

Unearthing Ireland: A Free Open Talk on Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats*
 The Rogue Theatre, Tucson AZ
 January 2, 2016 at 2:00 and 3:30

"It's one of the most difficult questions to resolve here on this earth: how do you explain dark matter, that dark matter in us?" -Marina Carr, World Literature Today



Marina Carr with Holly Griffith, Dublin, July 2015

Euripides' Medea	Hester Swane
Medea's husband Jason leaves her for the younger, wealthier daughter of Creon the king.	Hester's lover Carthage leaves her for the younger, wealthier daughter of Xavier Cassidy, a landowner.
A chorus of women and a nurse advise and comfort Medea.	Monica Murray, a voice of reason, and The Catwoman, a bog-dwelling medium, advise and comfort Hester.
Medea is an outsider, having fled with Jason from her homeland of Colchis.	Hester Swane is an outsider, an Irish Traveller (gypsy) by heritage.
Medea becomes enraged by Jason's betrayal and Creon's plan to exile her from Corinth.	Hester becomes enraged when the community threatens to exile her from The Bog of Cats.
Out of revenge, Medea murders her two sons.	Out of love, Hester murders her daughter Josie.
Deus-ex-machina	Ghost Fancier-ex-machina

Celtic Myth: black swan, The Children of Lir, Cúchulainn & The Táin, the Cailleach

Irish Travellers

-Some terms: “tinker,” “settled people,” “caravan,” “halting site,” “turf,” “scrubber”

-Culture & heritage

-Scapegoats & outsiders

-Land conflicts



A traditional Traveller caravan

The Bog Landscape



Preserved hand & wrist of the Old Croghan Man, National Museum of Archaeology, Dublin: estimated 362-175 BC

-Irish Midlands

-Unique chemical makeup & preservative properties

-Seamus Heaney’s Bog Poems: Reading from “Boglands” (see also “Bog Queen,” “Bog Oak” and “The Grauballe Man”)

-Irish identity

-Carr’s fascination with the bogs

“If imagination is a country, then Marina’s maps bring me to a stretch of land and water that I recognize: The interior landscape of the bog, the colours of rage and passionate love. This place is dark, deep, and conversant with the world at its most reduced and primal, a place of great anguish and great exultation: twin truths that rise and fall with parallel intensity.” –Olwen Fouéré, Actor: Hester Swane at The Abbey Theatre 1998

“Scuts [children] know instinctively that morality is a human invention, fallible and variable as the wind, and so our dramas were strange and free and cruel.” –Marina Carr, introduction to Plays: Volume 1