it was just yesterday: "It's still like she only walked away yesterday" (3.61). This conviction makes her wait constantly in that "[t]he urge to regain the person lost [. . .] is so powerful and often persists long after reason has deemed it useless" (Bowlby, *Sadness* 27). This waiting turns into an

obsession considering the fact that Hester persistently wanders around the bog. Hester's fixation also has a totemic aspect because she believes that her waiting as the performed act will end with the mother's coming which is the expected result. Freud explains this attitude in *Totem* (1913) arguing that "the importance attached to wishes and to the will has been extended from them on to all those physical acts which are subject to the will" (85). That is to say, Hester's wish to reunite with the lost mother is related to the act of waiting by Hester herself; as long as she waits, she anticipates that Big Josie will come. Thereby, this passive act of waiting can be regarded as Hester's denial of loss in her own way. Bowlby clarifies this point with the statement that "a bereaved person usually does not believe that the loss can really be permanent; he therefore continues to act as though it were still possible not only to find and recover the lost person but to reproach him for his actions" (*Anxiety* 247). The psychoanalyst refers to the acceptance of loss as a temporal state as "denial" (*Sadness* 16).

Moreover, the separation leads the person to anxiety and anger as Zulueta articulates: "[P]leasure is the outcome of attachment, [but] separation produces distress, irratibility and aggression" (66). This sense of aggression following separation in Carr's play has destructive consequences in different forms. As a case in point, Hester displays hostility and inward aggression when she is threatened to leave the bog by Xavier. He tries to make Hester give up waiting and abandon the bog by defaming Big Josie as follows: "We often breathed the same air, me and Josie Swane, she was a loose wan, loose and lazy and aisy, a five-shillin' hoor" (3.66). Along with her stress because of separation and loss, Hester does not want to lose the image of her mother in her mind, which is why she appears to be courageous enough to attack Xavier. When he attempts to rape Hester and puts a gun to her throat (3.67), she becomes more outrageous and violent: "Ya think I'm afraid of you and your auld gun. (*Puts her mouth over the barrel.*) G'wan shoot! Blow me away! Save me the bother meself. (*Goes for the trigger.*) Ya want me to do it for ya?" (3.67). She is fractious; at this stage, she directs her destructive impulses to herself and attempts to harm herself which hints that Hester's violence has no limits. In another case, Hester's rage of abandonment manifests itself reaching its peak in the meeting with her brother Joseph who just came to share their father's money with Hester. However, the fact that Big Josie left her daughter and lived with her son drove Hester to commit murderous action because of extreme envy which is a form of

violent conduct (Klein 192). When Joseph's ghost visits Hester, she firstly discloses that she envied his relationship with their mother:

> If ya hadn't been such an arrogant git I may have left ya alone but ya just wouldn't shut up talkin' about her as if she wasn't my mother at all. The big smug neck of ya! It was axin' to be cut. And she even called ya after her. And calls me Hester. What sourt of a name is Hester? Hester's after no wan. And she saves her own name for you – Didn't she ever tell ya about me? (3.56)

Then, Hester confesses the real reason for murdering her brother:

> HESTER Ya think I slit your throat for the few auld pound me father left me?
>
> JOSEPH Then why?
>
> HESTER Should've been with her for always and would have only for you. (3.58)

Hester's motivation for this violent action is the absent mother; she vents the anger she is filled with because of the void left by Big Josie on the brother in a violent way because he is "thought to have played a part in the loss or in some way to be obstructing reunion" (Bowlby, *Anxiety* 248). This becomes Hester's first murderous action that is prompted by her obsessive relationship with the mother. As she cannot compensate for her loss of her mother, Hester prefers to transform the pain she is in into violence and expresses her suffering in a radical way.

While losing her mother turns Hester into a destructive figure, she is surrounded by surrogate maternal figures in the bog. Among the female characters in the play, Monica is one of the alternative mothers for Hester. She is Hester's neighbour and lives alone in the bog as she lost her son Brian (2.42). She is presented as a conventional woman who seems to substitute Hester for her dead son. Therefore, Monica's sincere affection for the protagonist, who is othered in society, turns her into a maternal figure for Hester. In the scene where Monica is introduced to the reader/audience, it is observed that she is inclined to protect Hester. While the protagonist is expected to leave the bog, Monica is ready to open her house to her, saying that "[y]a know you're welcome in my little shack" (1.1.5). She repeats her offer to live together again at the wedding when Hester comes in her wedding dress that Carthage previously bought for her:

> MONICA C'mon, Hester, I'll take you home.

HESTER	I have no home any more for he's decided to take it from me.
MONICA	Then come and live with me, I've no wan –
HESTER	No, I want to stay in me own house. (2.50)

Moreover, like a mother with good intentions, she gives advice to Hester who goes against Xavier and Carthage, the patriarchal figures in the play. The surrogate mother firstly proposes Hester to go away from this place (3.59) and later advises her to give up her possessive love for Carthage: "Don't waste you time over a man like him, faithless as an acorn on a high wind" (3.62). Additionally, she helps Hester to recollect her memories of Big Josie. Monica narrates the lost woman's individual characteristics to Hester:

> She 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 had 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 her 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 with her, riddled by her, though, 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. (3.60)

Monica's depiction of Big Josie as a black-eyed singer corresponds to stereotypical representations of travellers (Joyce 1206). The physical qualities attributed to the absent mother also recall masculine images in that Finn compares Big Josie to "a strong and valiant warrior" (*Make me Human* 87). Furthermore, Big Josie, according to Monica's portrait of her, is like a sublime figure since she is both feared and admired, especially at times when she sang songs. Her mysterious identity still charms Hester who cannot fully recollect her mother. Yet Monica reminds her of the reality that Hester cannot live with the dream of her mother's return:

> Hester, I know what it's like to wait for somewan who's never walkin' through the door again. But this waitin' is only a fancy of yours. Now I don't make out to know anythin' about the workin's of this world but I know this much, it don't yield aisy to mortal wishes. And maybe that's the way it has to be. You up on forty, Hester, and sitll dreamin' of storybook endin's, still whingin' for your mam. (3.61)

Although Monica makes an effort and asks Hester to return to real life, she cannot persuade her to end the long waiting. Nevertheless, her presence in Hester's life is functional in that Monica, like Stacia in *Portia Coughlan*, helps Hester look after Josie. While Hester roams in the bog and waits for her mother's return, it is her neighbour that

prepares meals for Josie and takes care of the little girl at nights. Therefore, Monica in her sixties plays the role of a grandmother for Josie, too.

However, as Martinovich describes her, Monica Murray is only an "ineffectual yet well-meaning neighbor" ("Mythical" 120). She is not strong enough to be a mother for Hester. Her powerlessness stems from her submission to Xavier Cassidy. Monica is afraid of his dominance and control in the bog so she tries to balance her ties between Hester and Xavier. When Hester burns Carthage's house and animals, Monica is frightened of what will happen to the destructive woman: "They'll skin ya alive, Hester, I'm tellin' ya, they'll kill ya" (3.59). Aware of Monica's true nature, Hester replies her in a very honest way: "And you with them" (3.59). Then, the ineffective mother declares that "I stood up for ya as best I could, I've to live round here, Hester. I had to pay me respects to the Cassidys. Sure Xavier and meself used walk to school together" (3.59). In order to keep her position in the community, Monica cannot oppose Xavier openly. Campos, therefore, explains Monica's situation as follows: "She is more concerned about keeping her respected position in the addictive society than she is about asserting herself and standing up for Hester – a sign that she has resigned her personal power in exchange for acceptance" (35). For this reason, Monica's characterisation differs from Hester's portrait. Hester is a rebellious woman, insisting on her personal choices rather than submitting to the rules imposed on her.

Mrs. Kilbride, on the other hand, is a demanding figure in contrast to ineffective Monica. The old mother of Carthage attempts to control her son's life though her persistent intervention in his life draws the possessive mother as a comic character. Carthage's past relationship with Hester evidences the fact that Mrs. Kilbride cannot maintain power over her son, and this defeat makes her attack Josie and Hester. As she does not approve of her son's affair with the traveller woman, Mrs. Kilbride rejects Josie as her descent. She does not want to have a close relationship with the little girl and therefore orders Josie to call her only Grandmother, not Granny:

> MRS KILBRIDE What did I tell ya about callin' me Grandmother.
>
> JOSIE (*defiantly*) Granny.
>
> MRS KILBRIDE (*leans over the table viciously*) Grandmother! Say it!
>
> JOSIE (*giving in*) Grandmother. (1.4.16)

Mrs. Kilbride not only avoids a close connection with Josie, but also invents a new identity for Josie by renaming her. In order to insult the girl, the grandmother tells Josie to spell her name. Yet the old matriarch rejects her answer, which is Josie Kilbride, saying, "[y]a got some of it right. Ya got the 'Josie' part right, but ya got the 'Kilbride' part wrong, because you're not a Kilbride. Of course ya can't. You're Hester Swane's little bastard. You're not a Kilbride and never will be" (1.4.17). She cannot tolerate Hester's presence in their lives in that she does not regard her son's daughter as a member of her family. As Mrs. Kilbride believes that Hester stole Carthage from her, the old woman is harsh and cruel to Hester. Referring to the age gap between Hester and Carthage, the old woman tells the unwelcome protagonist that "[y]a took advantage of him, ya had to take advantage of a young boy for your perverted pleasures for no grown man would stomach ya" (2.49). Mrs. Kilbride also humiliates Hester's identity as a tinker irrespective of the fact that her ancestry comes from the same community, that her own grandfather was "a wanderin' tinsmith" (2.51). She even claims that Hester the traveller does not deserve good treatment because, she declares, "[a]ll tinkers understands is the open road and where the next bottle of whiskey is comin' from" (2.51). When Hester disrupts the wedding and insists on staying in the bog, Mrs. Kilbride threatens her with such words as "[w]e'll burn ya out if we have to – " (2.52). In regard to her animosity, Mrs. Kilbride becomes an unloving mother-in-law for Hester, while Sierz defines her as "the terrestrial clinging mother" (44) because of her possessive and materialistic attitudes, the source of her cruelty to Hester. Mrs. Kilbride is observed to be a materialistic woman who is interested in her properties and money. She saves money in the bank and wears expensive wedding shoes in which she takes photos and tries to impress others. More interestingly, Mrs. Kilbride regards Carthage as her own; she wears a bridal costume at the wedding, and, ignoring Caroline's presence, the mother and son "*pose like a bride and groom, Carthage glaring at Mrs. Kilbride*" (2.40). In her wedding speech, she declares a kind of Oedipal affair between Carthage and her: "When his father died he used come into the bed to sleep beside me for fear I would be lonely. Often I woke from a deep slumber over me in sleep – " (2.47). Recalling Freud's analysis of Sophocles' *Oedipus the Rex* (429 BC) (*Interpretation* 201-04), Mrs. Kilbride's statement indicates that the father's death allows the mother and son to develop a more intimate attachment. Moreover, she refers to Carthage as her

husband. She says: "[I]f Carthage will be as good a son to Caroline as he's been a husband to me then she'll have no complaints" (2.47). This Freudian slip unveils the importance of Carthage in Mrs. Kilbride's life and the reason for her possessiveness. Her surname, Kill-bride, can also be related to her possessive attitude in this Oedipal relationship with her son as Mrs. Kilbride does not accept Hester as her daughter-in-law and metaphorically "kills" Caroline, the real bride, by acting like a bride herself at the wedding and sabotaging Caroline's special day. By virtue of her commitment to Carthage, Mrs. Kilbride cannot take the place of a mother in Hester's life, but she rather competes with her while she could be an alternative maternal figure for the abandoned daughter.

Along with Hester, Catwoman is the most powerful and interesting female figure in the play. This woman, sharing common traits with Hester, is probably the most suitable surrogate mother for the protagonist. Firstly, Catwoman, living on a little turf in the bog, is marginalised by the community like Hester. Mrs. Kilbride is, for example, disturbed by Catwoman's presence at the wedding and discriminates against her, the same way she treats Hester, claiming that she should not be allowed to be among them:

CATWOMAN	Anywhere it's not rainin' because it's goin' to rain here all next summer, seen it writ in the sky.
MRS KILBRIDE	Writ in the sky, me eye, sure she's blind as a bat. Xavier, what did ya have to invite the Catwoman for? Brings down the tone of the whole weddin'.
MONICA	Hasn't she as much right to walk God's earth as you, partake of its pleasures too.
MRS KILBRIDE	No, she hasn't. Not till she washes herself. The turf-smoke stink of her. [. . .] (2.44)

Defining Catwoman as dirty, Mrs. Kilbride somehow associates her with the traveller community. While Catwoman, "Hag-like creature [. . .] give[s] a mythic quality to the play's poetic language" (Llewellyn-Jones 88) and stands for the pagan past of the country in Carr's play, Mrs. Kilbride criticises her for her relationship with Father Willow who represents the dysfunctional religion in Ireland. Catwoman and Father Willow's plan to go "somewhere with a big hot sun" (2.44) connotes sexual imagery with an emphasis on hotness, and the religious figure who wears pyjamas under his

dress at the wedding and wears ear-plugs in the Confession-box to avoid listening to people's lies is condemned by Mrs. Kilbride:

> Look at her moochin' up to Father Willow and her never inside the door of the church and me at seven Mass every mornin' watchin' that auld fool dribblin' into the chalice. And would he call to see me? Never. Spends all his time with the Catwoman in her dirty little hovel. I'd write to the Archbishop if I thought he was capable of anthin'. (2.44)

Yet both of them take their places at the wedding because Catwoman is feared to bring bad luck unless invited, and Father Willow presents the instutitional power of the Church although shown or perceived as a ridiciluous figure.

In addition to common marginalisation, Catwoman can be associated with Hester in another way, too. This woman who eats mice and drinks milk in the manner of a cat carries the name of the animal that she behaves like, comparable to Hester Swane whose surname means swan (1.3.13). Moreover, Catwoman defines herself as the owner and keeper of the bog (1.3.9) while Hester feels that she belongs to this land and refuses to leave because her mother, she believes, will return to the bog. Catwoman's name and ties with the bog, therefore, can be related to the play's title without ellipsis, *By the Bog of Cats…*.Maccionnaith draws attention to the folkloric importance of this character by referring to the motifs in which women and cats are paired (77). He emphasises the association of cats with ill omen owing to the prophetic capacity of Catwoman who warns people about the coming disasters. Catwoman reminds Hester that she always tells the truth in her visions of the future:

> Tould Monica Murray to stop her only son drivin' to the city that night. Would she listen? Where's her son? In his grave, that's where he is. Begged her till she ran me off with a kitle of bilin' water. Mayhap she wanted him dead. I'll say nothin'. Gave auld Xavier Cassidy herbs to cure his wife. What did he do? Pegged them down the tilet and took Olive Cassidy to see some swanky medicine man in a private hospital. They cured her alright, cured her so well she came back cured as a side of ham in an oak coffin with golden handles. Maybe he wanted her dead too. (1.3.14)

Catwoman's vision of coming deaths is also ascribed to her name and the title of the play in that "[i]n the folklore and legendary tradition, cats were associated with divination rites and Otherworld encounters or journeys (particularly those connected with the dead)" (McLeod 118). Therefore, the "Cats" in the title of Carr's play can be related to both Catwoman's past visions of deaths in the bog and the deaths of Hester and Josie in the last scene of the play. Later, Catwoman, referring to her correct

predictions, warns Hester to leave the bog for her own sake: "I'll be off now and don't say the Catwoman never tould ya. Lave this place now or ya never will" (2.14). She also tries to admonish Hester to avoid a disaster by narrating her dream of the previous night: "Dreamt you were a black train motorin' through the Bog of Cats and, oh, the scorch off of this train and it blastin' by and all the bog was dark in your wake" (1.3.11). From the perspective of Freud's dream analysis, the motif of the train journey in Catwoman's dream signifies death, for Freud proposes that "[d]ying is replaced in dreams by departure, by a train journey" (*Introductory* 153). Her following vision in the dream that "I had to run from the burn. Hester Swane, you'll bring this place down by evenin'" (1.3.11) also foreshadows Hester's burning of Carthage's house and the destructive ending of the play.

Additionally, Catwoman is able to comprehend the guilty act that Hester committed like a mother who can easily detect her child's wrong actions: "I been thinkin' a while now that there's some fierce wrong ya done that's caught up with ya. [. . .] Now I can't say I know the exact wrong ya done but I'd put a bet on it's somethin' serious judgin' by the way ya go on" (1.3.11-12). Although Catwoman cannot name it, it is later realised that she actually refers to Hester's killing of her own brother, but Hester tries to refute her words though she knows that Catwoman is right. Catwoman also returns to the past and talks about Big Josie to Hester who is in need of figuring out her mother's character. Thus, Catwoman depicts the change that she observed in the lost woman:

> She was the greatest song stitcher ever to have passed through this place and we've had plenty pass through but none like Josie Swane. But somewhere along the way lost the weave of the song and in so doin' became small and bitter and mean. By the time she ran off and left ya I couldn't abide her. (1.3.13)

Then, she sincerely warns Hester to forget about her mother as Catwoman herself knows her nature and tells Hester that "[y]a were lucky she left ya. Just forget about her and lave this place now or you never will" (1.3.14). Like Xavier, Catwoman, too, comments on Big Josie's motherhood and depicts a bad mother image:

> Sure the night ya were born she 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 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.' And each night for three nights she left ya in the

> black swan's lair and each night I snuck ya out of the lair and took ya home with me and brung ya back to the lair before she'd come lookin' for ya in the mornin'. That's when I started to turn again' her. (1.3.13)

The above narration implies that Big Josie behaved cruelly to her little baby by leaving her in the snow with a black swan, and she put a curse on her daughter by identifying Hester's life with the swan's. In contrast to Big Josie's cold manner, Catwoman, guarding the poor baby, appears to embrace Hester with maternal affection here. Nevertheless, Hester resists to accept the monstrous maternal image attributed to her mother by Catwoman and considers such claims as yet another attempt to keep her out of the bog. Albeit Hester's tenacity to disbelieve what Catwoman recounts, this half-human half-animal woman, declaring that Hester is her "match in witchery" (1.3.11), proves to be the most felicitous mother subsitute for the abandoned daughter in the bog in the absence of Big Josie.

In regard to Big Josie's curse on Hester, it can also be articulated that the swan is symbolically used in the play, and it functions as a maternal symbol (O'Gorman, "Caught" 119). In the first scene of *By the Bog of Cats…*, Hester appears on the stage with the black swan. The stage direction states that "*Hester Swane trails the corpse of a black swan after her, leaving a trail of blood in the snow*" (1.1.3). At night, the swan freezes to death in the snow, and Hester is about to bury it. Then, like Catwoman who has a supernatural connection with the ghosts, Hester talks with the Ghost Fancier, who comes to take her life, about her relationship with the dead animal:

> This is auld Black Wing. I've known her the longest time. We used play together when I was a young wan. Wance I had to lave the Bog of Cats and when I returned years later this swan here came swoopin' over the bog to welcome me home, came right up to me and kissed me hand. (1.1.3-4)

This contact between Hester and the swan is specified by Martinovich as a "psychic connection" ("Mythical" 122) which also illustrates Big Josie's construction of a second self, or an alter ego, for Hester. Therefore, the swan, from the very first scene, connotates death and hints at Hester's death in the play due to their identification and the curse. Monica's description of Hester's death in the end – "Hester – She's cut her heart out – it's lyin' there on top of her chest like some dark feathered bird" (3.77) – suggests a physical resemblance, too. Besides, considering the fact that "[b]ecause of the swan's faithfulness to its mate and its solicitous care of its young, it has been

thought of by mankind, an anthropomorphic view perhaps, as a caregiver" (Price 21), Black Wing, as Hester depicts their close relationship, functions as a maternal figure for her. The swan becomes another surrogate mother for Hester which is particularly chosen by Big Josie. Considering that Big Josie associates the swan with Hester and wants the swan to be in her daughter's life, another idea comes to mind that Black Wing may stand for Big Josie in two ways. Firstly, women's ability to metamorphose into birds in fairy tales links Hester's lost mother to the swan in the play (Cousin 48). *By the Bog of Cats…* itself offers a fairy tale atmosphere both with its supernatural mood and with its theme, that is the search for an absent parent (Cousin 48, 51). Moreover, Celtic myths which include tales of humans transforming into swans – such as Lir's children who had to live in the form of swans for nine hundred years as a result of their step-mother's curse and Angus and Caer's love story in which they choose to become swans to live together (Vega 104) – are suggested and subverted in Carr's play. The swan associated with battling and prophetic powers (Price 17) recalls Big Josie as she, like this animal, is said to occasionally get into fights and have a supernatural vision. Secondly, the swans' itinerant life style relates Big Josie to Black Wing in that swans regularly migrate at certain times of the year (Rees et al. 112-31), and Hester's mother as a member of the traveller community seems to feel obliged to move from one place to another constantly. In Big Josie's song, "The Black Swan" given at the end of the play, her desire to flee like a swan is observed: "I wish I was a black swan/And could fly away from here,/But I am Josie Swane/Without wings, without care" (80). By leaving Hester, then, Big Josie fulfils her wish, and she moves away like the animal she appears to adore. In this regard, the swan as a symbol of movement and migration implicitly represents Hester's own mother on the stage.

Although Hester leaves aside all these surrogate mothers, her behaviours seem to be shaped by them. Like Monica, Hester is a caring and attentive woman. Her possessiveness recalls Mrs. Kilbride's attitude in that Hester threatens Catwoman to burn her unless she gives back Hester's chair (1.3.9). She also declares to Monica that "Carthage Kilbride is mine for always or until I say he is no longer mine. I'm the one who chooses and discards, not him, and certainly not any of yees" (1.1.7). Similar to Catwoman, she is able to communicate with ghosts and she has a liminal personality, standing on both sides between the worlds of the living and the dead. In a fashion

similar to the swan, she is loyal to her lover and does her best as a caregiver. However, as Hester does not know about her own mother's true nature, she cannot replace these different types of maternal figures with Big Josie. For this reason, despite the existence of alternative maternal figures, Hester waits for the ideal mother in her imagination to come back, disregarding the narrated characteristics of Big Josie who seems to shatter the romantic myth of motherhood in Ireland. Sayın states that Big Josie is the embodiment of "the mother image in general, that has been eliminated in the father-centered Irish dramatic tradition" (80), and "her exclusion from the stage articulates the exclusion of a different, passionate, aware, an independent woman/mother" (Sayın 83). However, Big Josie's demise cannot be merely limited to the removal of a self-reliant mother from the stage. It suggests that, although Hester constructs an ideal mother image for Big Josie by refusing the memories of all the other characters about her mother, the sentimentalised and idealised notion of Irish motherhood is no longer present. It actually fades away with the disappearence of Big Josie. There is even more to it. Carr portrays Hester as a mother with different aspects which means that the playwright is not bound to one-dimensional images of good or bad mothers in her portrayal of the main character of the play.

As stated previously, the absence of Big Josie defines Hester's own perception of motherhood, and because of her, Hester is obsessed with the role of mother. Stone claims that "maternal experience is shaped by the mother's history of being the daughter of her own mother" (108), and this idea accords with Hester's maternal identity in the play. Due to the lack of the main caregiver in her life, Hester is preoccupied with mothering. She even used to take care of Caroline like a mother as she, too, lost her own mother at a very young age. When Caroline goes to Hester and asks her to leave the bog, Hester reminds her of their past, stating that "I used babysit you. Remember that?" (1.5.22). Then, she sets forth that "[a]fter your mother died, several nights ya came down and slept with me. Ya were glad of the auld caravan then, when your daddy'd be off at the races or the mart or the pub, remember that, do ya? A pasty little thing, and I'd be awake half the night listenin' to your girly gibberish and grievances" (1.5.22). Sharing the same faith with Caroline, Hester proves herself to be an affectionate woman who does not hesitate to look after the orphan girl. Although Hester does not refrain from threatening Caroline with words of menace like "the other Hester, well, could slide

a knife down your face, carve ya up and not bat an eyelid" (1.5.22), she does not harm her. She actually pities Caroline as she is aware of Caroline's familial trouble with her father Xavier who is thought to have poisoned his own son and who gives voice to his appalling ideas about children: "Never. Children! If they were calves we'd have them fattened and sould in three weeks" (2.42). To state the same thing differently, Xavier regards Caroline as an object to be sold for profit, and he anticipates that this marriage will enable Xavier to enlarge his farm lands. He declares this fact to Hester as follows: "He [Carthage] loves the land and like me he'd rather die than part with it wance he gets his greedy hands on it. With him Cassidy's farm'll be safe, the name'll be gone, but never the farm" (3.65). Caroline, though too naive and innocent in contrast to her father who threatens Hester with his gun and attempts to rape her (3.67), senses that she has been used by Xavier and confesses to Hester:

> Everywan [at the wedding] too loud and frantic – and when ya turned up in that weddin' dress, knew it should've been you – and Daddy drinkin' too much and shoutin', and Carthage gone away in himself, just watchin' it all like it had nothin' to do with him, and everywan laughin' behind me back and pityin' me – (3.72)

In regard to the fact that Caroline becomes an object of patriarchy by moving from her father's home to Carthage's, Fitzpatrick declares her as "a repressive model of femininity in which fulfilment must be found – if it is found at all – in service to another" (332). Similarly, Finn states that Caroline is "representative of the oppression that women in Ireland have historically been subjected to under the patriarchal rule of the Church. Stripped of her power and having lost the influence of her mother after her death in Caroline's childhood, she is utterly dominated by her father Xavier" (*Make me Human* 92). Moreover, Xavier's sexual violence displayed in his threat of Hester and Hester's words to Caroline that "no need to break ya, you were broke a long while back" (3.73) hint that Caroline may have been abused by her own father. The implicit suggestions of Xavier's sexual violation of Caroline can be identified in the play (Finn, *Make me Human* 91; Sihra, "Reflections" 105), and it is probably Hester's recognition of Caroline's trauma that prevents the protagonist from harming the weak woman.

When it comes to Hester's bond with Josie, Hester's identity as a mother becomes problematic on different grounds as a consequence of which her relationship with her little daughter is unsettled. Granted that Hester is an unmarried mother, her maternity is

unwelcome on the social and moral levels as motherhood out of wedlock is intolerable in Ireland. In the past, the Irish even used to keep unmarried mothers away from the public in the Magdalen asylums, commonly known as laundries, which were originally established by the Catholic Church in 1766 in Dublin to reform prostitutes; these laundries continued to exist until the end of the 1900s (Luddy, "Magdalen" 736). These institutions later began to host single mothers as Luddy explains:

> The function of Magdalen asylums was to change significantly in the twentieth century when they became homes for unmarried mothers and 'wayward' daughters, rather than for prostitutes. These institutions became increasingly used by the public to shield their families from the shame it was believed non-conformist daughters or female relatives were likely to inflict on them. Both the Catholic public and the religious communities colluded in removing these 'shameful objects' from public view. ("Magdalen" 737)

In a country with such a history, Carr, different from the previous plays of the Midlands trilogy, centralises this play on a woman who does not feel secure in marriage. In this way, the playwright touches upon the problems of another marginal group in Ireland, that is single mothers considering the fact that the number of children out of legal marital bonds is on the increase in Ireland since the 1970s (Hyde 71). Although the position of unmarried mothers was secured by the law with the "Unmarried Mothers Allowance" of 1973, and the discrimination against illegitimate children was legally forbidden in "the Status of Children Act 1987" (Fahey 58), Irish society, conditioned in the holiness of marriage by the Irish State and Church, still cannot give up animosity against illegitimate children and their mothers. Therefore, Hester the mother is unacceptable in her own society. She is forced to move from the bog and leave her daughter to the father who hopes to secure Josie's social and financial rights by means of his new marriage. Mrs. Kilbride who already marginalises Hester because of her identity as a tinker discredits her maternity with such judgemental words as "[u]seless, that's what she [Hester] is, livin' off of handouts from my son that she flitters away on whiskey and cigars, the Jezebel witch" (1.4.17) and offers Josie to live with them by rejecting that Hester is her mother.

The reason for Hester's non-marital status can be related to the absence of her own mother and her subsequent violence, too. Although she had lived with Carthage for long years and he even proposed to Hester a few years ago (2.49), the change in the protagonist after Joseph's visit alienates the couple. The appearance of Joseph drives

Hester mad because she realises that her mother had a life of her own while Hester was waiting for her return. She tells Carthage that “[s]omethin’ evil move in on me blood – and the fishin’ knife was there in the bottom of the boat – and Bergit’s Lake was wide – and I looked across the lake to me father’s house and it went through me like a spear that she had a whole other life there – How could she have and I a part of her?” (3.70). This recognition causes Hester to kill her brother, but her sufferring after the violent act ruins her life. Witnessing Hester’s violence, Carthage seems to get away from her, and Hester starts drinking and wandering around the bog more. Hester tells Carthage that “[i]f I had somewan to talk to I wouldn’t have drunk so hard, somewan to roam the bog with me, somewan to take away a tiny piece of this guilt I carry with me, but ya never would” (3.71). Here it becomes clear that Carthage leaves Hester by herself, and after his decision to marry Caroline, he uses Hester’s habits against her. He disregards Hester’s motherhood and threatens her with separating Josie from her. When Hester refuses to leave the bog, Carthage declares that “[i]f I have to mow ya down or have ya declared an unfit mother to see Josie I will, so for your own sake don’t cause any trouble in that department” (1.6.27). Then, he openly accuses Hester of being a bad mother: “Ya’ll not separate me and Josie or I’ll have her taken off of ya. I only have to mention your drinkin’ or your roamin’ or the way ya sleep in that dirty auld caravan and lave Josie alone in the house” (1.6.27). After Hester burns Carthage’s house and livestock, he makes the final decision that “I’m takin’ Josie. I’m takin’ her off of ya” (3.71). However, Hester who is very sensitive about the mother-daughter relationship would not allow anybody to take Josie from her even though it costs them their lives.

Hester’s maternal experience with Josie indeed cannot be dissociated from her connection with absent Big Josie because “[b]ecoming a mother provokes mothers to remember their archaic past, [. . .] spent with their own mothers” (Stone 128). Thus, Hester who suffers from her mother’s absence is very careful of her bond with Josie, and she does not think of leaving Josie. Her opposition to the Ghost Fancier in the first scene of the play proves that Hester, unlike the Mai and Portia, acts responsibly towards Josie. She asserts that “I can’t die – I have a daughter” (1.1.5). O’Dwyer, accordingly, claims that Hester “does better as a mother than either The Mai or Portia [. . .]. Hester and Josie are devoted to each other; they play games and have fun. There is no sense of neglect, as in The Mai and Portia Coughlan, but of deep love and affection” (245). In

the scene where their relationship is firstly introduced to the audience/reader, it is observed that Hester is an affectionate mother who is aware of her maternal responsibilites; the mother and daughter entertain themselves with Josie's mockery of Mrs. Kilbride (1.6.23); and Hester's warnings of Josie not to eat too much sugar and to brush her teeth (1.6.24) present Carr's protagonist as a typical caring mother. Yet the conditions Hester is burdened with affect their relationship negatively in that the mother cannot be very responsive to Josie's demands. For instance, after Hester disputes with Carthage, she tends to lose her temper against the little girl who just wants some candy:

JOSIE	What's wrong of ya, Mum?
HESTER	Ah go 'way, would ya, and lave me alone.
JOSIE	Can I go down to Daly's and buy sweets?
HESTER	No, ya can't. Go on off and play, you're far too demandin'.
JOSIE	Yeah, well, just because you're in a bad humour it's not my fault. I'm fed up playin' on me own.
HESTER	You'll get a clatter if you're not careful. I played on me own when I was your age, I never bothered me mother, you're spoilt rotten, that's what ya are. (*in a gentler tone*) G'wan and play with your dolls, give them a bath, cut their hair. (1.6.28-29)

As can be observed, the little girl resists her mother's negative attitude, and Hester, albeit her bad mood, tries to control herself as long as she is with Josie. In another case, Josie wants to go with Carthage and Caroline on their honeymoon, and she is excited to see the sea for the first time in her life. Upon recognising her daughter's willigness to go away, Hester becomes anxious about losing Josie and begins denigrating Carthage. However, Josie again protests her mother, "*cover[ing] her ears with her hands*" (3.63) and tells Hester that "I said I'm not listenin'!" (3.63). In order to ensure Josie's stay with her, Hester, then, frightens the child by making up a curse:

HESTER	(*pulls Josie's hands from her ears*) You'll listen to me, Josie Swane, and you listen well. Another that had your name walked away from me. Your perfect daddy walked away from me. And you'll walk from me too. All me life people have walked away without a word of explanation. Well, I want to tell ya somethin', Josie, if you lave me, ya'll die.
JOSIE	I will not.
HESTER	Ya will! Ya will! It's a sourt of curse was put on ya be the Catwoman and the black swan. Remember the black swan?

JOSIE (*frightened*) Aye.

HESTER So ya have to stay with me, d'ya see, and if your daddy or anywan else axes ya who ya'd prefer to live with, ya have to say me. (3.63-64)

In Hester's outrage, her fear of being left can be remarked on as it reflects the trauma of her separation from her own mother. Hester is nervous about experiencing the same agonising event once again with her daughter who is named after Hester's mother and who, Hester believes, has her mother's eyes (1.6.33-34). Her fabrication of the curse echoes what Catwoman told her about Big Josie's prophecy on Hester's life, and Hester, using the curse herself, attempts to reflect her image onto her own daughter by frightening the girl with a similar curse. It is the first moment that Hester perceives Josie as her own mirror as Schanoes highlights: "Mothering a daughter [. . .] is a way of living the past in the present and extending the effect of the past to the future, as each mother extends the effect of her own mother's care to her daughter while at the same time revis(it)ing her own childhood" (35). As Hester lacked maternal care in her childhood, she uses the curse once voiced by Big Josie and reflects it to Josie, Hester's mirror image. Nevertheless, she cannot allow her daughter to feel troubled, and, noticing Josie's fear, Hester immediately apologises to her: "Oh, I'm sorry, Josie, I'm sorry, sweetheart. It's not true what I said about a curse bein' put on ya, it's not true at all. If I'm let go tonight I swear I'll make it up to ya for them awful things I'm after sayin'" (3.64). Then, mother and daughter dance and sing the song "By the Bog of Cats…" together (3.64).

Until the end of the play, Hester longs for her mother's return, and for this reason, she opposes leaving the bog which is clear in her speech at the wedding: "I can't go till me mother comes. I'd hoped she'd have come before now" (2.52). Her motivation for waiting for Big Josie is, however, revealed only towards the end of the play when Hester confesses Caroline that "[f]or too long now I've imagined her comin' towards me across the Bog of Cats and she would find me here standin' strong. She would see me life was complete, that I had Carthage and Josie and me own house. I so much wanted her to see that I had flourished without her and maybe then I could forgive her" (3.73). Although mother-daughter relationships are of importance in the development of a complete identity, Hester wants to prove herself to Big Josie, showing her that she is

complete without her. Yet her dream does not come true. In real life, Hester burnt Carthage's house; Carthage married another woman and is threatening to take Josie from her; and Hester's mother is still absent. Hester manages to face all these truths and realises that she is on the verge of more separations. As her traumatic past repeats itself in a different way, and she is again about to lose the intimate figure in her life, the death instinct dominates Hester.

Following her failure to carry out her wishes, she decides to kill herself and takes a knife from her caravan. At that moment, Josie enters the scene to inform Hester that she will go with her father on his honeymoon. Then, the play leads to a terrific point when Hester tells Josie that she will also go to a place from which she will never return.

JOSIE	Well, can I go with ya?
HESTER	No ya can't.
JOSIE	Ah, Mam, I want to be where you'll be.
HESTER	Well, ya can't, because wance ya go there ya can never come back.
JOSIE	I wouldn't want to if you're not here, Mam.
HESTER	You're just bein' contrary now. Don't ya want to be with your daddy and grow up big and lovely and full of advantages I have not the power to give ya?
JOSIE	Mam, I'd be watchin' for ya all the time 'long the Bog of Cats. I'd be hopin' and waitin' and prayin' for ya to return. (3.74-75)

Josie's future plan to wait for Hester's return terrifies her mother who has dedicated her whole life to waiting for her own mother. At this point in the play Hester realises that history will repeat itself if she makes Josie bound to wait after her death. Although Hester tries to push Josie away from her, the desperate girl insists on going away with the mother. Her despair forces Hester to take radical action which shocks the audience/reader:

JOSIE	(*struggling to stay in contact with Hester*) No, Mam, stop! I'm goin' with ya!
HESTER	Would ya let go!
JOSIE	(*frantic*) No, Mam. Please!

HESTER Alright, alright! Shhh! (*Picks her up.*) It's alright, I'll take ya with me, I won't have ya as I was, waitin' a lifetime for somewan to return, because they don't, Josie, they don't. It's alright. Close your eyes.

Josie closes her eyes.

Are you closed tight?

JOSIE Yeah.

Hester cuts Josie's throat in one savage moment.

(*softly*) Mam – Mam – (*And Josie dies in Hester's arms.)* (3.75)

The above scene depicts how Hester kills her own daughter. As in Joseph's murder, Hester takes immediate action, but this pure act of violence, infanticide, is problematic as her perception of violence as a solution complicates the protagonist's maternal identity. On the one hand, she is a caring mother who is concerned with the well-being of Josie. On the other hand, Hester is of a destructive nature. She killed her own brother without hesitation; she intimidates the people around her with violent threats; and she finally murders Josie although her being Josie's mother does not give her the right to end the little girl's life.

This representation of an Irish mother with her good and evil sides challenges the stereotypical maternal stage figures in the Irish dramatic tradition. Hester, like her mother, "def[ies] romantic and idealised versions of Irish womanhood and contest[s] the iconic nationalist stereotype of the woman-mother through [her] ostensibly wayward behaviour" (Sihra, "Greek" 121). Although this murder is used to deconstruct the concept of Irish motherhood, it is claimed that Hester's murder of Josie is, in contrast to Medea's poisoning of her sons, an act of love, not a vengeful act against Carthage's betrayal (Fouéré 166; Pine, "Living" 222; Roche, *Contemporary* 254; Russell 161). This interpretation resonates Jeremiah's idea that mothering is a complicated process; maternal love may be individually shaped in different contexts in which the "sacrifice" of a child can be considered the compassionate act of a desperate mother (63-65). However, Hester's explanation that "she's [Josie's] mine and I wouldn't have her waste her life dreamin' about me and yees thwartin' her with black stories against me" (3.77) suggests that her violence is actually a consequence of Hester's calamitous relationship with her absent mother Big Josie. Harrower mentions that

> Hester kills Josie because Hester is unable to separate Josie's feelings from her own feelings toward the mother that abandoned her decades earlier. [. . .] [S]he immediately couples Josie's fears with her own sense of longing for mother. Hester kills Josie to save the girl from the torment Hester assumes her daughter will face in the future. The act of killing, in Hester's damaged mind, is merciful because the unfulfilled longing for inadequate mothering is worse than death. (149)

As stated by Harrower, Hester identifies herself with Josie who mirrors Hester's seven-year-old image wearing the same dress when the protagonist was left by her own mother. This coincidence can be scrutinised in a metaphorical way in that Josie, killed by her own mother at the age of seven, symbolically stands for Hester who was killed emotionally when Big Josie abandoned her. Hester therefore tells Joseph that "for a long time now I been thinkin' I'm already a ghost" (3.58). Finn makes the comment that "[t]he day Big Josie left everything stopped for Hester and she could not move forward. Despite the fact that she fell in love and bore a child of her own, a significant part of her soul is perpetually frozen in time at the age of seven. She is metaphorically frozen in time, frozen in the past, frozen in memory" (*Make me Human* 95). The frozen and snowy atmosphere of the play, accordingly, may be a representation of Hester's deadly state. Moreover, the parallel deaths of Hester and Josie who both whisper the words of "Mam – Mam " (3.75, 77) at the moment of death strengthen the argument that Josie's annihilation mirrors Hester's emotional death.

To further argue, Josie's death is the result of Hester's excess of empathy and identification with her own daughter. When she decides to commit suicide, Josie's innocent despair looks familiar to Hester who was once pained in a similar way. That is why she decides to terminate the repetitious waiting and longing for an absent mother by killing Josie although the ellipsis in title of the play, *By the Bog of Cats…*, suggests continuity. In fact, it is clear that Hester is afraid of turning into her absent mother and Josie's turning into herself and repeating the same fate at the final moments of the play. Her violent act comes out of this fear which can be named "matrophobia." Matrophobia, firstly termed by Lynn Sukenick in 1973 (519), refers to "the fear not of one's mother or of motherhood but of *becoming one's mother*" (Rich 235). In Carr's play, Hester, obsessed with the mother image, demonstrates a possessive nature in her connection with Josie, thereby trying to compensate for the mother-daughter relationship that she herself once lacked. She tries to play the role of her ideal version of Big Josie to her daughter, while little Josie substitutes for Hester the daughter. In this sense, it can be

argued that "Hester and Josie are a composite unit, in their case an amalgam of mother and daughter" (Cousin 52). From this vantage point, Hester cannot tolerate the idea of leaving Josie by committing suicide. She fears that Josie, like herself, will be bound to wait and embark on the cycle of Sisyphus since she will take the place of the absent mother in her daughter's life. In this regard, Hester's violence can be attributed to matrophobia, the fear of becoming her own mother, rather than love or mercy. While matrophobia motivates Hester to terminate the cycle of the traumatic mother-daughter relationship, the presence of this maternal tie will not disappear from the bog even after their death, and the ellipsis in the title of the play draws forth a sense of continuity again. The sorrow, pain and trauma of Hester's maternal relationships appear to be presevered in the bog as Hester makes it clear in her words to Carthage:

> Ya won't forget me now, Carthage, and when all of this is over or half remembered and you think you've almost forgotten me again, take a walk along the Bog of Cats and wait for a purlin' winds through your hair or a soft breath be your ear or a rustle behind ya. That'll be me and Josie ghostin' ya. (3.77)

Her promise to return to the bog by haunting Carthage evokes the lines of another song sung by Big Josie which also gives the play its title, "By the Bog of Cats…": "To the Bog of Cats I one day will return,/In mortal form or in ghostly form,/And I will find you there and there with sojourn,/Forever by the Bog of Cats, my darling one" (1.2.8). The song itself promises the act of coming back and conveys a sense of continuity. Since nobody has returned yet, the hauntings are unfinished and the oath is incomplete.

When it comes to Hester's death, it is already foreshadowed by the coming of the Ghost Fancier in the first scene and Catwoman's visions. However, Hester's self-violence, or her decision to take her own life, makes her a rebellious character because she does not submit to her fate, but she dies of her own volition. From this perspective, she does not want to be a victim of destiny and perpetrates violence herself in an outrageous way. As she takes Josie with her, too, the death is not a defeat, but a victory in Hester's case. Hester challenges death embodied in the figure of the Ghost Fancier, scolding him: "You're late, ya came too late" (3.77). Then, she embraces her coming death by dancing with the Ghost Fancier: "*They [Hester and Ghost Fancier] go into a death dance with the fishing knife, which ends plunged into Hester's heart. She falls to the ground*" (3.77). This dance puts forward the perception of death as a celebration and recalls the

medieval imagery of *danse macabre*. Translated as "dance of death" in English, this idea is claimed to have emerged during the time of the Black Death in the fourteenth century when a French thinker, Jean Gerson (1363-1429), wrote the poem *Danse Macabre des Hommes* and painted the walls of a big cemetery in Paris with images from the work (Harrison 7-8). As the plague caused the deaths of masses, death became part of people's lives. The dance of death presented the ultimate end with images of skeletons coming to take people's lives while dancing and suggesting the inevitability of death. This representation is also functionally used to demonstrate that death is the best equaliser as all the people, whether rich or poor, are doomed to die ("Death"). While the didactic message is given, the personification of death as a dancing skeleton soothes its victims. It can also be regarded as a grotesque image as Johnson-Medland describes this presentation as a "powerful and almost erotic teasing of life to be passed on" (28). This kind of "teasing" can be associated with Hester's rebuke of the Ghost Fancier for his bad time management, and their dance proposes that Hester welcomes death. The last words uttered by Monica that "Hester – She's gone – Hester – She's cut her heart out –" (3.77) depict Hester's unforgettable violence, her stabbing a knife into her heart. The protagonist's self-murder is "a self creating act" for Martinovich (*Poetics* 239-40), while Dedebas claims that this exposition of violence "lead[s] to the creation of a model of new woman, who chooses a different and violent way to be taken seriously. Hester clearly underscores that her acts of murder and suicide not only rescue her from a traditional, patriarchal society but will also make people remember her" (264). Even though Hester cannot fulfil her dream to unite with the lost mother, she declares herself as the master of her own destiny by committing suicide in a remarkable way.

It is apparent from Hester Swane's psychological autopsy that her fixation on the absent mother induces Carr's protagonist to verbal violence with threats of destruction, physical damage in the form of putting a house on fire, homicide, that is the murders of Joseph and Josie, and finally self-murder. The trauma caused by the separation from the maternal figure at a young age shatters Hester's whole life. She feels obliged to compensate for the loss and waits for the time of Big Josie's return as she desperately desires to prove herself to the missing mother. When she realises that her obsessive waiting is in vain and that she is on the brink of separation from her own daughter,

Hester cannot allow herself to make Josie suffer from the same trauma and to turn into Big Josie. Finally, she kills the little girl and immediately after that leaves the bog by taking her own life.

CONCLUSION

Divergent beginnings, shared endings.

--Raine, *The Anatomy of Violence*

The presence of violence in motherhood is deemed unacceptable and severely opposed to in different parts of the world. While women's identity and individuality are restricted to the overreaching requirements of ideal motherhood, the personal desires, aspirations or needs of mothers may lead them to become destructive figures. While stories of violent mothers can be found in many places all around the world, Marina Carr's Midlands trilogy – *the Mai*, *Portia Coughlan* and *By the Bog of Cats…* – seems to be distinct as it deals with the place of violence in maternity from the Irish perspective. The playwright focuses on three violent female characters and artistically fuses the myths of Irish and Greek origins – the myths of the Owl Lake, the Belmont River and Medea – in her descriptions of the troubled mother characters. In these three plays, the Mai, Portia Coughlan and Hester Swan are occupied with their own problems and desires rather than devoting themselves to maternal ideals. Their sense of individualism distinguishes these mothers from the domestic self-sacrificing maternal image in the Irish dramatic tradition which emerged out of the nationalistic yearnings for Irish freedom at the beginning of the twentieth century. The cooperation of the State and Church on the reduction of women's identity to motherhood has been mirrored in the depictions of perfect mothers in the Irish theatre, but this type of nationalism and institutional ideologies are challenged by Carr's aggressive and violent mothers.

In her deconstruction of the perfect mother image, Carr stands out with her thematic concerns, particularly with such themes as motherhood and violence. Indeed, from the first play of the trilogy to the last one, the playwright develops the course of action on similar themes; however, she expands on these themes by adding different dimensions to them, challenges the long-established notions of motherhood and gradually increases the tension in her plays. In contrast to the Irish State's policy of the ideal family, Carr's plays firstly portray decaying familial relationships. In *The Mai*, The Mai's family life is disturbed by her husband Robert's departures and his adultery; furthermore, the Mai as a mother does not emotionally correspond to the needs of her children. In *Portia*

Coughlan, the dynamics of Portia Coughlan's family are complicated by means of incest: Sly and Marianne, the protagonist's parents, are unknowingly involved in an incestuous relationship in their marriage. What is more, their twin children, Portia and Gabriel, are attached to each other with an incestuous desire. In *By the Bog of Cats…*, Hester Swane's family makes it difficult for her to define her identity as her settler father and traveller mother induce her to develop an in-between identity. Furthermore, their absence, especially the loss of the mother figure, causes Hester to fail to have an established family life with her own daughter Josie, and her whole life is thus destroyed. Moreover, the theme of betrayal within familial and marital ties – Robert's adultery, Portia's adultery and her leaving Gabriel at the moment of his death, Carthage's infidelity and Big Josie's breach of her promise to return – demonstrates the problematic aspects of the families in Carr's trilogy.

Carr's Midlands plays also draw upon the theme of obsession in the portraits of mother characters. All the women in this trilogy persistently pursue their dreams even though this brings about destruction and costs them their lives. The Mai is desperately in love with her unfaithful husband, and her wish to be with Robert turns into a kind of obsession. Although her matrilineal family, including the Mai's own daughter Millie, advises her to get free of Robert, the Mai believes that she cannot live without his love. In Portia's case, she feels incomplete without Gabriel. In addition to bonds of desire, their connection peculiar to twins determines Portia's way of living, making her obsessively want to unite with her dead brother. In the last play, Hester's absent mother becomes the focus of obsession as Hester always believes that Big Josie will one day return and incessantly waits for the day of reunion.

These women's fixations not only trouble themselves, but also influence their maternal identity in different, mostly negative, ways. Although the Mai does not abandon her motherly responsibilities at home and looks after her children, she is not emotionally involved in their lives. She is only concerned with the personal problems in her marriage and pursues her love for Robert. The Mai's disregard of motherhood is particularly revealed in her suicide because she does not think of what will happen to her offspring. Instead, she is worried about her lover's absence in her life; she therefore takes radical action and kills herself. Portia, on the other hand, openly refuses to fulfil

maternal duties and disconnects herself, both physically and psychologically, from her children. When she is called up for motherly affection and care, she even threatens and frightens her husband, declaring that she is inclined to murder her sons, and this violent tendency becomes her assertive denial of motherhood. In opposition to the Mai and Portia, Hester does her best to mother Josie. She appears to have an affectionate relationship with her daughter, but Carthage accuses her of being a bad mother due to her habits of drinking and roaming in the bog at nights. However, owing to her traumatic mother-daughter relationship with Big Josie, Hester's maternity is problematised in the play. She is described as a possessive mother; when she is threatened to pact with her daughter, she does not allow anybody to separate them. What is more, Hester, waiting for her mother, does not fully fit herself into the role of a mother because she is still a daughter looking for maternal affection. That is why, when she decides to kill herself, she is afraid that Josie will share the same fate with her. Hester identifies herself with Josie and, in an agitated mood, cuts her daughter's throat and kills the girl before committing suicide herself.

Similar to the application of themes, Carr's imagery, too, is repetitive. She increasingly expands on the use of images and symbolically works more or less on the same images. In the trilogy, the playwright makes use of images of water as the site of violence and death. Carr firstly sets *The Mai* in the Owl Lake, introduces the story of the lake and relates the mythical lovers to the Mai and Robert. She uses the sad ending of the story in her play and chooses the Owl Lake as the place of the protagonist's suicide. Water as the location of self-murder is later on used in *Portia Coughlan* in which the Belmont River has several functions. Similar to the usage of the previous water myth, the local story of the Belmont River is depicted in the play, and Portia associates herself with the so-called "witch" in the myth as she is othered by her community. The river initially becomes the place where Portia takes refuge as she escapes from the domestic terrain of home; it is again the river bank where she regularly meets her lover Damus for long years; more importantly, it reminds Portia of Gabriel, and she pursues his ghost there. As Portia's brother is drowned in this river, the place also symbolises death. The protagonist decides to unite with Gabriel by drowning herself in the Belmont River. Finally, in the last play of the trilogy, Bergit's Lake is illustrated as the point of recognition and violence: Hester kills her brother Joseph in this lake out of intense

jealousy of her mother's presence in his life, and she realises that her mother has a life without her while Hester is waiting for Big Josie's return. As regards the relation between water and death in all these three plays, it can be argued that Carr's watery settings evoke murderous action, violence and death, and hence radically function as a way to renounce the perfect image of Irish mothers.

The swan symbol is also used by the playwright who states in an interview that the place of this animal "is huge in Irish mythology, from the Children of Lír, through to Yeats. I'm drawing on that motif in the Irish canon" (*Reading* 50). Carr makes use of swans in relation to the mother figures in her plays. In *The Mai,* the Mai's loyalty to her husband can be associated with this animal as swans are said to be devoted mates. Moreover, the Mai's suicide and Millie's recalling of swan sounds at the end of the play link the mother with the animal. This association is further developed in *By the Bog of Cats….* Hester's surname and Big Josie's curse on her both connect Hester with the swans. Moreover, the animal is mentioned in one of Big Josie's songs in which Hester's mother speaks of her desire to be like swans and go away from the bog. Her constant leaving evokes the swans' regular migration, and, in this regard, too, she can be associated with this animal. Therefore, both Hester, Josie's mother, and Big Josie, Hester's mother, bring to mind the image of a swan, which combines the mythological animal with maternal figures in Carr's plays.

Ghosts, too, appear repetitively in the Midlands trilogy. Millie is haunted by the ghosts of her matriarchal family; Gabriel's ghost frequently makes Portia feel his presence; and Joseph's ghost visits Hester. The hauntings of these ghosts can be interpreted as the metaphorical invasion of the present by the past. Through the ghosts, it can be realised that these characters cannot isolate themselves from their traumatic memories. Therefore, Carr refers to the Irish preoccupation with the past in accordance with Barker's claim that "[i]n Ireland, the past has often seemed to matter more than the future" (165).

Merriman claims that most of the dramatic works in the last decade of the twentieth century deal with violence in its different types (200) as Carr, in her trilogy, handles several forms of personal or domestic violence as well. In the same manner as her use of common themes and images, Carr diversifies the types of personal violence on the stage

in a climactic order. The protagonists of the trilogy, manifest, before anything else, verbal violence in various ways. The Mai, Portia and Hester express their hostility through their speeches. The Mai condemns Robert in her curses and asserts her wish to destroy Robert's mistress. Portia harms people around her with statements of hatred and violence, and frequently voices her destructive tendencies. Hester's words are aggressive threats against her enemies, and she attempts to defend herself through this violent discourse. As a second type of violence, homicide, in the forms of fratricide and infanticide, takes place in the last play. Hester kills her own brother because she cannot stand her mother's presence in Joseph's life, and she feels betrayed by her absent mother; she slaughters her daughter Josie when she identifies herself with the little girl too much. The last type of violence comes out in the shared endings of each woman character's life, that is self-murder. This self-inflicted kind of violence is detailed in each character's psychological autopsy. The motives for suicide in Carr's maternal figures originate in the individual problems in their lives. The Mai kills herself as she refuses to live without her lover; Portia takes her life because her death instinct dominates her because of her longing to unite with her late brother; finally, Hester's suicide is her choice to leave the bog in her own violent way.

In relation to the presence of death in her plays, Carr states in an interview with Sihra: "On stage there is nothing more beautiful than looking at the arc of a life and the completion of that life. [. . .] I have always thought that death is just a moment, like two seconds" (*Theatre* 56, 57). Thus, she includes this process of life in her plays and completes her characters' lives with their deaths. Moreover, the mothers in the Midlands trilogy decide to perish in suicidal action: The Mai and Portia drown and Hester stabs a knife into her heart, which proves that these mothers are violent enough to end their own lives. In the Freudian sense, their suicide also illustrates that these mothers are led by innate feelings of destruction and violence. They demonstrate their hostility in the forms of verbal attacks and physical violence, and, finally, their aggression returns to their own selves in the form of self-destruction as they no longer direct their destructive impulses to the outer world (Freud, *The Ego* 41).

The violent demeanour in the stories of the maternal characters Carr draws is particularly important within the Irish dramatic tradition. Although the portrait of

mothers in Irish plays is traditionally romanticised and sentimentalised thanks to the nationalist ideology that aims to unite the Irish under the national icon of nurturing and sacrificing Mother Ireland, Carr presents violent mothers. In contrast to self-sacrificing, self-denying and idealised maternal stereotypes, the Midlands trilogy dwells on mothers who openly reject to be perfect caregivers. These mothers are concerned with their own personal problems and obsessions which means their children are not centralised in their lives. In this regard, Carr "uses the gendered symbolism of nation as woman – but turns that representation against itself" (Lonergan 173). As opposed to Mother Ireland or other versions of this image, Carr's mother figures do not dedicate themselves to providing their offspring with limitless care and love. Unlike traditional representations of motherhood on the Irish stage, the Mai neglects her children's presence in her life, and she emotionally distances herself from her offspring. Portia openly rejects to fulfil a mother's role for her sons and announces her uncontrollable urge to destroy them. Lastly, Hester perpetrates downright violence and kills her daughter. This increasing rupture of motherhood culminates in the mother's murdering of offspring in the last play. Therefore, one may assert that these mothers react against the prescribed notions of motherhood in Ireland through their use of violence. This dissolution of perfect maternity in the trilogy suggests the idea that Carr moves from the image of Mother Ireland to the portrait of self-centred violent mothers who reclaim autonomy and individuality whereby their destructive actions. The protagonists' deaths or their self-murder in these plays cannot be regarded as defeat in that Carr defines suicide as an "individual choice within the journey [of life]" (*Theatre* 58). In other words, suicide firstly enables the Mai, Portia and Hester to dissolve their maternal bodies, and they are no longer socially entrapped by the identity constructed for them in Ireland. Then, suicide as a personal decision makes these women autonomous and assertive because they choose death rather than life and motherhood. From this vantage point, Carr's Midlands trilogy with its three defiant mothers goes against the grain of the traditional understanding of motherhood in Ireland by means of violence.

As for Carr's place in the Irish dramatic tradition, it must be highlighted that the influence of the canonised Irish playwrights on her cannot be denied. Carr's plays share similar themes with her forerunners and contemporary Irish dramatists. The Midlands trilogy focuses on three mother figures, and their central position is reminiscent of the

works of the first wave Irish playwrights which promote nationalistic ideals on the stage through their use of romanticised mother characters. However, Carr appears to distance her characters from political nationalist propaganda as the Mai, Portia and Hester do not stand for Mother Ireland, and she subverts the conventional presentation of motherhood in her plays. Moreover, these maternal characters are more developed in terms of their conflicts and psychological complexities compared to the works of the second wave Irish dramatists. In comparison to contemporary playwrights, Carr displays the decaying of certain institutions in Ireland, but she does not set her plays on political illusions. She only concentrates on the lives of Irish women who are lost in their personal troubles. While presenting the individual problems of her women characters, Carr exploits violence in her plays, but she does not use this theme in a satirical way. In the tragic tone of the Midlands trilogy, Carr's introduction of violence in her mother characters is to liberate them from maternity. That is to say, Carr makes use of violence to deconstruct the ideal image of Irish mothers. With regard to the violent rejection of motherhood in Carr's trilogy, Sihra argues that

> [p]erhaps a more positive, if utopian, message would be put forth if the female characters slammed the door, moving on to ostensibly greener pastures just as O'Casey's women do in Juno and the Paycock, but Carr's refusal to romanticize the legacy of patriarchal confinement in this country is so powerful, and opens up a new dialogue of recalcitrance to female abjection in Irish theatre, culture, and history. ("Nature" 145)

Therefore, Carr's violent mothers in the Midlands trilogy appear to be perpetrators of destruction and reclaim their individualty in a violent way. The playwright's dealing with the themes of motherhood and violence in a deconstructive way can be deemed her contribution to the Irish stage.

Today, Carr is still attached to the presentation of motherhood and violence, and she seems to broaden the context of her work by moving from the Irish world to the ancient world of the Trojans and Greeks in her rewriting of Euripides' *Hecuba.* The original text tells Hecuba's story of revenge in which, after the Trojan War, she takes violent action and kills the murderer of her son Polydorus. The Royal Shakespeare Company introduces Carr's rewriting, also entitled *Hecuba*, which will be performed in the 2015 winter season of the Swan Theatre, as follows:

> Humiliated by her defeat and imprisoned by the charismatic victor Agamemnon, the great queen Hecuba must wash the blood of her buried sons from her hands and lead her daughters forward into a world they no longer recognise. [. . .] In a world where human instinct has been ravaged by violence, is everything as it seems in the hearts of the winners and those they have defeated? ("*Hecuba*")

So it seems that Carr will stage the themes of motherhood and violence again, this time in her own version of a mythical story.

NOTES

[1]Durkheim in *Suicide* gives a detailed analysis of three types of suicide in relation to social causes. For further information, see the chapters entitled "Egoistic Suicide" (105-74), "Altruistic Suicide" (175-200) and "Anomic Suicide" (201-39) in Durkheim's mentioned book.

[2] Marina Carr seemed to put a distance between herself and the plays of her career's first period, as Campos (1) states that *This Love Thing, The Deer's Surrender* and *Ullallo* are not printed. O'Gorham explains that these three texts were sold by Carr to the National Library of Ireland in Dublin, but they are not open to the public and only kept in archive (490). For these reasons, while giving information about unpublished three plays, the secondary sources will be used in this thesis.

[3] The English translation of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* is edited by the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City with its German Libretto, and the original German lines of Wagner's opera used in this reference are as follows:

wehendem All –
ertrinken –
versinken –
unbewusst –
höchste Lust!" (V. iv. 36)

[4] In order to soften the dialect, *Portia Coughlan's* text was rewritten by Marina Carr in 1998 (Barr 452), and in this thesis, this second text is used.

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APPENDIX 1: ORIGINALITY REPORTS

HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
YÜKSEK LİSANS/DOKTORA TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ORJİNALLİK RAPORU

HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞI'NA

Tarih:06/07/2015

Tez Başlığı / Konusu: Marina Carr'ın Oyunlarındaki Şiddet Dolu Anneler: *The Mai, Portia Coughlan* ve *By the Bog of Cats...*

Yukarıda başlığı/konusu gösterilen tez çalışmamın a) Kapak sayfası, b) Giriş, c) Ana bölümler ve d) Sonuç kısımlarından oluşan toplam 142 sayfalık kısmına ilişkin, 06/07/2015 tarihinde şahsım/tez danışmanım tarafından Turnitin adlı intihal tespit programından aşağıda belirtilen filtrelemeler uygulanarak alınmış olan orijinallik raporuna göre, tezimin benzerlik oranı %2 'dir.

Uygulanan filtrelemeler:
1- Kabul/Onay ve Bildirim sayfaları hariç,
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3- Alıntılar hariç
4- 5 kelimeden daha az örtüşme içeren metin kısımları hariç

Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tez Çalışması Orjinallik Raporu Alınması ve Kullanılması Uygulama Esasları'nı inceledim ve bu Uygulama Esasları'nda belirtilen azami benzerlik oranlarına göre tez çalışmamın herhangi bir intihal içermediğini; aksinin tespit edileceği muhtemel durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim.

Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.

06/07/2015

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Öğrenci No: N12220069
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UYGUNDUR.

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Şebnem Kaya

HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
THESIS/DISSERTATION ORIGINALITY REPORT

HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Date:06/07/2015

Thesis Title / Topic: Violent Mothers in Marina Carr's Plays: *The Mai, Portia Coughlan* and *By the Bog of Cats...*

According to the originality report obtained by myself/my thesis advisor by using the Turnitin plagiarism detection software and by applying the filtering options stated below on 06/07/2015 for the total of 142 pages including the a) Title Page, b) Introduction, c) Main Chapters, and d) Conclusion sections of my thesis entitled as above, the similarity index of my thesis is 2%.

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06/07/2015

Name Surname: Kübra Vural
Student No: N12220069
Department: English Language and Literature
Program: English Language and Literature
Status: ☒ Masters ☐ Ph.D. ☐ Integrated Ph.D.

ADVISOR APPROVAL

APPROVED.

Assist. Prof. Dr.Şebnem Kaya

APPENDIX 2: ETHICS BOARD WAIVER FORMS FOR THESIS WORK

HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
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TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ETİK KURUL İZİN MUAFİYETİ FORMU

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SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞI'NA

Tarih:06/07/2015

Tez Başlığı / Konusu: Marina Carr'ın Oyunlarındaki Şiddet Dolu Anneler: *The Mai*, *Portia Coughlan* ve *By the Bog of Cats*...

Yukarıda başlığı/konusu gösterilen tez çalışmam:

1. İnsan ve hayvan üzerinde deney niteliği taşımamaktadır,
2. Biyolojik materyal (kan, idrar vb. biyolojik sıvılar ve numuneler) kullanılmasını gerektirmemektedir.
3. Beden bütünlüğüne müdahale içermemektedir.
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Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.

06/07/2015

Adı Soyadı: Kübra Vural
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ETHICS BOARD WAIVER FORM FOR THESIS WORK

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE TO THE DEPARTMENT PRESIDENCY

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Thesis Title / Topic: Violent Mothers in Marina Carr's Plays: *The Mai*, *Portia Coughlan* and *By the Bog of Cats...*

My thesis work related to the title/topic above:

1. Does not perform experimentation on animals or people.
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Name Surname: Kübra Vural
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ADVISER COMMENTS AND APPROVAL

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